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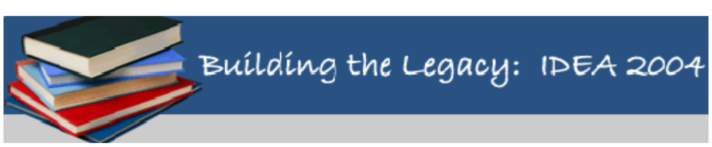
Functional Behavioral Assessments & Behavior Intervention Plan Guide



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Introduction & Overview

Purpose of This Document

This document provides guidelines to assist in completing a Functional Behavioral Assessment and writing a Behavioral Intervention Plan using requirements set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). A North Dakota workgroup examined the literature to identify critical issues and to provide recommendations relating to proactively addressing the needs of students with behavioral challenges. This document provides the information, tools, forms, and examples that will allow educators to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) in various settings and develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) for the student that appropriately addresses problem behaviors.

The document represents a combination of current literature and best practice in the use of FBAs and BIPs. The material comes from local, state, and national resources. Much of this guide was adapted from a copyright-free document prepared by The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice.

What is a Functional Behavioral Assessment?

A Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a comprehensive and individualized, problem-solving process that addresses challenging behavior. It incorporates a variety of techniques and strategies to gather information as a means of understanding the specific reasons for the student's problem behavior and how a student's behavior relates to or is affected by his/her environment. An FBA looks beyond the form of the behavior (i.e., what the behavior looks or sounds like), and focuses on identifying what causes and maintains the behavior (i.e., the function). This type of assessment leads the observer beyond the "symptom" (the behavior) to the student's underlying motivation (escape, avoid, or gain something).

An FBA is complete when four main outcomes are achieved:

1. A clear description of the problem behavior is provided.
2. Identification of the events, times, and situations that predict when the problem behaviors will and will not occur is listed.
3. Identification of the consequences that maintain the problem behaviors are included.
4. One or more summary statements or hypotheses has been developed.

These outcomes should provide a confident prediction of the conditions in which the problem behavior is likely to occur and not occur. When there is agreement about the factors that appear to maintain the problem behavior, a BIP should be developed to be used by the teachers and support staff in that student's educational setting.

What is a Behavior Intervention Plan?

A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is a specific plan of action that designs effective positive behavior interventions to teach the student more acceptable behavior(s) to replace the inappropriate behavior. When a BIP is implemented, progress monitoring (data collection) occurs to determine if there are reductions in the inappropriate behavior(s) and increases in the appropriate behavior(s). In order to develop a more effective and efficient behavior intervention plan, we must use the information from the FBA that describes when, where, and why problem behavior occurs. Intervention plans based on an understanding of "why" a student engages in problem behavior are extremely useful in addressing a wide range of problem behaviors.

If interventions are developed without a functional assessment, they may make a problem behavior worse. A functional assessment not only helps us develop effective intervention plans, but it also helps us avoid providing ineffective interventions.

Reactive vs. Proactive Models

The Reactive and Punitive Model

Often, when a student's behavior disrupts classroom instruction, it results in either removing the student from the environment (school or classroom) or providing strong negative consequences to the student (detention, suspension, etc.). The traditional response to challenging behavior tends to be a more reactive and punitive discipline model. That is, educators focus on applying negative or punitive consequences in order to make the student stop engaging in a problem behavior. This type of reactive approach tends to focus on a student's inappropriate, undesirable behaviors more than their appropriate behaviors.

This traditional discipline model assumes that students should know how to behave appropriately, that they willingly choose to engage in problem behavior, and that external controls are necessary to prevent these behaviors from occurring again. However, this model fails to teach the student acceptable behaviors that are expected and appropriate. Even though the student may respond to the negative consequences at that moment, the effects are typically short-term. Relying on the reactive and punitive model can exacerbate challenging behavior in many students. For example, if a student engages in a problem behavior to get out of doing an academic task, then discipline that involves removing the student from the situation provides the result that the student was anticipating (i.e., not having to complete the academic task). Although the intention is not to reinforce or strengthen the problem behavior, the use of a reactive and punitive discipline model can produce these unfortunate results.

The Proactive and Instructional Model

The proactive and instructional model focuses on recognizing and reinforcing the appropriate behaviors that the student exhibits. The occurrence of inappropriate behavior is recognized as a need to teach appropriate behavior.

Teaching appropriate behavior is especially important if students do not know the appropriate behavior that is expected of them in certain settings or circumstances. The proactive and instructional model assumes that students who produce challenging behavior should be taught more productive replacement behaviors rather than referred to other services or removal from the environment. This means that educators teach the students the skills expected of them rather than punish students for their skill deficits. In addition, this model of addressing behavior involves assessing and identifying the reason why the student engages in challenging behaviors.

When to Conduct an FBA & BIP

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states, a BIP should be completed when a student's behavior is sufficiently disruptive that it interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others. It is best practice to complete a BIP before a behavior escalates to a point where discipline procedures such as suspension and expulsion are used. The IDEA does not require that an FBA be completed before writing a BIP. However, in order to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) the team needs to write a BIP based on data collected through an evaluation process. It is best practice to do this by completing an FBA.

Most teachers recognize that many discipline problems can be resolved by consistently applying standard classroom management strategies. Strategies proven to be effective include teaching students how to comply with well-defined classroom rules and expectations, providing students more structure in lessons, implementing classroom reward systems, making strategic seating assignments, and posting a class schedule. These proactive procedures can sometimes even alleviate the need for teachers to require more intensive support. School personnel generally should introduce one or more classroom and/or individualized interventions before seeking to initiate the more complex, and often time-consuming, process of an FBA. A formal assessment usually is reserved for serious, recurring problems that do not readily respond to intervention strategies, or classroom management techniques and impede a student's learning, or are ongoing.

When are an FBA and BIP legally required?

When a child's behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, the IEP team must consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies, to address that behavior (IDEA 34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)(i)). The child's IEP may include modifications in his or her program, support for his or her teachers, and any related services necessary to achieve those behavioral goals (IDEA 34 CFR §300.320(a)(4)). If the child requires a BIP to improve learning and socialization, the BIP can be included in the IEP and aligned with the goals in the IEP.

An FBA and BIP are required if the IEP team completes a Manifestation Determination Review and determines the student's behavior <u>is</u> a manifestation of his/her disability. 34 CFR 300.530 (f).

If it is determined that the student's behavior is not a manifestation of their disability the IDEA states that as appropriate an FBA and BIP should be completed and modifications should be put in place to try and prevent the behavioral violation from reoccurring. 34 CFR 300.530(d)(1)(ii). Further guidance on when this is required can be found in the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) IDEA Discipline Regulations for Students with Disabilities Policy Paper.

Is an FBA & BIP only for students with disabilities?

This guide provides comprehensive information and guidance for ensuring that procedures for students identified as having disabilities under IDEA are carried out with compliance with federal laws and regulations. Although there are legal circumstances in which a BIP must be conducted (for students on an Individual Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan), there is nothing in the law that prevents a team from concluding that an FBA and BIP are appropriate supports for any student. Best practices suggest that an FBA be conducted for any student whenever behavior appears to be significantly interfering with the learning process and well before behaviors reach crisis proportions. All students can benefit from the use of consistent positive behavior interventions and supports.

Who should conduct and participate in an FBA and BIP?

Persons responsible for conducting the FBA will vary from school to school, depending on the supports available at the school. To coordinate with the effort, each school should have a minimum of one (preferred two) individual(s) available to serve as school-based FBA facilitator(s). The facilitator(s) should have knowledge and experience conducting an FBA. They will aid and support the IEP team members during the FBA process. However, a facilitator(s) is no more responsible for the evaluation and implementation than any other team member.

With training and support, many components of the assessment can be conducted by individuals on the student's team. Personnel who may be able to fill this role at varying levels of expertise may include special education or general education teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, intervention specialists, school administrators, and behavior analysts. Some behavioral assessment procedures, such as standardized tests or experimental functional analysis, may require an individual with specific training (e.g., behavior analyst or school psychologist). Although only certain members of the team may have the training to conduct the FBA, anyone who knows the student or has direct knowledge of the situation and/or is a direct contributor to the situation should participate in providing information for the FBA. These participants may include the teacher(s), guidance counselor, bus driver, school psychologist, intervention specialist, and administrator(s). The parent (and the student, as appropriate) should be included in the FBA process.

The development of the BIP occurs as a result of a team process and subsequently becomes an integral part of the student's IEP. Developing an appropriate BIP requires collaborative effort for a successful outcome including the classroom teacher(s), administrative support, parent/guardian, student (if appropriate), and others who know the student best and who will be involved with the implementation of the plan.

As with the FBA, the team approach is not a group of people who meet to complete required forms. A team approach is a problem-solving process that requires shared responsibility for the solution of the problem. Lack of improvement should be a cue for adjustment and revision, not a reason to abandon effort or refer the student elsewhere for assistance. With a BIP, one should expect that preliminary interventions will need revision and that lack of success can provide essential information about the behavior and its function.

Persons responsible for implementing the BIP will vary according to the student's needs and the supports available at the school. When developing the BIP, the team will determine the persons responsible for implementing and monitoring the BIP. Participants usually include the teacher(s), intervention specialist, and support staff that interacts with the student daily. However, the team may want to consider training other participants, such as the guidance counselor, bus driver, cafeteria staff, parents, and administrator(s). The parent/guardian at home should also be significantly involved with the implementation of the BIP, as the connection between school interventions and home support can help ensure the student's behavioral success.

The FBA Process

Form of Behavior VS. Function of Behavior

All behavior serves a specific function, or purpose. Students learn to behave in ways that satisfy a need or that result in a desired outcome or "pay-off". Although the form of the behavior (i.e., what the behavior looks like or sounds like) among many students may be similar, the purpose or "function", of the behavior may be very different. For example, Heather and Terri both make inappropriate comments to the teacher. However, Heather is seeking peer attention while Terri is trying to escape. Even though both students engage in the same behavior, the behavior serves a different function for each student. Only focusing on what the behavior looks or sounds like, will not help identify the underlying cause(s) of the student's behavior.

Don't Blame the Function!

It is okay for the students to experience certain emotions and feelings; however, the behavior they choose to use as a means of expressing those feelings may not always be appropriate. For example, Tyler might be angry he cannot sit with his friends during lunch. The anger is an appropriate feeling, but the behavior of swearing and throwing his lunch tray is not an appropriate behavior to express that feeling. In addition, the function of the behavior might be appropriate, but the behavior exhibited by the student to achieve the "pay off" could be inappropriate. For example, volunteering for a class project and talking back to the teacher may serve the same function (i.e., gain attention from adults), yet, the behaviors that are involved with volunteering are typically considered more appropriate than those that are involved with talking back.

Is an FBA considered an evaluation?

An FBA is generally understood to be an individualized evaluation of a child in accordance with IDEA (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 BIP. In addition, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 2007), stated that an FBA is considered an evaluation when information is systematically collected and analyzed for the express purposes of determining behavioral function and the development of a BIP for a student with a disability.

Is parental consent required for an FBA?

As with other individualized evaluation procedures, and consistent with IDEA (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. If an FBA is being completed for a student with a disability or a student with a 504 Plan, parental consent must be obtained. If an FBA is being completed for a student who is not identified with a disability, a "selective screening" consent form should be completed prior to completing an FBA.

Consent is not required if the FBA merely consists of reviewing existing data on the student. The list below describes the type of existing data that is allowed to without consent:

- Documents in the student's record review, such as attendance records, grades, citizenship, referral records, etc.
- Teacher/Administrator interviews
- Any functional assessment observations or parent/student interviews previously conducted, if they were completed to gather information on the current target behavior. If not, then these particular assessments must be conducted as part of the FBA and they are considered "new data"
- Any instrument routinely use with ALL students (data collection or monitoring)

Conducting an FBA

What are the components of an FBA?

The process of conducting an FBA involves collecting assessment data to provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the target behavior?
- At what level does the target behavior exist (e.g., frequency, duration, etc.)?
- What circumstances or events are likely to trigger the behavior?
- Is the problem behavior influenced by certain events or conditions?
- What function does the problem behavior serve?
- What replacement behavior should be taught?
- Is the problem behavior a performance deficit or skill deficit?

The Functional Behavioral Assessment can follow a Simple Four Step Process

Step 1: Identify the Problem Behavior
Before an FBA can be conducted, the team must pinpoint the behavior causing learning or discipline problems. The team must "identify the behavior" that needs to change.

Consider the following when identifying the behavior:

- When identifying the problem behavior, it may be necessary to objectively observe the student's behavior in different settings and during different types of activities in order to pinpoint the specific characteristics of the behavior.
- Consider the teacher's expectations for student academic performance as well as classroom conduct. It may be that the expectations exceed or fall below the student's ability to perform. As a result, problem behaviors may stem from frustration, fear of embarrassment, or boredom.
- Consider whether a behavior relates to cultural differences or expectations. For example, in some cultures, making eye contact is considered rude and blurting out is a sign of engagement. Remember that each of your students and their families are different, depending on their cultural or ethnic background. Parents can often be a valuable source of information regarding the behaviors and their cultural values. The team must be aware that these differences may exist and respect these differences as they consider student behavior.
- The following questions can be used to determine the significance of the behavior:
    - Does the student's behavior significantly differ from that of his/her peers?
    - Does the behavior interfere with the learning of the student and/or others?
    - Have past efforts to address the behavior using standard interventions been unsuccessful?
    - Does the behavior represent a skill or performance deficit, rather than a cultural difference?
    - Is the behavior serious, persistent, chronic, or a threat to the safety of the student or others?
    - If the behavior persists, is some disciplinary action likely to result?

Once the behavior of interest is identified, the team must create a "behavioral definition". A behavioral definition is a statement that specifies exactly what behavior to observe. Consider the following when creating behavior definitions:

- The definition should be in specific terms that are easy to communicate and simple to measure and record. If the behavioral definitions are vague, it can be difficult to determine appropriate interventions
- Precise definitions lead to accurate data collection, reliable measurement, and confidence in educational decision making. A description of behavior should be precise or descriptive enough so that a stranger can observe and determine if the behavior is or is not occurring
- The following table shows how vague, generalized descriptions can be stated as specific, concrete definitions:

Bad	Better	Best
Brenda loses control.	Brenda cries and tantrums.	Brenda's tantrum is defined as crying, flopping to the floor, kicking, or pounding objects or fists on the floor.
Bob is disruptive.	Bob makes inappropriate comments during class.	Bob curses, talks excessively, and delivers verbal insults to peers during class.

Step 2: Gather Sources of Information

Once the team has defined the problem behavior, they can begin to devise a plan for conducting the FBA. This plan should involve procedures for gathering information to complete the FBA, deciding who will handle various parts of it, and ensuring that it is completed in a timely manner (i.e., approximately 10 school days). Various kinds of information about behavior should be collected and analyzed to determine the likely causes of the behavior. A well-developed assessment plan and properly executed FBA should include sources of information that identify the contextual factors that contribute to the behavior.

Since problem behavior can stem from a variety of causes, it is best to assess the behavior from many different angles. A single source of information typically does not produce sufficient or accurate information, especially if the problem behavior occurs for many different reasons (e.g., leaving the assigned area may serve to get peer attention in some instances, while in other situations it may occur to escape an instructional activity). Often, the temptation to rely solely on interviews and record reviews alone is alluring, but not best practice. A poorly designed FBA relying only on interviews and record reviews may result in inaccurate assessment results, faulty hypotheses, and ineffective interventions. It is important to incorporate various procedures for assessing behavior, which can include, but are not limited to: a review of the student's records, samples of academic products, various observation procedures, questionnaires, interviews with parents, interviews with teachers and/or school personnel, and interviews with student (as appropriate). The sources used should gather information on most or all the following circumstances:

- Times when the behavior does/does not occur (e.g., during reading, prior to P.E.)
- Specific location of the behavior (e.g., bathroom, classroom)
- Conditions when the behavior does/does not occur (e.g., independent work, unstructured times)
- Individuals present when the behavior is most/least likely to occur (e.g., certain peers, presence of a certain teacher)
- Antecedents: events or conditions that occur before the behavior (e.g., presented with a specific task, told "no")
- Consequences: events or conditions that occur after the behavior (e.g., reprimand, sent out of the room)
- Common setting events (e.g., hungry, tired, headaches)

- Other behaviors that are associated with the problem behavior (e.g., series of negative peer interactions)

Types of Sources

Although many activities and procedures may be considered in an FBA, there are three categories of an FBA under which all activities and procedures fall:

1) Indirect Functional Assessment Methods
2) Functional Assessment Methods
3) Experimental Functional Analysis (this method should only be completed by individuals with specific training, such as a Certified Behavior Analyst)

Indirect Functional Assessment Methods

Indirect functional assessment methods involve gathering information regarding antecedents and consequences and other critical variables indirectly through informants or records. Indirect methods are often the first procedures used in an FBA because they allow the team to plan for more meaningful observations and to begin developing hypotheses about the function of the behavior. Indirect methods involve a variety of procedures including:

<u>Record Reviews</u>

A record review should be completed during the early stages of the FBA process. This involves looking at existing documentation for information that could help determine the function(s) of the behavior. The table below can serve as a guide for information that is typically contained in a student's cumulative record and how that information may be pertinent to the FBA process.

Category	What to Look For	Importance for FBA
Attendance history	Patterns of absences and total number of absences	Identify antecedents for problem behavior and possible skill deficits from a lack of opportunity to receive instruction
Educational history & standardized test scores	Current and historical results of state testing, achievement data, and retentions	Indicates academic subjects and activities that are most difficult for the student and identifies what age/grade the deficits became more pronounced
Developmental / Social history	Frequent changes in address, foster home placement, recent occurrence of stressful events (e.g., parents' divorce, remarriage of parent, death in family, schools attended) and social emotional adjustments	Indicates possible setting events that may be impacting school behavior
Disciplinary history	Types of problem behaviors, times and locations in which they occurred, disciplinary actions taken, and referrals	Helps identify patterns of behavior, effective or ineffective disciplinary strategies, and possible consequences that are maintaining the behavior
Previous FBA, BIP, diagnostic evaluations, or related assessment results	Other assessments that have been conducted that focus on academic skills, behavioral functioning, language skills, etc.	Possible changes in function of behavior, previous antecedents, history of behavior and interventions, and programming decisions
Previous interventions, intervention data/graphs, or classroom logs/notes	Formal and informal interventions that are documented in some manner	Identify interventions that have been successful or unsuccessful and why
IEP	Instructional goals and objectives, how/if they are being taught, how/if they are being monitored, accommodations and modifications, previous referrals and placements	Provides information on the degree to which the behaviors of concern are being addressed in the classroom and on the extent to which the teacher collects and records behavioral data

Behavior Rating Scales or Questionnaires

Behavior rating scales and questionnaires are useful for identifying behaviors of concern but may not be the most reliable method of determining behavioral function. They can be given to multiple raters and compared for differences or similarities in results. The following should be considered when using a behavior rating scale or questionnaire:

- They should always be supplemented with direct observations,
- They can reflect perceptions about students which could account for differences between raters, and
- Care should be taken so that information about the student is not skewed toward the negative

Checklists or Assessments

This can include but are not limited to: curriculum-based assessments, setting event checklists, social/emotional checklists, classroom management checklists, reinforcer assessment checklists, adaptive behavior scales, or social skill assessments. These are useful in identifying skill deficits, environmental variables that may trigger or maintain the problem behavior, and potential reinforcers for appropriate behavior.

Interviews

Interviews should be conducted not only with teachers, support staff, related services staff, parents and family members, and other relevant persons who work with or know the student well, but also with the student who is exhibiting the behavior. The purpose of the interview is to collect information about events that influence problem behavior. It helps to identify settings, events and activities that can be targeted through direct observation. It is also an opportunity to collect information about a range of other factors that could be helpful in developing intervention plans for a student, such as the student's learning styles, strengths, interests, and prior successes.

The information obtained through informal functional assessment methods can produce valuable information but are generally not considered reliable due to their subjectivity. Teams should be cautious of the information obtained through these methods alone. Typically, the information gathered through the indirect methods will inform and guide the more direct, observational methods of gathering data.

Functional Assessment Observation Methods

Functional assessment observation methods are the most powerful tools in a school-based FBA. They consist of observing the problem behavior and describing the conditions that surround the behavior (its context). Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) Analysis and Scatterplot are the two most common functional assessment observation methods.

ABC Analysis

This type of assessment is done by observing the student and recording anecdotal information over the course of several observation periods. As the problem behavior occurs, the observer records events that occurred right before the behavior (antecedents) and events that occurred just after the behavior (consequences). The information gathered in an ABC analysis helps to identify events that are maintaining the challenging behavior, appropriate behaviors that are not reinforced, social skills that need to be learned, and environmental conditions that need modification.

Scatterplot

A scatterplot is a chart or grid on which an observer records single events (e.g., number of times out of seat) or a series of events (e.g., teacher requests and student responses) that occur within a given context (e.g., during teacher-led reading instruction, at lunch, on the playground). It provides a pattern of analysis for determining which situations are associated with the problem behaviors. The purpose is to discover if the problem behavior correlates with time of day, a particular physical setting, the presence of a particular person, a certain activity, or some combination of these factors.

When conducting a functional assessment observation, follow the guidelines below:

- The problem behavior being observed should be the behavior defined in Step 1 of the FBA.
- If several people are conducting observations, each person should be familiar with the definition of the problem behavior as well as the procedures being used for data collection.
- Observations should be carried out in the most natural setting for the student.
- Observations should be carried out over a period of several days until clear patterns have emerged, which is generally a minimum of three to five days for observation periods. Behaviors and environmental conditions change over time, so the length of data collection time may vary. However, the team should conduct at least two separate observations as part of the FBA and one of those observations must be from someone other than the classroom teacher.
- It is important to keep in mind that the observer is attempting to observe and record behavior within the context of naturally occurring situations, so the observer should be as unobtrusive as possible when observing and recording the behavior.

There may be times when the assessment team will not be able to directly observe all the events that bring about behavior. These may have occurred previously within the classroom (e.g., Tara was moved to a different seat during reading last week) or they can be far removed from the classroom but still exert powerful influence over student's behavior (e.g., Tara had an argument with another student at the bus stop before school). Even though they may not be observable, they could increase the likelihood of behavior occurring in the classroom. In other cases, the behavior may be serious but not occur frequently enough to be readily observed. In these instances, the behavior must be assessed primarily through indirect assessment methods.

Baseline Data

Baseline data is information gathered about the target behavior before a program begins. It is used later to provide a comparison for assessing the success and progress of subsequent interventions. At this point, an observable, measurable, and specific definition for the target behavior should already be established. The next step is to decide which method of data collection will be used. The data collection method and observation tools depend on the identified challenging behavior. The type of behavior, strength of behavior (e.g., intensity, frequency, duration), and context of the behavior (e.g., when and where it occurs) should be considered when deciding on a data collection method. In addition to collecting data on the targeted student, the FBA should also collect comparative data on one or more other students.

Who collects the data?

Data can be collected by anyone who is with the child frequently enough to be present when the behavior occurs. The observer must be trained to identify the occurrence of the behavior and procedures for recording the behavior. The observer must also be able to record or document the occurrence of the behavior immediately. Typically, daily data is recorded by the teacher or support staff.

Which method should we use?

Different recording methods are used to most effectively record relevant information about a behavior. For example, if a student exhibits tantrum behavior (screaming, throwing toys, and slamming doors), does the team want to know the number of tantrums per day (frequency), how long the tantrums last (duration), or when the tantrums are occurring most often during the day (scatterplot or interval)? Unless the right dimension of the behavior is measured, the team may not be able to obtain an accurate representation of the behavior. The common behavioral data collection methods are frequency, latency, rate, time sampling, duration, permanent product, intervals, ABC analysis, opportunities, and scatterplot.

The data collection methods used to gather information about the level and strength of the behavior (e.g., frequency, duration, etc.) are typically different from the assessment methods to determine function. However, ABC analysis, a functional assessment observation method, can be used to determine baseline data, but the observer must be willing to continue with this type of data collection method throughout the implementation of the BIP, which can sometimes be burdensome. Data collections from this point forward must be a continuous, ongoing process. The data collection method chosen for baseline will also need to be used as an evaluation tool in the BIP in order to determine the effectiveness of the interventions.

Prior to data collection, the observer should review his/her resources and daily schedule to determine what forms of data collection are feasible. If the observer works with other staff, more time-consuming forms of data collection are possible. When working alone, the observer needs to consider what pieces of data are vital and what data systems can be successfully implemented considering the circumstances.

How long should baseline data be collected?

If an FBA was initiated for a one-time incident, no baseline data is required. If the behavior is a "recurrent" behavior, it is recommended that a minimum of three to five days of data be collected to obtain a baseline average of the target behavior. It is recommended that the observer start collecting data as soon as the FBA process begins. For example, over a week, the designated observer could record the number of aggressive behaviors and find the daily average. This would quantify the scope of the problem for others, such as students, parents, teachers, administrators, school-based intervention specialist, and/or IEP teams. Once the observer starts collecting data, they or someone else should continue to collect data while a BIP is being implemented.

When and where should data be collected?

The observer should record behavior when it is likely the behavior will occur. The information from others or previous experiences may indicate the best times to observe. Observe and record the behavior in natural settings where the target behavior typically occurs (e.g., classroom, playground, cafeteria, etc.). The observer should strive to observe and record behavior in as many settings and periods of time as possible in order to accurately capture the occurrence(s) of behavior, the environments in which the behavior occurs and the times where behavior is least likely to occur. Once the times for data collection have been established, it is important to stick to the schedule. If data are to be representative of a student's performance, it must be collected on a consistent basis over time. Only then can the data be considered accurate baseline data.

Recommended Sources

Although multiple sources of information are recommended, the following sources are particularly helpful when completing an FBA:

- Record review
- Structured interview with the parent or primary caregiver
- Structured interview with a school-based teacher, staff, or administrator
- Three functional assessment observations (one observation must be from someone outside the classroom)
- Baseline data

If these sources cannot be gathered, the team should document the reason.

Step 3: Summarize Assessment Data
Once the team is satisfied that enough data has been collected, the next step is to compare and analyze the information. This analysis will help the team to determine whether there are any patterns associated with the behavior (e.g., whenever Heather is told "no", she reacts by hitting

someone). If patterns cannot be determined, the team should review and revise (as necessary) the functional behavioral assessment plan to identify other methods for assessing behavior.

The summary of assessment data requires the team to discuss, analyze, and document the following variables:

- Strength/skills – when is the student most successful (academically, socially, and behaviorally)? What qualities and strengths does the student possess that help him or her to be successful? Identifying times when the student is most successful provides information about what the student enjoys, what the student values, and how the student becomes successful. This information will be helpful to determine types of behavioral interventions to use and how to make the student successful with the chosen interventions.
- Setting events – what events or conditions affect how the student responds to situations? Setting events can be environmental, physiological, social, or related to learning and self-regulation. The purpose of identifying setting events is to determine if there are events or conditions, not directly related to the behavior, which can be addressed to reduce the probability of it contributing to the occurrence of the targeted behavior (i.e., illness, medication effects, crowded environment, pain, stress from home/community, medical conditions, etc.).
- Antecedents – what is most likely to "trigger" or immediately precede the target behavior? The purpose of identifying antecedents is to determine preventative and proactive strategies to minimize or eliminate triggers for the target behavior. In order to identify all possible antecedents, the team must consider the following questions:
    - When is the target behavior most likely to occur?
    - Where does the target behavior usually occur?
    - During what subject area or activity is the target behavior most like to occur?
    - Who is present when the target behavior usually occurs?
    - Are there any EVENTS or CONDITIONS that immediately precede the target behavior?
- Consequences – what is most likely to immediately follow the occurrence of the target behavior? The team must consider common consequences that typically follow the problem behavior, such as verbal reprimands, peer reactions, or removal from the room. The purpose of identifying common consequences is to help determine if certain consequences are maintaining the behavior and to help identify the function of the target behavior.
- Previous interventions – what has been tried thus far to change the targeted behavior? The team must discuss and consider all previous interventions that have been implemented, such as reward systems, prompting techniques, conferences with a parent, and curriculum modifications. The purpose of identifying previous interventions is to determine if certain interventions should or should not be used, depending on how consistently they were implemented in the past.

- Preferences – what school-related items and activities are most enjoyable to the student? Are there special items, activities, privileges, or social interactions that could serve as special rewards for appropriate behavior (e.g., praise, hugs, stickers, line leader, breaks for work, computer time, homework credit coupons, positive notes home, candy, etc.)? The purpose of listing preferences and interests is to identify potential reinforcers to include in the BIP to reinforce appropriate behavior.

Step 4: Formulate Summary Statements
Once the team has identified the behavior and gathered data about when, where, and how it is demonstrated, the team must determine "WHY" the behavior may be occurring. There are two basic ways to categorize why a behavior is occurring: determine the function or "pay-off" and determine the type of deficit.

Determine the Function

Function refers to why the student is demonstrating the behavior. Most human behavior, has one or two functions: the student gains (GET) something or the student avoids or escapes (GET OUT OF) something.

The Student GAINS (GETS)…

- <u>Attention</u> – Attention can include talking, physical contact, eye contact, or nearly anything that acknowledges the student's presence. The attention does not necessarily need to be positive attention to serve as a reinforcer. For many students, any attention at all, even harsh or negative attention, serves to maintain the problem behavior. In addition, attention from adults can be very different than attention from peer groups. Some students will value the attention of peer groups more than adults. It can often be a way for the student to gain peer acceptance.
- <u>Desired items, preferred activities, and privileges</u> - The student's behavior is occurring in order to get access to something they want. This can include desired items (e.g., food, money, personal belongings), activities (e.g., hanging out with friends, playing on computer, toys), or privileges (e.g., line leader, sitting at a special lunch table, taking materials to the office). This type of behavioral function can be witnessed best at a supermarket when a child is screaming and crying for candy. When the parent gives the child the candy in order to quiet the child, the behavior results in the "pay-off" and the child gains access to the desired item. In school, challenging behavior that serves this function can often occur when a desired activity is terminated or when a student is told "no".
- <u>Sensory Stimulation (Input)</u> – The student's behavior is occurring in order to obtain sensory feedback, such as tactile, auditory, smell, taste or visual. The sensory input produced by one's behavior can be reinforcing to that student, even though we may not be able to observe the reason why. For example, a student may make loud noises, engage in self-injurious behavior, or make certain physical movements in order to obtain certain sensory input.

The Student AVOID or ESCAPES…

- Attention (from adults/teachers or peers) – The student's behavior is occurring to avoid or escape attention from others. For example, a student may isolate himself from his peers if they do not like physical contact or social interactions.
- Non-preferred activities or tasks – The student's behavior is occurring in order to avoid or escape a certain task that may be boring, repetitive, difficult, or frustrating. For example, this may occur when a student's academic instruction is not meeting his or her needs, such as when a student requires more challenging curriculum. Another example of this type of function is when a student engages in behavior (e.g., hiding under a table) in order to escape an activity or work task.
- Non-preferred settings or social interactions – The student's behavior is occurring to avoid or escape a certain setting, such as the lunchroom or bathroom. In addition, students may perceive social interactions with others as aversive. They may not like physical contact, or they may feel uncomfortable in social situations. Some students engage in behavior to escape people with whom they are unable to cope. For example, a student may avoid or escape an adult because the student and the adult have a history of disciplinary interactions. In these circumstances, these students have learned that their problem behavior will result in being removed from an unpleasant interaction with the adult. In another example, a student may avoid or escape a peer because they may find that peer annoying or unpleasant due to peer pressure, teasing, verbal insults, accusations, or criticism. In these circumstances, these students have learned to engage in problem behavior to get away from these peers.
- Transitions – The student's behavior is occurring in order to avoid transitioning to another activity or setting. Often times, students will engage in challenging behavior when they are faced with a situation that requires them to switch activities. Transitions may produce challenging behavior because the student may have to leave a preferred activity and go to a non-preferred activity. Some students respond negatively to transitions when they are not in the normal routine or if the transitions are unscheduled.
- Aversive physical sensations – The student's behavior is occurring to escape or avoid unpleasant physical sensations, such as heat, fatigue, illness, restlessness, boredom, or pain. For example, children sometimes cry or whine excessively in attempt to escape pain or discomfort. A non-verbal student may engage in self-injurious behavior to communicate or alleviate pain. Examples of escape from boredom may include off-task behavior or daydreaming. Examples of escape from restlessness may include getting out of one's seat, moving around without permission, or excessive talking.
- Sensory stimulation (reduction) – The student's behavior is occurring to escape or avoid unpleasant sensory stimulation. Examples of sensory stimulation that may produce challenging behavior include crowded environments, extreme temperatures, extreme lighting, and loud environments.

Determine the Type of Deficit

When assessing behavior, the team must not always assume that a student exhibits behavior by choice. When determining why a behavior occurs, the team must consider whether the behavior relates to either a skill deficit, a performance deficit, or both.

- Skill Deficit – The student does not know how to perform the appropriate behavior/skill. For example, a student engages in physically violent behavior toward another student because he does not know other strategies for conflict resolution. Identifying a skill deficit will help the team identify strategies in the BIP that will address teaching the skill and how to support the student while learning it.
- Performance Deficit – The student is capable of performing an appropriate behavior/skill but chooses not to do so consistently.

Overall, the team must consider if it is likely that the student “can’t” behave differently because he or she does not know differently, or if he or she does know differently and just “won’t”. Usually, “can’t” indicates a skill deficit and “won’t” indicates a performance deficit.

Hypothesis Statement

Based on the information from the assessment, the team can establish a hypothesis regarding the function of the behavior in question. The hypothesis statement predicts the general conditions under which the behavior is most and least likely to occur (antecedents), as well the consequences that serve to maintain it. Only when the team has all the necessary information to identify these variables can the team formulate a possible explanation, or hypothesis, for the student’s behavior.

- For example, if Heather yells out during instruction, an FBA might reveal that the function of the behavior is to gain attention (e.g., verbal approval of peers), avoid an instructional task (e.g., difficult assignment), or both.

A hypothesis is formed by using the following format: **When…**(describe antecedents) **…the student…**(describe the target behavior) **…in order to…** (describe the function/ “pay-off”).

- Based on the information obtained during the FBA for Heather, the team may propose the following hypothesis: “When the teacher is providing instruction, Heather will yell out during class in order to gain peer attention.”
- Heather’s team might make accommodations in the environment to ensure that Heather gets the peer attention she seeks because of appropriate, rather than inappropriate behaviors. If the intervention changes Heather’s behavior, the team can assume that their hypothesis was correct. If Heather’s behavior remains unchanged following the intervention, a new hypothesis may need to be formulated using the data collected during the FBA.

The BIP Process

What is the purpose of a BIP?

The primary purpose of conducting an FBA is to identify the causes of behavior and develop more effective intervention strategies. There should always be a logical connection between the information that was gathered and analyzed during the assessment process and the development of Behavior Intervention Plans. The development of effective BIP's that are positive in nature (i.e., proactive and educative) relies upon data collected during the FBA process. BIP's are effective when they produce meaningful outcomes. That is, they should result in:

- Increases in the acquisition and use of new appropriate, replacement skills
- Decreases in problem behavior
- General improvements in the quality of life for the individual

Comprehensive and effective BIP's have the following characteristics:

- Hypothesis-driven – address the function of the student's behavior
- Student-centered – respect personal preferences and the goals are tailored to the student's typical daily routine
- Consist of multiple intervention or support strategies – including prevention, teaching, reinforcement, and disciplinary components

Why is it important that we collect data?

The purpose of collecting data is to determine if progress is being made to increase the replacement behavior and to decrease the target behavior. When the team collects data documenting the occurrence and non-occurrence of the behaviors, the team can make data-based decisions regarding the effectiveness of interventions and supports. The use of data also promotes consistent communication to all parties involved (e.g., school and home) on the progress of the interventions, rather than relying on verbal reports and subjective opinions. Only with data can the team accurately assess and document progress with the BIP and determine if more supports are necessary.

Developing a BIP

Elements of a Behavior Intervention Plan

When a team has determined that a BIP is necessary, the team members should determine interventions based on information gathered during the FBA. The BIPs should not include single interventions, but a combination of multiple interventions based on the student, teacher, and environmental needs. The following components should be addressed within each BIP:

- Prevention strategies
- Teaching appropriate behavior
- Increasing appropriate behavior

- Decreasing inappropriate behavior
- Safety plan
- Progress monitoring
- Implementation and support

Addressing Behavioral Function

To effectively redirect behavior, the team must understand the function of the behavior. Interventions should not be designed based on the type of behavior (e.g., aggression) but should differ depending on the motivation behind the behavior.

Examples of Function-Based Interventions:

If a student's behavior functions to gain attention, the interventions may include:

- Teaching the student appropriate ways to get attention
- Systematically teaching the student to tolerate longer and longer wait times to get attention
- Giving teacher attention following appropriate behavior

If a student's behavior functions to escape a difficult academic task, the interventions may include:

- Teaching the student to use socially acceptable escape behavior (e.g., asking for help)
- Providing assignments within the student's skill level (if a skill deficit)
- Provide strategies and supports to assist the student (e.g. direct instruction, working with peers)
- Reinforcing when the student gradually spends more time on the undesirable task

Two students may exhibit the same behavior but with different functions. Therefore, it is important to understand the function of the behavior and match interventions to the function.

Selecting Appropriate Interventions

Prevention Strategies

What strategies can be implemented to prevent the problem behavior from occurring and to facilitate success? These strategies typically involve manipulating identified antecedents ("triggers") and setting events. Types of prevention strategies may include:

- Avoiding or eliminating certain triggers – (e.g., make adjustments to where or when the problem behavior occurs, the subject/activity during which the problem behavior occurs, people present when the behavior occurs, etc. Some examples include avoiding large crowds, avoiding requiring repetitive tasks, avoiding exposing the student to long delays, allowing the student to take frequent breaks during difficult work activities, providing time alone or time to regroup after a negative event, etc.)

- Adjust the structure – (e.g., provide choices, state clear expectations for student performance, schedule preferred activities in daily routines, schedule non-preferred activities among preferred activities, etc.)
- Modify the curriculum/tasks/instruction – (e.g., change voice intonation, mix difficult work with easy work, etc.)
- Make environmental modifications – (e.g., preferential seating, changing seating arrangements away from an instigating peer, minimizing or eliminating distracting materials, change the lighting, create quiet areas, etc.)
- Design social supports – (e.g., peer mentor/tutor opportunities, parent-teacher communication systems, positive peer reporting interventions, transition supports, etc.)
- Use specialized equipment or materials – (e.g., visual strategies to help provide structure or prompts for appropriate behavior, communication system or books, assistive technology, etc.)

Teaching Appropriate Behavior

The main purpose of a BIP is to teach a student more acceptable behaviors that can help eliminate the inappropriate behavior.

In order to teach appropriate behavior, first consider the replacement behavior. Replacement behavior is defined as a behavior that is either compatible to the target behavior or will serve the same purpose (function) as the target behavior, but in a more appropriate way. An example of a replacement behavior includes teaching a student to use a non-verbal signal to let a teacher know he/she is frustrated instead of tearing up a paper.

A replacement behavior should be determined by using the following format: **Rather than…** (describe the target behavior) **…I want this student to** (describe the replacement behavior) **…in order to…** (describe the function / "pay-off"). For example: "Rather than yell out during class, I want Heather to participate in group instruction by raising her hand in order to gain peer attention appropriately."

The team should list examples of situations when the use of the replacement behavior is appropriate. If the behavior is to seek teacher attention and the replacement behavior is raising a hand, the team may list examples such as anytime he has a question, needs help, wants to tell the teacher something, and needs to use the restroom. Care should be given to select a behavior that likely will be elicited by and reinforced in the natural environment. For example, using appropriate problem-solving skills on the playground will help the student stay out of the principal's office.

Instructional Strategies:

The team should determine types of teaching strategies and procedures the student needs to learn to ensure the appropriate behaviors are chosen. These teaching strategies include direct instruction, guided practice, group instruction, reminders, visual supports, modeling and rehearsal. Teaching a student lagging or missing skills may help reduce behaviors. For example, teaching a student organizational skills may help prevent frustration when a student faces multiple tasks.

Increasing Appropriate Behavior

It is important to develop procedures to reinforce the occurrence of the replacement behavior and any other appropriate behavior. A reinforcer is something that is given <u>after</u> the occurrence of behavior that results in an increase in the behavior. The team must determine reinforcers that can be used to motivate the student to engage in the replacement behavior and other appropriate behavior. Examples of a reinforcer include specific verbal praise, social interactions, access to certain items, activities or privileges. The team should use knowledge of student performances and strengths to define reinforcers. The team might ask a student what type of things he or she likes, watch for and record any preferred activities, or use an informal reinforcer assessment checklist to identify any preferences. It is a good idea to vary the type of reinforcers given to the student, so that the student does not tire or become bored with a particular reinforcer.

Reinforcers should only be delivered contingent upon the occurrence of appropriate behavior. They should never be used as a bribe to get the student to behave appropriately. They should only delivered if the student already has exhibited an appropriate behavior. There are many different methods to deliver reinforcers, and the team must decide what procedures they will use to reinforce the appropriate behaviors.

- Establish specific behavior criteria – what exactly should the student do to earn the reinforcers?
- Determine schedule of reinforcement – how frequently can the student earn the reinforcers?
- Identify the delivery system – what intervention components will be used to monitor the student's behavior and deliver reinforcement (e.g., self-monitoring, behavior contracts, point system, behavior charts, etc.)?

The procedures should detail how the reinforcers will be given, when they will be given, how the student can earn them, and when the student can redeem any awards. It is important to be consistent in the frequency of delivery as well as the amount given. Make sure that the student is reinforced more often for the replacement behavior than he or she was previously for the problem behavior (at least twice as often). The team can use information collected during the FBA (i.e., baseline data) to determine the frequency with which the problem behavior occurred and was previously reinforced. This information can then be used to determine how often reinforcement should occur for appropriate behavior (example: on average, Cameron disturbs instruction two times each 55-minute math class; therefore; the pay-off for his inappropriate behavior occurs about every 30 minutes. So, his behavior intervention plan should call for a re-arrangement of his instructional environment so that he has an opportunity to engage in and be positively reinforced for appropriate behavior at least every 15 minutes). The general rule of thumb is to use a ratio of four positive to every one negative to encourage more appropriate and positive interactions to remain proactive.

When determining procedures, remember that the reinforcer must be a better pay-off than the pay-off that the student receives from engaging in the problem behavior. In some cases, it may be necessary to initially offer a student “non-contingent” access to a reinforcer (e.g., no strings attached), especially if the reinforcer is something he or she has never had before. To introduce the reinforcer, they would initially “sample” the reinforcer by letting them participate in the highly preferred activity or interaction. If the student enjoys it, access to that activity would later depend on the student engaging in the desired appropriate behavior.

Initially set obtainable goals for earning reinforcers. If the goals are set too high, the student will never access the reinforcer and no behavioral change will occur. The team will need to define gradual change toward the desired behavior, giving the student an opportunity to experience success.

If the student lacks intrinsic motivation (seeing the personal value of performing a behavior), it may be necessary to initially reinforce the behavior with some type of extrinsic reward, such as activities, tokens, or rewards (some type of tangible item). If doing so, we must remember to “fade” the extrinsic reward or be gradually replaced with more naturally occurring rewards such as good grades, approval from others, or the pleasure that comes from success. Of course, fading will only be a consideration once the student has shown an increased ability and willingness to engage in the appropriate, desired behavior. In order to accomplish this fading process, the extrinsic rewards will need to be paired with the intrinsic reward. The purpose of pairing the extrinsic with the intrinsic is to teach the student that the behavior is a positive behavior so that the intrinsic motivation will become just as valuable as the extrinsic (example: A middle school student who has completed all his homework for the week gets to attend a popcorn party. Along with attending the party, the teacher may also say something such as; “Josh, you have completed all your homework this week and you are much better prepared for class. You must feel good about yourself and proud of all the hard work you have done”).

Decreasing Inappropriate Behavior

This section focuses on developing strategies that describe how adults and peers should respond to the student when the problem behavior occurs.

When the behavior occurs, the interventions should not provide the student with the desired “pay-off.” Refer to the hypothesis in the student’s FBA to identify the student’s “pay-off” or the function of the student’s behavior. If the intervention provides the “pay-off” then the behavior will continue to occur and may even worsen. For example, if a student’s behavior occurs to escape class, one would not develop an intervention that results in the student leaving class.

The consequences that will be administered should go from least restrictive to most restrictive. This means that the team should not resort to the most punitive consequence as the first intervention to try but should start with the less intrusive procedures.

The following are examples of interventions or consequences to inappropriate behavior:

- Modify the environment and/or use proximity management
    - Changing the seating arrangements
    - Rearranging the room or furniture
    - Moving the student closer to the teacher
    - Eliminating distracting items in the classroom
    - Posting rules or expectations in the classroom
- Ignoring occurrences of problem behavior and attending to the appropriate behavior of other students
- Prompting or redirecting each occurrence of the behavior by:
    - Giving a verbal prompt/reminder
    - Giving a non-verbal (e.g., gesture, gentle guidance) or visual prompt/reminder
    - Clarifying or re-teaching expectations and rules
    - Utilizing precision requests to ensure follow through
    - Completing a teaching interaction (I do, we do, you do)
- Apply a structured consequence for the inappropriate behavior, such as:
    - Loss of incentive/privilege
    - In-class break time
    - Positive practice
    - Restitution
    - Parent contact or conference
- Implement a problem-solving or reflection activity
- Implement a level system including a hierarchy of consequences for inappropriate behavior

When ignoring problem behavior or using precision requests to ensure follow through, often the behavior may get worse before it gets better. Because the "pay-off" is no longer being delivered, the student will often escalate the behavior or engage in a different problem behavior in an attempt to receive the "pay-off." If when the behavior escalates, the "pay-off" is delivered, the student has learned to display the behavior at an even higher level than she or he used before. As a result, the teacher's attempt to change the student's behavior was ineffective and the student has actually become more adept at using the problem behavior. To see changes in the behavior the person implementing the procedure must be consistent and follow through and not give in to the behavior.

> Example: Previously Shay would cry when she could not be the "line leader." In order to quiet her, the teacher previously would allow her to walk at the front next to the teacher. The teacher realizes that this is only making the behavior worse, as it occurs every day. In order to change the student's behavior, the teacher decides to try not letting Shay stand at the front of the line today when she cries. Initially, Shay began crying and the teacher did not allow her to move to the front. However, Shay began

> screaming and falling on the floor, so her teacher ultimately let her walk next to her at the front. In this example, the teacher gave in and allowed Shay to receive the "pay-off."

Removing a student from the instructional environment should be avoided and implemented as a last resort. When administration steps in and the student is removed, the teacher relinquishes the right to handle the situation and build a relationship with the student.

Time-out or removal from the setting should be avoided if the student is engaging in the behavior to escape a task or situation. By using these interventions, the student receives the "pay-off" because they have been removed from the unpleasant task or situation.

In order to shape behavior, the consequences (positive or negative) must matter to the student. What may seem like negative consequences may actually be positive to the student.

> Example: The teacher may say, "Avery, when you use inappropriate language, you will be immediately removed from the activity." The teacher may assume that removal from the activity is a negative consequence, when Avery may think it is a positive consequence – she *wants* to be removed from the activity.

Is punishment ever appropriate? Positive interventions are far more likely to produce behavior changes than punishment. The team should try positive interventions for an appropriate length of time before considering punishment. Punishment does not address the cause of the behavior and it is usually ineffective in the long-term. Punishment, such as suspension, should only be considered in extreme case when the student's behavior severely endangers her or his safety or the safety of others.

Guidelines for Selecting Interventions

After some ideas about positive behavioral interventions have been generated for a student's BIP, teams should consider the following questions. Answering these questions as a team should yield an effective and efficient intervention that the team will adopt and implement as a part of the student's educational program.

1. Do the interventions align with the function of the target behavior?
2. Are the interventions appropriate given the student's need and current levels of performance?
3. Do the interventions directly teach the replacement behavior and other alternative skills?
4. Did the team choose interventions that are "least intrusive" and "least complex" and are likely to produce positive changes in student behavior?
5. Did the team choose interventions that are most likely to positively change behavior quickly and easily?
6. Did the team choose interventions that are least likely to produce negative side effects?
7. Do the interventions have evidence of effectiveness with the target behavior?
8. Are the interventions acceptable and practical for the team member(s) responsible for implementing the plan?

9. Are the interventions most likely to be accepted by the student?
10. Are the interventions most likely to promote a replacement behavior that will occur and be reinforced in the natural environment?
11. Is there system-wide support for the use of the chosen interventions?

Frequently Asked Questions

How often should we review the FBA & BIP?

To ensure the FBA remains current, the FBA should be reviewed by the team, at least annually, to determine if the results are still reliable and relevant. It is encouraged to review the FBA during the annual IEP meeting or if applicable, as needed to discuss the student's needs. An FBA may also be reviewed if the BIP data demonstrates no change or negative change in the target behavior.

During the review of the FBA, the IEP team should determine:

- Does the FBA address the current problem behavior that is occurring?
- Is the hypothesis statement, regarding the function of the behavior, still appropriate?

If the answer is "yes" to both questions, the team would document that the FBA remains current. If the answer is "no" to either one of these statements, the team should document that the FBA is no longer current or valid and a new FBA will be developed.

The BIP should also be reviewed by the team, at least annually. Best practice, however, is to review data whenever other school progress is reported. A progress report requires the team to summarize and graph daily data, determine progress or lack of progress with the target and replacement behavior, and determine an action to take to ensure continued success or to promote behavioral success. Data would also help the team determine if the IEP needs to be modified for things such as a change of setting, change in staff or in behavioral supports if there has been an emergence of a more disruptive behavior.

What is the relationship between the BIP and the IEP?

In cases involving a student with a disability, documentation of a BIP must be included in the IEP. On the special considerations page mark that the student's behavior impacts his/her learning or that of others. Information about the BIP must also be included in other areas of the IEP. Best practices are to include the information in the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), adaptations, and behavioral goals. Behavioral goals should be developed and reflect the target and replacement behaviors in the BIP. If behavioral goals are already created, they should be reviewed to determine if they address the behaviors in the BIP.

Is it important that the BIP be implemented as indicated on the IEP?

It is not enough merely to have documented that the BIP was designed. If school-based teams do not implement the intervention and supports and do not have evidence indicating that they have done so, they are guilty of failing to provide a "free and appropriate public education" (FAPE). FAPE is one of the cornerstones of IDEA and stresses that education must be individualized to meet the unique needs and challenges of the student with a disability.

What about changes in placement? Is a BIP needed before a change of placement occurs?

Before a district wishes to move a student to a more restrictive setting, BIPs that have been revised and monitored are important elements that should support the district's decision.

Safety Plans

If the student's behavior is severe enough to cause harm to themselves or others, a safety plan must be written to address a severe and/or dangerous situation. It will be noted in the BIP where the safety plan can be found and how team members will be trained. The team is still required to implement proactive and positive interventions to continue to teach the student alternate skills. A safety plan is only appropriate if less intrusive or restrictive interventions have been unsuccessful.

The team should spell out the conditions under which a safety plan should be used. This plan should also include the exact procedures that participating team members should implement if these conditions occur. Examples of safety procedures include, but are not limited to: redirecting the student to an alternate activity, clearing other students from the area, ensuring a safe environment (moving furniture or possibly dangerous items), blocking attempts of aggression, requesting additional assistance from designated support staff, creating a safe space between students and others (proximity and position), and/or using an individualized de-escalation strategy for the student.

Implementation and Support

Prior to the implementation of any BIP, the team should determine any training needs, material needs (schedules, prompts, reward systems), or environmental arrangements (seating plans, de-cluttering, removing distractions) that will be necessary before the BIP can be implemented.

Once the BIP is implemented, supports should be in place for both the student and the team members and staff implementing the plan. Both types of support are important for facilitating success and ensuring proper implementation.

Supporting the Student

Sometimes supports are necessary to help students use appropriate behavior. The student may benefit from support from the following sources:

- Peers: Provide academic or behavioral support through tutoring or conflict-resolution activities.
- Families: Provide copies of visual cues that help a student handle frustration during work completion or social interactions.

- Teachers and paraprofessionals: Provide both academic supports and curricular modification to address and decrease a student's need to avoid academically challenged situations.
- Related Services: provide the student with alternative ways to respond to any situation by working with a speech-language pathologist or help with student's sensory needs by working with an occupational therapist.
- In addition, a variety of adults and students in and around the school and community may contribute support.

Supporting the team members implementing the plan

Often, the responsibility of implementing a BIP falls on the shoulders of one person, typically the teacher. However, this can often lead to "burn out." The person often begins implementing consistently, but tires quickly, resulting in a failure to provide quality services. The implementation of a BIP should never be a one-man mission, but it should be a team process. Although it is typically the teacher implementing the strategies, the other team members can provide support in other ways such as creating materials or graphing data. When a BIP is not supported, it will often affect the implementation of the plan. When the implementation of the plan is poor, the interventions are less likely to produce a positive change in the student's behavior.

Monitoring Progress

Implementation Fidelity

Implementation fidelity involves determining if the interventions are being implemented as written. This will be easier if the team is very specific when writing the interventions and strategies and if the team documents the individuals responsible for implementing the interventions. If the student's behavioral data indicate "no improvement," determinations must be made to identify if the lack of progress is due to insufficient interventions or to lack of implementation fidelity. This will help determine if interventions should be revised or if training and supports need to increase.

Examples of fidelity procedures:

- "Self-check" or checklist to correspond with each component of an intervention
- Walkthroughs or observations
- Written scripts or lists that detail the responsibilities of each individual participating in implementing the plan
- Student reports about the strategies and intervention
- Review of intervention products (e.g., data collection sheets, completed token economy sheets, reward charts, behavioral contracts)

Behavior Data Collection

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention plan, the team must collect behavioral data to accurately measure changes to the target and replacement behaviors. By collecting and analyzing data on a systematic basis, the team will be able to clearly determine whether the program has produced, or is producing, the desired change in behavior. Decisions might then be made to continue or modify the intervention plan.

Data Collection and Summary Procedures

To provide valid and reliable information regarding a student's performance, data collection must be a continuous, ongoing process. If data is not collected accurately or reliably, the team may conclude that a procedure is working and continue it when in fact it is ineffective and should be modified. On the other hand, the team may also conclude that a procedure is not working and terminate it when in fact it was effective and should have continued to produce greater effects. It is recommended that data be collected frequently and consistently. In order to receive an accurate and reliable measure of the level of behavior, best practice suggests daily data collection on both the target and replacement behavior. In addition, data should be collected at least one or two times a week on a comparison peer to provide information about how the student compares to peer norms.

Target Behavior

The desired outcome for the target behavior must be a data-based goal that can be compared to baseline data. For example, if the baseline data indicated that Joshua hits others an average of ten times per day, a desired outcome/goal might be for Joshua to hit an average of two times per day or less. Even though the the ultimate goal is for the student to decrease the behavior to zero, we must set reasonable goals that still indicate significant progress.

Replacement Behavior

Baseline data is not required for the replacement behavior because, most likely, the replacement behavior is not occurring at all. Based on the difficulty of the behavior and the opportunity to demonstrate the behavior, the team must set a reasonable data-based goal for the replacement behavior. For example, if the replacement behavior is to walk away from an instigating peer, a reasonable goal may be that the replacement behavior occurs during four out of five (80%) of first daily opportunities.

IEP Goals

Behavioral goals should be developed in the IEP and reflect the target and replacement behaviors in the BIP. If the behavioral goals are already created in the IEP, they should be reviewed to determine if they address the behaviors in the BIP.

Determining Progress

Daily data must be collected and summarized to determine progress for both the replacement and inappropriate behaviors. The inappropriate behavior data should be graphed, and the team should evaluate the data to determine if progress has or has not been made during the review period for the target and replacement behavior. Progress can be described best by the following five levels:

1) Behavioral data do not indicate improvement. Revisions are needed.
    - There are negative changes in the behavior, or the behavior continues to stay at the same level with no progress.
    - Revisions may be needed if the interventions have been in place for a while and have been implemented with fidelity. It is likely that the current interventions are not effective and may need to be revised or replaced.
2) Behavioral data do not indicate improvement. More time is needed.
    - There are negative changes in the behavior, or the behavior continues to stay at the same level with no progress.
    - More time may be needed if the interventions have not been in place for a while or they have not been implemented with fidelity. It may be that the current interventions have not been effective because not enough time has passed or more training and support needs to occur to implement the interventions reliably.
3) Behavioral data indicate minimal improvement.
    - There are slight positive changes in the behavior, although not significant at this point.
    - The team may decide to continue with the current interventions or to make modifications as needed.
4) Behavioral data indicate improvement.
    - There are positive changes in the behavior.
    - The interventions and strategies appear to be effective at this point, so the team will most likely continue with the current plan.
5) Behavioral data meets desired outcome/goal.
    - The behavior meets or exceeds the desired outcome/goal identified in the BIP.
    - The team may choose to continue with the interventions to ensure that the behavior will be maintained over time.
    - The team may need to meet to set new goals and outcomes.
    - The team may choose to begin to fade out certain interventions or to include additional supports to ensure that the behavior generalizes to all settings and situations.
    - Over time, if the behavior maintains after fading interventions, the BIP may be discontinued. If the team is discontinuing the plan, there should be a team meeting to document the discontinuation.

Fading Interventions

Some interventions should be implemented indefinitely while others will eventually need to stop. For example, Ben is learning to use social problem-solving skills instead of getting into fights on the playground. He is learning to ask for adult support when he feels like he might get into a fight, and his team has decided that he can earn points for the class token economy when he seeks help appropriately rather than fighting. Knowing that he cannot get points for the rest of his life, the team has decided to use the technique of fading once Ben has reached the desired outcome/goal. Ben's teachers will gradually decrease the use of points or other tangible rewards when he asks for help instead of fighting. This could be done in several ways:

1. His teacher could increase the amount of time Ben has to remain "fight free" in order to receive a reward. For example, he may initially receive rewards daily, but as he reaches criterion, it could be increased to every other day, then once a week, and so on.
2. His teacher could award fewer points until he is receiving no points at all. For instance, Ben could initially earn 50 points per day for not fighting. This could be reduced to 40, then 30, and so on until he earns no points at all.

It is very important to note that the social reinforcement should continue and eventually replace the tangible rewards completely. If this process is gradual and Ben is helped to realize the advantages of using appropriate social problem solving, remaining "fight-free" will become intrinsically rewarding to him.

Important Questions to Consider when Making Decisions

The teams should consider the following outcomes when considering changes to the BIP:

- Have there been gains in new skills to enable the student to meet his or her needs in a socially acceptable manner?
- Have there been reductions in the student's problem behavior? Are these reductions satisfactory?
- If there has been little or no increase in new skills, what can be done to enhance acquisition?
- If there has been little or no decrease in problem behavior, are there sufficient increases in new skills? What can be done to better enable the student to decrease problem behavior?
- If there has been little positive development of new skills and/or decreases in problem behavior, has the team:
    - Implemented the support plan in a consistent manner?
    - Reevaluated the FBA hypothesis and BIP interventions and support strategies?

Possible Pitfalls to Effective BIPs

The process of using FBA and BIPs is complete only when the team produces positive behavioral changes in student performance. The best laid plans may be obstructed by any number of factors. Below are some possible pitfalls to an effective BIP. To ensure success, teams should avoid these pitfalls:

- Too vague a definition of the behavior(s) of concern and/or incomplete measurement/data collection regarding the behavior(s) and the interventions selected.
- Incorrect interpretation of the functional assessment data collected.
- Inappropriate intervention (e.g., too weak to deal with the complexity or magnitude of the behavior problem; not aligned with the assessment data).
- Inconsistent or incorrect application of one or more parts of the intervention plan and/or personnel lack skills and/or training to correctly implement the interventions.
- Failure to adequately monitor the implementation of the intervention plan or to adjust the intervention plan over time, as needed, based on on-going monitoring and evaluation, and to adequately evaluate the impact of the intervention plan.
- Inadequate system-wide support to avoid future episodes of the behavior problem (e.g., too many initiatives or competing priorities that may interfere with time and commitment needed to develop and implement (BIPs).
- The behavior is an issue of tolerance rather than being something that distracts the student or others (e.g., a specific minor behavior, such as doodling).
- Failure to consider environmental or psychological issues, cultural norms, family, or other situations outside the school that are impacting the student's behaviors.

Resources:

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Task Force. *Functional Behavior Assessments & Positive Behavioral Intervention Plans Guide.*