Individual Schedule and Environment Adaptations

Schedules and routines in your program need to be sensitive to all the children and youth enrolled, especially those with special needs. Read the scenario below and answer the questions. Then, share your responses with your supervisor.

Jillian, a 9-year-old in your school-age program has special emotional and behavioral needs. Your program is set-up such that children and youth arrive in groups based upon their school release time, and typically about 15 to 20 children arrive together, check in, put their things away, wash their hands, and go to the choice board to choose where to start their afternoon. Since the start of the school year you have noticed that Jillian consistently becomes agitated during this arrival time—she has yelled loudly at other children if they remind her she has not washed her hands, she has thrown her belongings when staff member remind her she must put them away before selecting an activity, she has tried to hit children who accidently touch her while putting their belongings away, she has pushed other children in the hand-washing line. Jillian seems to become particularly distressed if the choice activity she wants to use is full by the time she gets to the board. It often takes Jillian 20 to 30 minutes to calm down in the cool down space before she is ready to safely reengage with the other children and youth.

You and other staff members want to better support Jillian during this time and increase safety for the other children. Think about the following questions.

- What might be potential causes for Jillian’s behavior during arrival time?

- Should you make changes to the arrival routine for all the children? If so, what might these look like?

- Are there any environmental changes you could make to better support Jillian?

- What schedule changes or strategies could you try for Jillian?

- How would you work with Jillian’s family to support her?