Social and Behavioral Change
Advisor or Specialist

Many programs employ a social and behavioral change (SBC) advisor or specialist; others combine SBC duties with a number of other responsibilities in one position (e.g., program planning). SBC advisors and specialists train other staff members in cross-cutting SBC skills. They also lead the process of developing or tailoring behavior change approaches to local contexts and cultures through formative research and by using the results to develop or adapt behavior change materials and activities.

The SBC advisor or specialist's core competency areas include:
1. Fostering organizational change: Setting the stage and building skills among program implementers and service providers
2. Defining what we are going to change
3. Conducting SBC formative research on key behaviors
4. Designing SBC strategies with sufficient coverage, effective messaging, and quality implementation
5. SBC monitoring

1. Fostering Organizational Change: Setting the Stage and Building Skills among Program Implementers and Service Providers

1.1 Convince staff, decision makers, and gatekeepers of the need to change from information-only campaigns and the attitude-behavior and economic self-interest approaches to behavior change to more robust SBC change strategies. Convince managers of the cost-effectiveness of evidence-based SBC strategies that address structural and personal barriers to change.

1.2 Work with agencies to encourage mechanisms of accountability by service providers and to address barriers to service use and delivery.

1.3 Train trainers of change agents in the same skills and methods the change agents will be asked to use in implementing SBC strategies (see 4.5).

2. Defining What We are Going to Change

2.1 Given limited resources and using baseline assessments and other data, prioritize behaviors to change.

3. Conducting SBC Formative Research on Key Behaviors

3.1 Conduct qualitative and quantitative formative research studies to understand how and why people do behaviors, including identifying and prioritizing key determinants of behaviors and barriers and enablers to change and knowing how to create plans to change them.

The Core Competency Series was developed by staff from The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program with significant contributions from the various task forces of the Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network. The series intends to provide hiring managers, program managers, and program staff with explanations of the basic skills and knowledge senior technical staff may possess to carry out their positions effectively. Official job titles, functions, and requirements may vary based on organization and program.

4. Designing SBC Strategies with Sufficient Coverage, Effective Messaging, and Quality Implementation

4.1 Choose the best behavior change communication coverage strategies and use them.

4.2 Segment audiences (priority and influencing groups): Deciding who to target with SBC messages/activities and identify the right people and channels to use to give messages credibility and coverage.

4.3 Determine which SBC tools, methods, and approaches are most acceptable to the targeted groups and work best together/complement each other given a particular cultural context.

4.4 Choose and prioritize messages/activities to target key determinants of priority behaviors.

4.5 Create and use effective SBC messages and activities, including:

> 4.5.1 Producing behavior change communication curricula/creating lesson plans for behavior change agents, taking into account current behavioral science (e.g., how many messages a person/group can understand and retain at one time, properly sequencing behaviors for change)

> 4.5.2 Incorporating and modeling adult learning principles in all trainings and periodic refreshers, which supports developing new skills, building confidence in using them, and integrating them into everyday working situations

> 4.5.3 Creating effective and specific "sticky" messages

> 4.5.4 Using a variety of effective methods (e.g., flipcharts, songs, open- and closed-ended stories, skits, negotiating for behavior change, discussions, puppetry, testimonials, demonstrations, use of radio, text message reminders, endorsements/testimonials)

> 4.5.5 Using proper group facilitation skills in community behavior change communication or discussion settings

5. SBC Monitoring

5.1 Monitor the quality of SBC activities and changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, coverage, and verification of practices to allow for mid-course corrections to SBC strategies and to document lessons learned to move the field ahead; this feeds back into Section 1. Fostering Organizational Change, as well.