Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) PROCESS

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a process for identifying problem behaviors and developing interventions to improve or eliminate those behaviors.

An FBA consists of information-gathering procedures that result in a hypothesis about the function(s) that the behavior is serving for the student. The process also results in the identification of environmental antecedents (what happened before the behavior occurred) and consequences (what happened after the behavior occurred) that are maintaining the behavior. The information gathered is used to develop an effective and efficient behavior plan.

An FBA is generally understood to be an individualized evaluation of a child in accordance with 34 CFR §300.301 through §300.311 to assist in determining whether the child is, or continues to be a child with a disability. The FBA process is frequently used to determine the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs, including the need for a positive behavior support plan.

As with other individualized evaluation procedures, and consistent with 34 CFR §300.300 (a) and (c), parental consent is required for an FBA to be conducted as part of the initial evaluation or a reevaluation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Data Based Decision Making

Information must be gathered indirectly through a team interview of people who have observed the behavior of the student in a variety of settings and conditions. The purpose of the interview is to review variables affecting the behavior, and then narrow the focus to those variables that are important to the student.

Information also should be gathered by collecting data through direct observation of the behavior across settings and times with consideration of a variety of other environmental factors (e.g., other persons present, task demands, changing conditions). Information gathered during the interview portion of the FBA identifies the type of data to collect during direct observations. A graphic representation of the data collected, written descriptions collected through structured anecdotal reports during direct observations, and the interview information result in the following:

1. Development of a specific, clear description of the behavior of concern

2. Identification of environmental factors such as antecedents and consequences corresponding with the behavior

3. Development of summary statements identifying the perceived function(s) of the behavior of concern

This information serves as the basis for the development of a positive behavior support plan that changes environmental conditions (i.e., antecedents and consequences) while providing instruction in the acquisition of new, more appropriate behaviors. Throughout the baseline and intervention phases, data are collected and evaluated, and decisions are made based upon analyses of the data. Ongoing revisions to the positive behavior support plan should continue to be driven by data analyses.

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Regulatory Requirements

When must a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) be conducted?

An FBA must be conducted:

- Whenever the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team (1) determines that a student's behavior is interfering with his/her learning or the learning of others, and (2) requires additional information to provide appropriate educational programming.

- When a behavior violates a "code of student conduct" that results in a change of placement and is determined by the IEP team to be a manifestation of the student's disability.

- When the school refers the student to law enforcement.

- When a student is removed from his/her current placement as a result of weapon possession, and/or illegal drug possession/ use, and/or serious bodily injury.

Positive, rather than negative, measures must form the basis of behavior support programs to ensure that all students and eligible young children shall be free from demeaning treatment, the use of aversive techniques, and the unreasonable use of restraints. Behavior support programs must include research-based practices and techniques to develop and maintain skills that will enhance an individual student's or eligible young child's opportunity for learning and self-fulfillment. Behavior support programs and plans must be based on a functional assessment of behavior and utilize positive behavior techniques. When an intervention is needed to address problem behavior, the types of intervention chosen for a particular student or eligible young child shall be the least intrusive necessary. The use of restraints is considered a measure of last resort, only to be used after other less restrictive measures, including de-escalation techniques, in accord with Chapters 14 and 711.

Notwithstanding the requirements incorporated by reference in 34 CFR §300.34, §300.324 and §300.530 (relating to related services; development, review, and revision of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); and authority of school personnel), with regard to a child's behavior, the following words and terms, when used in this section, have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Aversive techniques—Deliberate activities designed to establish a negative association with a specific behavior.

Behavior support—The development, change, and maintenance of selected behaviors through the systematic application of behavior change techniques.

Positive behavior support plans—A plan for students with disabilities and eligible young children who require specific intervention to address behavior that interferes with learning. A positive behavior support plan shall be developed by the IEP team, be based on an FBA, and become part of the individual eligible young child's or student's IEP. These plans must include methods that utilize positive reinforcement and other positive techniques to shape a student's or eligible young child's behavior, ranging from the use of positive verbal statements as a reward for good behavior to specific tangible rewards.

When a change of placement occurs, and/or subsequent to a referral to law enforcement for students with disabilities, as part of the evaluation/reevaluation, the LEA must conduct an FBA. The LEA must then complete the report and develop a positive behavior support plan as part of the IEP or modify the existing positive behavior support plan to prevent recurrence of the behavior.

A disciplinary change in placement occurs when a student with a disability is removed for:

- More than 10 consecutive school days, **or**

- More than 15 cumulative school days in a school year, **or**

- When school days 11-15 constitute a pattern of exclusion, **or**

- Even one school day for a student with an intellectual disability

- Up to 45 school days to an interim alternative educational setting for violations involving drugs, weapons, or serious bodily injury.
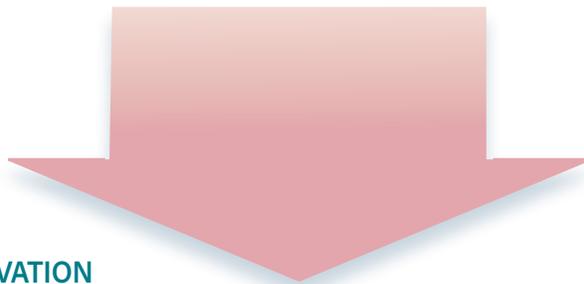
Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

**Steps to conducting an FBA within the
context of the evaluation or reevaluation process**

1

STEP 1: INTERVIEW

The IEP team, including persons who have observed the behavior of the student in a variety of settings and conditions, completes the interview questions focusing on antecedents, behaviors, and consequences.

2

STEP 2: DIRECT OBSERVATION

Data collection is accomplished through direct observation in the student's natural environment. Direct observation provides objective data to support or refute the interview information; thus leading to more accurate hypothesis formation. The observation and the data collection methods are determined by information gathered during the interview phases.
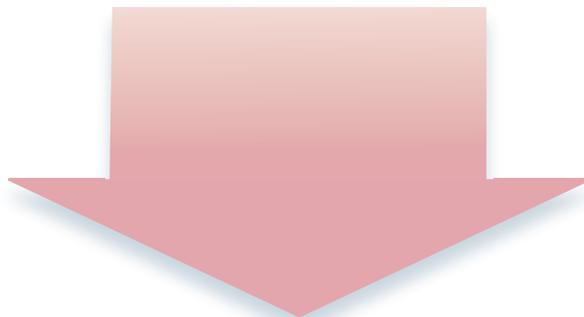
3

STEP 3: SUMMARY

The IEP team summarizes the interview information and the data collected during direct observation to form one or more hypotheses identifying the function(s) the behavior is serving for the student. The IEP team uses this information to build a positive behavior support plan. Ongoing analyses of data collected during the intervention phase of the positive behavior support plan guide the team in measuring progress and making necessary revisions.

STEP 1: FBA INTERVIEW

Student Name: _____   Date: _____

School: _____   Grade: _____ DOB: _____

Educational Program Description: _____

_____

_____

Instructions: When the answer checked is YES, add details on the lines provided.

List strengths of the student (such as academic, social, physical, family assets): _____

_____

_____

Description of the Behavior of Concern (specifically describe what the behavior looks and sounds like):

_____

_____

_____

Physiological and Medical Factors:

1. Could the behavior be the result of a medical or psychiatric condition or any form of physical discomfort?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Could the behavior be related to a side effect of medication?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Could the behavior be the result of some physical deprivation condition (thirst, hunger, lack of rest, etc.)?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____

   _____

   _____

Antecedent Events:

1. Are there circumstances in which the behavior ALWAYS occurs?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Are there circumstances in which the behavior NEVER occurs?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Does the behavior occur only (or more often) during particular activities?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Does the behavior occur only with (or more likely with) certain people?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Does the behavior occur in response to certain stimuli (demands, termination of preferred activities, tone of voice, noise level, ignoring, change in routine, transitions, number of people in the room, etc.)?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Does the behavior occur only (or more likely) during a certain time of day (morning, afternoon, end of school day, evening)?
   ☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____
   _____
   _____

Skill Deficits Related to Behavior of Concern:

1. Could the behavior be related to any skill deficits? (check all that apply*)

   ☐ **Academic Skills:** Task requirements as presented are not at the student's instructional level in the core areas of Reading, Math, or Writing.

   ☐ **Participation Skills:** The student has difficulty with participating in non-directed, semi-directed, teacher-directed, or peer-directed activities. The student has difficulty in small or large group instruction.

* If checked, please refer for further assessment (i.e., Speech & Language evaluation, Occupational Therapy evaluation, curriculum-based assessments, specific skills assessments).

☐ **Social Skills:** The student has difficulty acquiring and/or maintaining peer friendships. The student often withdraws from social interaction. The student is often verbally and/or physically aggressive in social interactions.

☐ **Communication Skills:** The student has difficulty requesting what he/she needs, including items, activities, attention, information, changes in the environment, or help. He/she has difficulties in conversational skills and answering questions, understanding nonverbal or verbal language, or following directions.

☐ **Organizational Skills:** The student has difficulty organizing school supplies, study area, time or projects, organizing class notes, or dividing assignments into tasks.

☐ **Self-Regulation Skills:** The student has difficulties staying on-task; completing work assignments; handling stressful situations; calming self when agitated; following rules; or difficulty transitioning between activities, places, or people. The student has difficulty with problem solving.

☐ **Study Skills:** The student has difficulty studying for tests, taking tests, taking notes from lectures, or using studying techniques.

☐ **Motor Skills:** The student has difficulty with gross motor skills (e.g., running, raising arms, putting feet together, squatting, bending at waist) or fine motor skills (e.g., pointing, counting with fingers, holding a pencil/pen, holding a fork/spoon, pressing a computer key, using a mouse). The student has difficulty imitating others' actions.

☐ **Functional Skills:** The student has difficulty performing activities of daily living (e.g., eating, dressing, toileting, grooming).

☐ **Play Skills:** The student has difficulty actively exploring activities/toys in their environment (inside or outside) to play with during leisure time, playing with the items as designated, or engaging in interactive play with peers during activities.

Consequence Factors:

1. Does the behavior allow the student to gain something?

   A. Preferred activities or items?

   Indicators: The behavior often occurs when the student sometimes or always regains an item or activity that has been taken away or terminated. The behavior often occurs when the student sometimes or always gains access to an activity or item that the student was told he/she couldn't have. The behavior rarely occurs when the student is given free access to his or her favorite items or activities.

   ☐ NO   ☐ YES _____
   _____
   _____

   B. Peer or adult attention?

   Indicators: The student frequently approaches others. The student frequently initiates social interaction. When the behavior occurs, someone usually responds by interacting with the student in some way (e.g., verbal reprimand, redirection, comforting statements). The behavior rarely occurs when the student is receiving attention.

   ☐ NO   ☐ YES _____
   _____
   _____

2. Does the behavior allow the student to postpone, avoid, or escape something such as task demands, social interaction, etc.?

Indicators: The behavior often occurs when the student sometimes or always postpones or escapes the task demands placed upon him. The behavior rarely occurs when few demands are placed on the student or when the student is left alone. The student is often noncompliant when asked to complete tasks, and the student sometimes or always postpones or escapes the tasks. The behavior often occurs prior to predictable demands and the student sometimes or always avoids or postpones the tasks.

☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____

_____

_____

3. Does the behavior provide stimulation as an alternative to the student's lack of active engagement in activities?

Indicators: The behavior occurs frequently when the student is alone or unoccupied. The student seems to have few known reinforcers or rarely engages in social interaction activities. When the student engages in the behavior, others usually respond by not attending to the behavior.

☐ NO   ☐ YES   _____

_____

_____

STEP 2: DIRECT OBSERVATION

The FBA interview results in a measurable description of the behavior of concern and information that leads to direct observation with data collection and analysis.

Direct observation:

- Serves to clearly define the behavior
- Supports or refutes interview information
- Allows for assessment of behavioral events in the student's natural environment
- Leads to a hypothesis regarding the function(s) of the student's behavior of concern
- Serves as a baseline to measure the frequency, duration, and/or intensity of the behavior prior to intervention
- Provides information that is necessary to build a positive behavior support plan
- Supplies the team with progress monitoring data to evaluate the implemented interventions and guide adjustments to the positive behavior support plan

Data collection process:

- Define the behavior in observable and measurable terms
- Determine the purpose for data collection—the type of information needed from each data collection session (e.g. frequency counts, identifying antecedents and/or consequences)
- Outline the schedule including where, when, how often, and who will collect data
- Design tools with clear coding systems that will result in the collection of the type of data needed and that are functional
- Transfer the data to a visual representation (graph) and analyze it for trend, level, and variability
- Analyze data regarding behavior of concern, antecedent events, and maintaining consequences to determine the function of behavior. Use this information to identify replacement behaviors and behavioral interventions, and develop a positive behavior support plan. An annotated positive behavior support plan and blank positive behavior support plan are available on the PaTTAN website (www.pattan.net).
- Utilize progress monitoring data to evaluate the implemented interventions and guide adjustments to the positive behavior support plan

Data collection methods:

- Record frequency and/or duration indicating time of day, location, activities occurring, and people present
- Write a description of the student's behavior as well as the antecedents and consequences using the Antecedent - Behavior - Consequence (A-B-C) format. This type of data must be collected multiple times across settings when the behavior of concern occurs as well as when the behavior of concern does not occur.

STEP 3: SUMMARY

List strategies used in the past and note their effectiveness:

Antecedent (prevention) strategies:	**Consequence strategies:**

Direct Observation Summary (attach graphic representation of observation data collected)

1. Describe how often the behavior of concern occurs, how long it lasts, and at what intensity it occurs.

2. Describe any patterns to the occurrence of the behavior of concern (consider the time of day, location, and others involved).

Antecedent and Consequence Factors

1. Describe the antecedents that are present when the behavior of concern occurs.

2. Describe the consequences that appear to be maintaining the behavior of concern.

Hypothesis Regarding Function of the Behavior of Concern (The team may identify more than one hypothesis.)

1. When (antecedent to behavior of concern) _____,
   (student)_____(behavior of concern)_____
   in order to (perceived function of the behavior) _____.

2. When (antecedent to behavior of concern) _____,
   (student)_____(behavior of concern)_____
   in order to (perceived function of the behavior) _____.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Josh Shapiro, Governor