

Planning and Reviewing Chapter Events Likely to be Controversial

In addressing the wide variety of possible behaviors, including systematic analysis of cultures and cultural factors, behavior analysis organizations such as ABAI affiliate chapters can consider a variety of activities. These may include, but are not limited to hosting seminars, providing continuing education opportunities, hosting speakers to share expertise about topics, and/or hosting speakers likely to be considered controversial by some people, either by members of the behavior analytic community or by the public at large. Such events might pertain to cultural, political, philosophical, religious, or other matters. Because such events can evoke strong and potentially adverse responses, they should be carefully planned and reviewed by the behavior analytic organization. Strong reactions have resulted in avoidable schisms within the behavior analytic community, may lead to strong and inaccurate criticism of and opposition to behavior analysis, or even contribute to sizable portions of the public avoiding and not receiving behavior analytic services. In turn, those strong reactions can reduce the public good that behavior analysts might provide for society.

To prevent such adverse outcomes, we suggest that chapters actively prepare and address events that are foreseeable as being controversial:

1. Identification of potentially controversial events/topics.
 - a. Designate a person to lead the identification of these events, and if feasible, possibly additional participants. The inclusion of people with varying affiliations and perspectives is highly recommended.
 - b. Establish a process for nominating/suggesting these events/topics to a designated person(s).
 - c. Inform chapter leadership of these events/topics.
 - d. Chapter leadership informs those individuals overseeing relevant chapter events (e.g., program chair, relevant program track coordinator, CE coordinator) of any events/topics that might be deemed potentially controversial.
 - e. Update the list of these events/topics as recommended by chapter leadership and/or the person designated to lead the identification process.
2. Review of a suggested or recommended potentially controversial event/topic, as identified in Step 1.
 - a. Initial process:
 - i. Chapter leadership or person(s) overseeing the relevant activity learns of this event/topic (e.g., seminar, workshop, conference presentation, presenter) and initiates Step 2 and following.
 - ii. Involve multiple stakeholders, including those with differing views regarding the event (e.g., program chair, relevant program track coordinator, CE coordinator, designee[s] of chapter leadership, possibly public representatives of any groups with varying

- perspectives regarding the event in question) and review relevant information (e.g., presentation abstract, objectives, presenter[s] credentials as behavior analysts and regarding the event/topic).
- iii. The group determines if a potential event or topic is controversial and informs chapter leadership and person(s) overseeing the event/topic of their decision, providing the basis for a decision by chapter leadership.
- b. Review by chapter leadership
- i. Review relevant information regarding whether the event/topic should be considered controversial and involve representatives of the initial review group.
 - ii. If the event/topic is considered controversial, the leaders review if the event actually is behavior analytic. If so, proceed with the next step; if not, provide an explanation of the decision to any relevant person(s), along with whether the event would be reconsidered if appropriate changes were made.
 - iii. For a controversial event/topic, address what potential negative impacts the sponsoring chapter or those participating may experience.
 - iv. Consider how the potentially negative impact on the sponsoring chapter, or those participating, might be mitigated and incorporate those steps if possible.
 - v. Decide if the controversial event should proceed and inform relevant people of the decision with an explanation of the decision.
 - vi. At the beginning of the event, introduce the event and note that the topic is controversial and what steps the chapter has taken, to include: reviewing it; what considerations of alternative perspectives were made; how negative, inflammatory, denigrating, or ad hominem comments during the event will be addressed; and any provisions for differing analyses or opinions.
- c. Post-event review
- i. Chapter leaders review if the actual event was consistent with what was proposed (i.e., event fidelity).
 - ii. Participants are surveyed by the event planners regarding the quality of the event and its professional and social benefits, with the results provided to chapter leadership.
 - iii. Chapter leader(s) assess the event fidelity review and the survey results, and:
 - 1. Provide feedback to relevant parties.
 - 2. Take any needed action to address known problems resulting from the event.