

Functional Behavior Assessments & Intervention Plans: A Fact Sheet For Parents

Many students with disabilities exhibit inappropriate behaviors that interfere with their learning or the learning of others. The reason for these behaviors, and the extent to which they can be changed, varies greatly from student to student. Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans are tools to understand and address behaviors in the school setting.

WHAT IS A FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT?

A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a gathering of information to determine the cause or function of a behavior and in what conditions the behavior occurs. The information gathered helps the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which is made up of school staff and the parents, develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Therefore, in most circumstances a FBA should be conducted before developing a BIP. Many different tools could be used for a FBA, so tools should be selected on a case-by-case basis.

A FBA should include:

- **Definition of the behavior that you want to change:** What is the target behavior?
- **Measurement of target behavior:** Answer the questions when, where, how often, for how long, and in what the context?
- **Data collection and assessment:** This can include parent, student and teacher observations and interviews, records reviews, and checklists or questionnaires.
- **Summary and hypothesis:** The team's best theory about why the student is exhibiting the target behavior.

WHAT IS A BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLAN?

A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), also called a Behavior Support Plan, is a course of action developed by the IEP team to address the target behavior and/or encourage new behaviors through positive interventions, strategies, and supports. The BIP should follow a FBA, unless the team already had enough data about the causes and circumstance of your child's behavior. The BIP should be modified as behaviors change.

A BIP should include:

- **A FBA Summary:** Target behavior and 'why'?
- **Positive behaviors that will be taught to replace the target behavior:** Ex: choice-making
- **Ways to teach new behaviors:** Ex: modeling
- **Positive reinforcements:** Results of desired behavior exhibited or target behavior avoided.
- **Negative consequences:** What happens when target behavior is exhibited.
- **Environmental modification:** Positive strategies to prevent the target behavior.
- **How and when success is measured:** Plan for collecting and reviewing data, monitoring, and team meeting timeline.
- **Implementation date and responsibilities:** Start date, team members, and responsibilities.

FACTS

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not provide specific procedure or development guidelines for FBAs or BIPs.

Parental consent must be obtained before a FBA is done for the purpose of evaluation.

The parents or school may ask for an FBA at any time if a child's target behaviors become worse or the team can't identify why a behavior occurs.

FBAs and BIPs may be developed for any behaviors that affect a child's learning or the learning of others.

The IDEA allows parents to ask about the FBA assessors' training, educational background, and experience. If you disagree with the school's FBA findings, you may request an independent evaluation by a professional outside the school system at the school's expense.

If a student's behavior results in a disciplinary action that keeps him or her out of school for more than 10 days during any school year, the IEP team must conduct a FBA and develop or revise a BIP.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Do not include calling the School Resource Officer or physical restraint in the BIP. The BIP's focus is changing and reducing behaviors not emergency interventions.
- Do not hesitate to suggest strategies for the BIP that you think might work for your child.
- Be sure the BIP includes how teachers and school staff will help your child, not just the skills your child has to work on.
- Ask the team to include at least one objective to decrease the target behavior and one to increase the new behavior.
- Help the team define the target behavior in a way that is measurable and observable. Behaviors like "lazy" or "disrespectful" are not observable or measurable behaviors.
- Prepare for team meetings by reviewing your child's disciplinary records and behavior data and talking to teachers.
- You should ask for an FBA or update of the FBA if your child: has been restrained or isolated; has frequent office referrals or suspensions; or their FBA is at least three years old. Put your request in writing to the school.



The information contained in this document is a summary and does not provide every detail, exception or circumstance. Please refer to other resources or your local system for complete information. Nothing in this document is intended to state new law or supplant any federal or state laws, regulations or requirements. To obtain advice regarding these issues, please consult an attorney. Alternative formats available upon request. Photo credit: Parent to Parent of Georgia www.p2ppga.org

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