

Basic Needs Scenarios

(determine which needs are needing to be met and is it being done in a clean way or a messy way.)

Sarah is a child about 7 years old. She comes hungry and cold without a coat or socks. She seems sleepy and communicates very little. Sarah follows her adult mentor around like a shadow.

Jimmy is a 5th grade student who appears very angry. He is defiant and resents being told what to do. He was just kicked out of school for hitting another child and has been suspended for two days. Jimmy is often non-compliant and leaves the group.

Dylan is an eight-year-old boy who is afraid of the horses and is extremely reluctant to ride around the arena even if lead by an adult. He appears insecure and requests to use the bathroom all the time. During group times he pokes others and distracts them by kicking his feet.

Yesenia is a 9-year-old who is very shut down, withdraws from activities, and refuses to participate. She appears needy and often displays avoidance behavior. When going riding, for example, Yesenia often tries on multiple pairs of boots before deciding on “just the right ones”. This can take several minutes.

Darren is a very dramatic 6th grader. He talks out of turn and tries to dominate conversations. He is loud and often rude to others. He puts other children down with disparaging remarks and is often flippant to the supervising adults.



Basic Needs Chart adapted by Sue Swank and Kathy Dorr

Illustration by Haley Didier

We all have basic needs that need to be met so we can be at maximum functioning. When a child is acting out or shut down we can investigate with them in how they are doing in getting their needs met. This chart can help them identify what they are needing and they can be guided on how to ask for help in getting that need met in a 'clean' way. We can brainstorm how we get these basic needs met in 'messy' ways (disruptive to self or others) or in 'clean' ways (causing no harm to self or others)