

General Information for School
Employees Conducting a

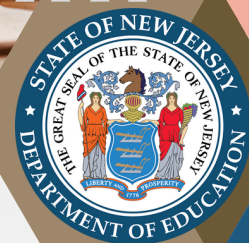
Functional Behavioral Assessment

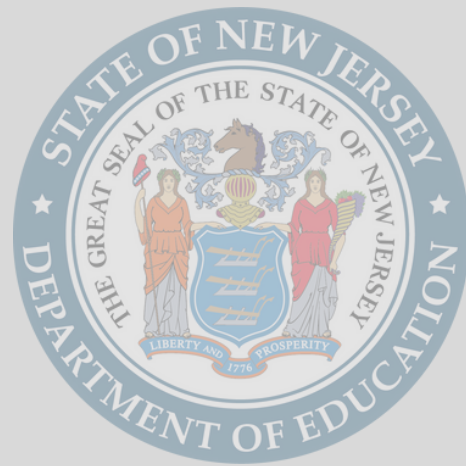
New Jersey Department of Education



20
23

Office of Special Education





Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D.
Acting Commissioner

Kathy Ehling
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services

Kimberly Murray
Director
Office of Special Education

New Jersey Department of Education

Office of Special Education

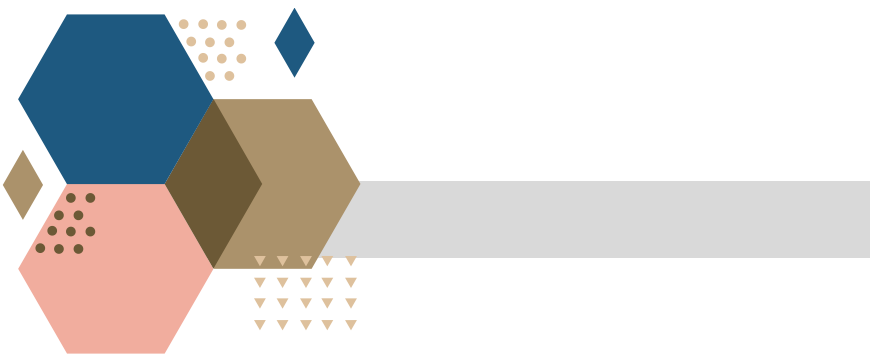
P.O. Box 500

Trenton, NJ 08625

2023

Table of Contents

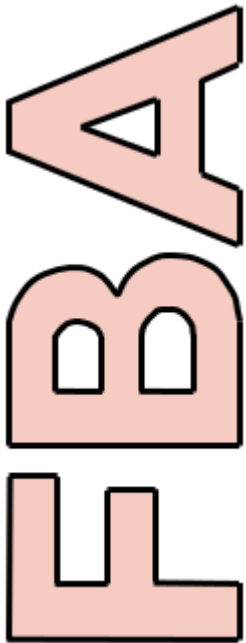
Background	<u>Page 4</u>
What is a Functional Behavioral Assessment?	<u>Page 4</u>
Research Supporting FBA's	<u>Page 6</u>
Who Implements and Conducts FBA's?	<u>Page 7</u>
Data-Based Decision Making	<u>Page 8</u>
Regulatory Requirements	<u>Page 9</u>
General Information for Conducting an FBA	<u>Page 11</u>
Steps to Conducting an FBA	<u>Page 12</u>
Additional Guidance and Information	<u>Page 13</u>
Conclusion	<u>Page 22</u>
Glossary	<u>Page 23</u>
Reference	<u>Page 27</u>
Acknowledgements and Contact Information	<u>Page 30</u>



Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) contains various specifications related to the academic performance and classroom conduct of students with disabilities. These legislative specifications significantly impact the roles and responsibilities of school personnel in New Jersey. The information contained in this document addresses best practices in conducting a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and, in turn, developing a behavior intervention plan (BIP) for students with a disability.

This document is for school employees. If the school employee represents themselves as a Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA®) or holds any certification from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB®), for example, Registered Behavior Technician (RBT®), Board Certified assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA®), or Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA®), this document is not intended for them. Those individuals certified by the BACB® are practitioners who have met the qualifications set forth by the BACB®. The information and guidance in this document are not identical to the practice or the qualifications set by the BACB®. This document is intended for school employees without BACB® licensure or certifications.

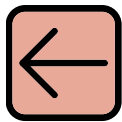


What is a Functional Behavioral Assessment?

Functional behavioral assessments (FBA) are a systematic process for identifying problem behaviors and developing interventions to improve or eliminate those behaviors. An FBA is a student-centered team process used in schools when behavior negatively impacts students' learning or their peers. The FBA is an evidence-based process rooted in the science of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). An FBA consists of information-gathering procedures through direct and indirect measures that result in a hypothesis about the function(s) that the behavior(s) is serving for the student.

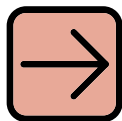
The process also identifies environmental conditions (e.g., antecedents - what happened before the behavior occurred) and consequences (e.g., what happened after the behavior occurred) that sustain the behavior. The information gathered in the FBA process is used to develop an effective and efficient behavior plan. Identifying the function of the behavior of concern guides the team by developing function-based strategies to address the behavior of concern. Intervention strategies may include prevention, remediation, or development of alternative behaviors (replacement behaviors). Function-based behavior plans effectively eliminate behaviors of concern, develop positive, proactive behaviors, and increase academic achievement (Sprague & Golly, 2005; Umbreit et al., 2007).

Functional behavioral assessment procedures typically include the following activities:



Indirect Assessment

- a. Review of records - including prior behavior intervention plans; and
- b. Interviews with people that are familiar to the student - family, teachers, and the student.



Direct Assessment

- a. Observations of the student's behavior in one or more settings and at various times; and,
- b. Data collection to determine functional purpose and baseline measures.

Within the context of why the FBA is being conducted, the assessment procedures are selected by the IEP team and based on the student's unique characteristics (e.g., English Language Learners, physical impairments, chronic health problems, etc.), in addition to the severity of the problem behavior. Because of the individualized nature of FBA's, the procedures for conducting an FBA will vary. For example, more severe and complex behaviors require that the assessment procedures are implemented correctly, and the procedures are thorough enough to capture the severity and complexity of the problem behavior.

Research demonstrates that there is a direct correlation between the severity of the behavioral issue and the resources needed and used correctly to accurately assess the problem behavior and determine the cause of the problem behavior. This means that the more severe and/or complex the behavioral issue is, the more in-depth the assessment will be, which may include both direct and indirect assessment measures.

Research Supporting FBA's

The purpose of an FBA is to identify why a student is engaging in problem behavior. FBAs in school settings have strong empirical support (Gable et al., 2014; Gage et al., 2010). Because an FBA results in the facilitation of the development of a BIP, the BIP then is able to focus on skill-building and reinforcement rather than reactive strategies and punishment. Thus, it is deemed appropriate for educational settings (McIntosh et al.,



2008). The FBA is a way for schools to identify relationships between the environment and the occurrence versus non-occurrence of a behavior (Dunlap et al., 1993). The usefulness of an FBA assumes that: (a) behavior serves a function for the student. That is, there is something that the student gets, (b) behavior is related to the context (setting) in which it occurs. For example, classroom, playground, hallway, cafeteria, etc., and (c) knowing the function of the behavior enables school personnel to develop an intervention plan aligned with the function of the behavior (e.g., Dunlap et al., 1991; Gable et al., 2014; Scott et al., 2010)

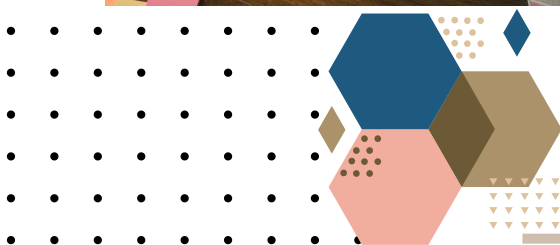


Thus, conducting an FBA is to identify events that predict and maintain student behavior (Steege & Watson, 2019).

In their review of the published research, Ervin et al. (2001) found that most FBA-based behavior interventions conducted in school settings created positive changes in student behavior. More recently, Goh and Bambara (2012) found similar findings. They determined that FBA-based behavior interventions are effective across grade levels for students with and without disabilities. Goh and Bambara, based on their review, asserted that an FBA could also play a key role in concluding the effectiveness of an intervention.



The logic behind FBAs is the notation that all student behavior is purposeful. It fulfills a need related to the context in which it occurs (e.g., in the classroom, cafeteria, hallway). As students learn a different behavior that is more effectively and efficiently capable of fulfilling the same need or producing the same outcome, they are likely to change their behavior. For this reason, identifying the motivation (i.e., function) for student behavior—what the student gets, or avoids through the behavior—is essential to finding ways to address behavior that disrupts the teaching and learning process.



Who Implements and Conducts an FBA?

Although there are no set descriptions of the specific skills needed by an individual to execute functional behavioral assessments and create behavioral intervention plans, the professional literature in peer-reviewed journals regarding education, special education, and student services disciplines provide some guidance.

Minimally, individuals should possess the following abilities:



Know how to employ a collaborative problem-solving approach and being able to do so.



Ability to choose and use assessment strategies to help build effective interventions.



Understand the origins of behavior problems and the functions that certain behaviors may serve.



Curriculum and teaching at the relevant developmental levels are known.

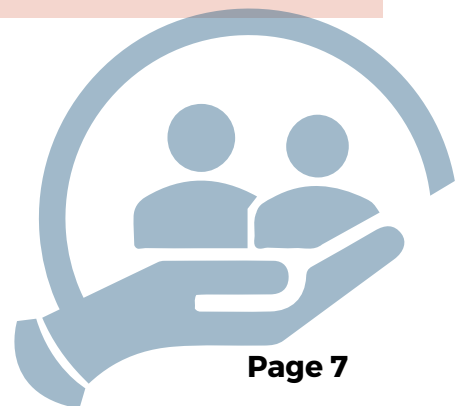


Ability to create and implement effective interventions based on behavior functions that have been identified.



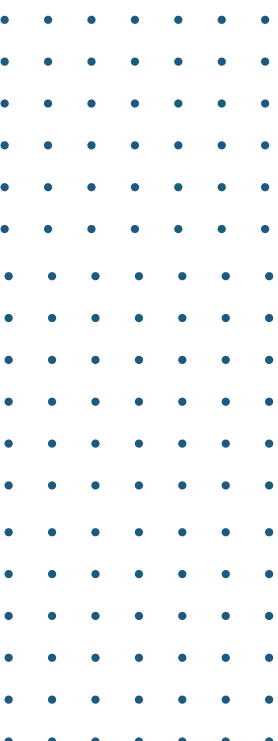
Knowledge and skills in developing objective, measurable intervention-monitoring systems that use direct measuring approaches are essential.

School psychologists, behavior specialists, guidance counselors, learning disability consultant teachers (LDTs), school social workers, special education teachers, and others with specific training in behavior analysis and therapy may be able to fill this function with various degrees of skill.



Data-Based Decision Making

Students' behavior must be assessed indirectly by a team of people who have observed the student under various settings and conditions. Indirect observations are usually collected via interviews, surveys, or questionnaires. The interviews/surveys and/or questionnaires aim to review variables affecting the behavior and then narrow the focus to those critical variables to the student.



Information should also be gathered by collecting data through direct observation of the behavior across settings and times, considering other environmental factors (e.g., other persons present, task demands, change in routines). The data collected during direct observations is determined by the information acquired during the FBA's interview section. A graphic representation of the data collected from the indirect and direct assessment results in the following:

This data is used to create a positive behavior support plan that involves changing environmental conditions (i.e., antecedents and consequences) while also teaching new, more suitable behaviors. Data is collected and examined during the baseline and intervention stages, and decisions are made based on data analyses. Data analysis should continue to drive ongoing adjustments to the positive behavior support plan.

1

Description

Creating a detailed, precise description of the challenging behavior.

2

Identification

Identification of environmental elements that influence behavior, such as antecedents and consequences.

3

Summary of Findings

Formulation of summary remarks describing the function(s) of the challenging behavior.

When must an FBA be Conducted?

Federal legislation includes provisions that address students' behavior that interfere with classroom instruction. The IDEA requires schools to address 'impeding' behavior using functional behavioral assessments (FBA), behavioral intervention planning (BIP), and positive academic and behavioral supports.

Neither the IDEA nor its regulations define an FBA or a BIP. However, the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has supplied the following description:

“An FBA focuses on identifying the function or purpose behind a child's behavior. Typically, the process involves looking closely at a wide range of child-specific factors (e.g., social, affective, environmental). Knowing why a child misbehaves is directly helpful to the IEP Team in developing a BIP that will reduce or eliminate the misbehavior. (Questions and Answers on Discipline Procedures, US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS; USED, 2009).

OSEP has since clarified that "an FBA may include both observation and formal assessments." (Letter to Glenna Gallo, personal communication, April 2, 2013, U.S. Department of Education, OSEP).

As noted above, an FBA and BIP may be completed when necessary to address a student's behavioral issues. However, regulations require that an FBA be completed when the IEP team determines that (a) behavior is a manifestation of a disability and the student does not have a behavioral intervention plan, or (b) sooner, if appropriate, if the student's behavior is interfering with the student's or others' learning.



When must an FBA be Conducted?

For students who have been subjected to disciplinary actions where the conduct was considered to be a manifestation of the student's disability, school districts are required to perform FBAs and implement BIPs. School divisions may conduct FBAs and implement BIPs for students who have been removed for long periods of time for behavior determined not to be a manifestation as deemed appropriate by the student's individual education program (IEP) team.

Based on Section 1415(k)(1)(B) of IDEA and on 34 CFR 300.519, if disciplinary action is being considered for a student with a disability that would result in a change of placement defined as

"(a) the removal is for more than 10 consecutive schools days, or

(b) the child is subjected to a series of removals that constitute a pattern because they cumulate to more than 10 school days in a school year",

one of the following must be completed by the IEP team either before or not later than 10 days after taking the disciplinary action:

Development of a plan for conducting an FBA and development of interim interventions.

Review of the student's BIP that has already been developed and modification of the plan as necessary to address the student's behavior.

While neither New Jersey nor federal regulations address other uses of FBAs and BIPs, both regulations require that, as a part of IEP development, when a student's behavior impedes their learning or that of others, the team must consider using positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address the behavior. A BIP is, by regulatory definition, one means of addressing interfering behaviors.

There are various ways to determine if an FBA is required. For a basic FBA, the decision protocol established by the National Professional Development Center on ASD (2015) can be used. See Figure 1. However, if a more complex FBA (e.g., [John Hopkins University Decision Making Protocol](#)) is required, an in-depth decision-making protocol form would be helpful.

Basic FBA Methods	may be used with students who:	Exhibit high frequency behaviors that are NOT dangerous (e.g. talking out, running, not following directions, not completing work)
	Have received interventions that did not improve behavior	
	Exhibit behaviors that occur in 1 to 2 school routines (e.g., specific classrooms/ subjects, lunch, recess)	
	are not sufficient for use with students who:	Exhibits behaviors in 3 or more school routines
	Exhibits dangerous behaviors (e.g. hitting, throwing objects, property destruction)	

Missouri Schoolwide Positive Support Workbook (2015)

Regulatory Requirements

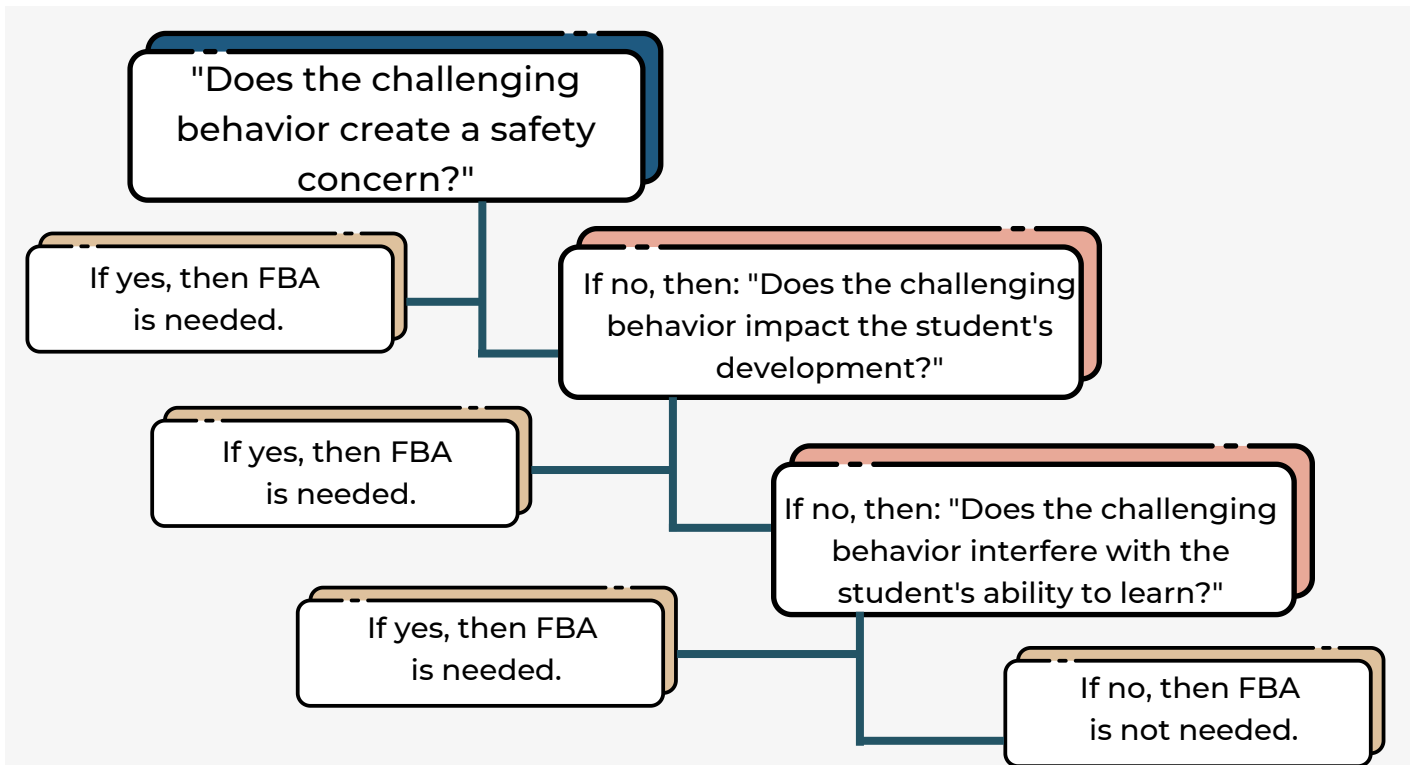
General Information for Conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment

To determine the function (or cause) behind inappropriate student behavior, an FBA employs a variety of indirect (e.g., interviews, questionnaires) and direct (e.g., antecedent-behavior-consequence form, event recording, interval recording) data gathering procedures. The goal is to identify the significant variables connected with the behavior (e.g., those variables that most directly and predictably influence the occurrence versus the non-occurrence of the behavior; Gable et al., 2014). Conducting an FBA is to identify a behavior that serves the same function (or reason) as the inappropriate behavior but is more socially acceptable or appropriate. School personnel can develop an intervention plan aligned with the function of the behavior that is designed to reduce or eliminate behavior that impedes learning while also promoting a new, appropriate replacement behavior by carefully examining the problem behavior, the context in which it occurs, and identifying the reason(s) why a student misbehaves. An adapted description of a 3-step FBA process developed by Gable and his colleagues (Gable et al., 1998) is outlined below.



Decision Tree for FBA

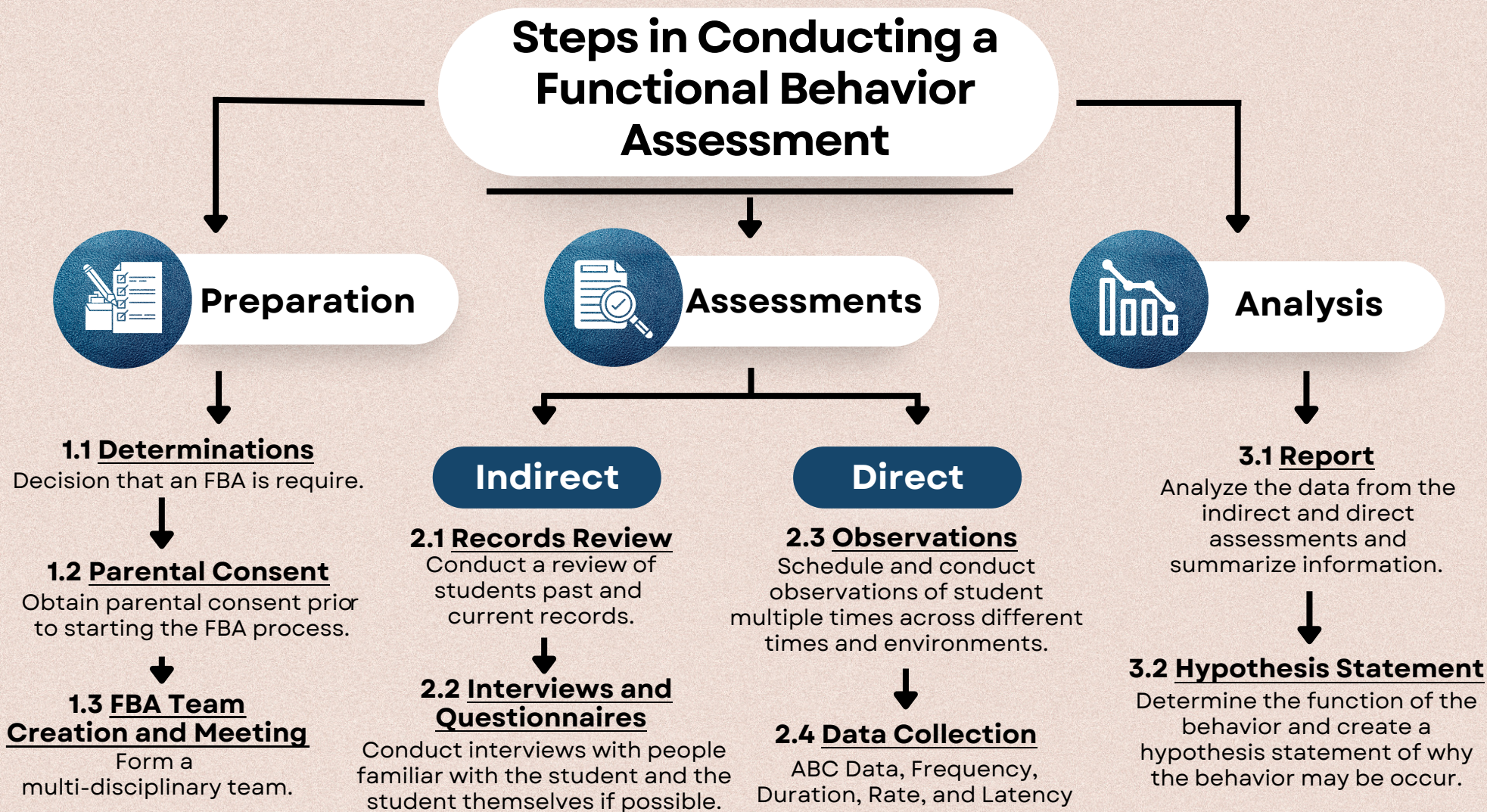
Figure 1. National Professional Development Center on ASD (2015)



Interactive Map

Steps in Conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment

Note: These instruments and forms are included to illustrate the range of available forms; the inclusion of these documents should not be construed as an official endorsement of these forms by the New Jersey Department of Education.





Additional Guiding Information



Establish and Verify the Seriousness of the Behavior

Educators can manage many behavioral difficulties in the classroom by consistently applying basic classroom management (tier 1; [NJ PBSIS](#)) strategies proven to be effective, including clear rules and expectations, pre-correcting, giving behavior-specific feedback, and keeping students on task (e.g., Kerr & Nelson, 2010).

However, when it is apparent that the problem behavior cannot be managed using tier 1 classroom management practices and, because of the seriousness of the problem, school personnel should consider initiating an FBA.



Assemble the Team, Initiate Meeting and Obtain Parental Consent

Once it has been verified that the problem behavior is unresponsive to tier 1 strategies and/or for any of the other federal regulations, a team is assembled. This team consists of child study team members (CST), classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and/or other staff familiar with the student and the family.

An initial meeting is required prior to beginning the FBA process. Along with obtaining written parental consent, the initial meeting will define the problem behavior, delegate which team member is responsible for each component of the FBA, and a timeline for completion.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) through its technical assistance meetings that parental consent is not required if the IEP team limits the FBA procedures to a review of existing data, such as positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports that were included in the current or previous IEP and other existing documents.



Define the Problem Behavior(s)

The teacher and the IEP team should explicitly define the problem behavior prior to beginning data collection. Overly broad or ambiguous descriptions of the behavior, such as "Amanda has a poor attitude or Sally is aggressive," make it difficult to measure the behavior accurately, determine an appropriate intervention, or evaluate its subsequent success. The terms 'poor attitude' and 'aggressive' are summary labels and have different meanings to each team member and can look very different from one person to the next. Definitions of behavior should be stated in measurable, observable, and objective terms. After preliminary information is gathered, the team can sharpen the definition and even include multiple examples of the behavior (e.g., when asked a question by the teacher, Amanda disrupts instruction—refuses to respond to teacher requests, argues with the teacher, swears at classmates, and fails to comply with teacher requests). For Sally, the definition may read like this: Sally repeatedly bites or scratches her arm during reading instruction with the paraprofessional; this behavior results in physical harm (e.g., bite or scratch marks or bruises and sometimes breaks the skin). As you noticed, the summary labels of 'poor attitude' and 'aggressive' have been replaced with observable actions of the students.



Collect Data via Indirect and Direct Assessment Measures

A basic FBA involves discussion among those teachers and other staff personnel with direct knowledge of the student and the context of the problem behavior. The team discusses if there were any past observations and/or assessments and the results of those observations and/or assessments and concentrating on if there were any predictable relationships between the environmental events and the student's problem behavior.

Together, the team decides on a plan of intervention. A basic FBA uses questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and rating scales. A more formal FBA is warranted when a simplified basic approach has not produced a successful plan (Scott, 2013).



Team members observe the student and the situation in which the problem behavior occurs during a more formal FBA to discover the exact nature of the problems. The team generally collects information (data) on the times, conditions, and individuals present when problem behavior is most likely to occur versus when it may be least likely to occur; the events or conditions that typically occur before and after the behavior; and other relevant information regarding the behavior. An analysis of this data may point to times and places where further observations should be made to capture the variables that most predict appropriate versus inappropriate student behavior. For example, data collection may reveal that problem behavior occurs at a higher rate during transition times.

Based on this initial analysis of the data, teams can focus their data collection and observations when transitions occur throughout the day (e.g., morning transition into school, the transition between the classroom and other environments within the school, transitions home, etc.). It is often useful to observe situations in which the student performs successfully and to compare classroom conditions that evoke appropriate versus inappropriate behavior.

Teams cannot always observe the events that proceed or maintain student misbehavior (Nichols, 2000). Accordingly, teams may need to collect indirect and direct observation data to identify the likely reasons behind the misbehavior. Reviewing the student's cumulative records, such as health, medical, and educational records, or conducting organized interviews with teachers and other school employees are examples of indirect methods (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria workers).

Teams create a whole picture of the student throughout the day and past educational settings.

In every FBA, different school staff members gather several types of data over a number of days because relying on just one source and type of data will not give a whole picture, especially if the problem behavior serves multiple functions across various contexts (e.g., environments, subjects, etc.). For situations that are neither too common nor too severe, it may be appropriate to rely on indirect data gathering, which is strengthened when several team members (e.g., teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists, etc.) gather the same indirect data and all the data shows a similar pattern of the problem behavior (Gable et al., 2014).

Brief observations (aka direct measurement) combined with indirect measurements may be used to gather data on low- frequency behaviors. Low-frequency behaviors are behaviors that are not occurring on a regular basis; however, when they do occur, they present significant challenges for the student. Because of the low frequency, direct observations may not be sufficient enough to capture the behavior; therefore, using indirect measures, such as the Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff (FACTS; March et al., 2000), student interviews (e.g., Kern et al., 1994; Reed et al., 1997; Worthington & Gargiul, 1998), or teacher questionnaire (e.g., Problem Behavior Questionnaire; Lewis, et al., 1994) may be needed. The likelihood that the results are accurate increases with the degree of agreement between indirect measures and direct measures (e.g., observations; Gable et al., 2004).



Types of Data Collection Tools

Listed on this resource page are different data collection tools that a team might consider using. Note that it is common to use multiple tools from each category in conducting and analyzing student behavioral problems. One tool is not always sufficient to gather the information needed to understand the problem behavior.

Checklist for Teachers and Staff (FACTS)

Questionnaires
(e.g., Functional Assessment Interview: Parent)

Student Interviews
(e.g. Student Functional Assessment and Reinforcement)

Teacher Interview Questionnaires
(e.g. Problem Behavior Questionnaire)

Records Review Form
(e.g., Records Review Summary)

Indirect Tools

Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) Data Collection

Observations Forms
(e.g., Classroom Observation Forms)

Frequency Data Collection

Data Collection

Duration Data Collection

Direct Tools

Note: These instruments and forms are included to illustrate the range of available forms; the inclusion of these documents should **not** be construed as an official endorsement of these forms by the New Jersey Department of Education.



Analyze Data and Information Collected on the Problem Behavior

The next step is to analyze the data once you've gathered enough information. The team looks for a pattern of events that predicts when and under what circumstances the behavior is most likely to occur versus least likely to occur, what is maintaining the behavior, and the likely function of the behavior. Scott et al. (2010) recommended a straight-forward approach to data analysis that consists of the following questions:

- When and where does the behavior occur? When and where does it not occur?
- What's happening – before the behavior? After the behavior?
- What is the purpose of the behavior - why does the student do it?



Developing a Working Hypothesis about the Function

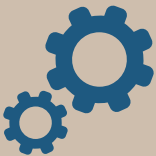


The IEP team then formulates a hypothesis (or motive) statement about the likely function of the problem behavior. The statement relates to what the data suggests the student gains, avoids, gets out of, or maybe communicates by engaging in a particular behavior. While there may be several reasons in some cases, it is usually best to focus on the core function of the aberrant behavior (Alter et al., 2008), that is, the explanation that accounts for the most change or variability in student behavior (Gable et al., 2014). The hypothesis statement can predict the circumstances in which the behavior is most likely to occur, the behavior itself, the student's strengths, and the possible reason(s) for the behavior.

For example, removal from instruction may have been exactly what Amanda wanted to happen. When presented with a challenging task, the behavior escalates, and Amanda is removed from class, which allows her to escape from the task demands of the teacher. On the other hand, Sally may bite and scratch to escape from reading instruction and to express frustration with the task demands of the paraprofessional.

There are three basic ways to categorize why a behavior is occurring:

Function



This is "why" the student is displaying a behavior. It is usually to get something desired or to escape/avoid something undesired or painful.

Example: student makes jokes and is always talking to peers. This can be a function of getting peer attention **and/or** escaping schoolwork. Schoolwork is aversive to the student

Skill Deficit



A behavioral or academic skill that the student does not know how to do.

Example: student, in a disagreement, hits another student because he doesn't know other strategies for conflict resolution.

In cases of skill deficit, the BIP needs to describe how the skill will be taught and how the student will be supported while learning it.

Performance Deficit



*A behavioral or academic skill the student **does** know but does not consistently do it.*

Example: student is chronically late for classes she doesn't "like".

In cases of performance deficit, the BIP may include strategies to increase motivation.



Team Meeting

Once the data and information have been analyzed, a team meeting, including the parents/guardians, occurs. During this meeting, the team reviews the data, presents the hypothesized function, and discusses strategies for addressing the problem behavior to develop the BIP. Parental involvement and understanding of the information at this stage are essential.

Develop and Implement an Intervention Plan

After collecting data and information to identify the function of the behavior, the team must develop or revise an existing behavioral intervention plan (BIP). The results of the FBA are used to develop and implement a BIP. This plan also considers the student's strengths and the concerns of the school team and parents. The BIP focuses on positive supports and strategies. It should also include strategies to eliminate the problem behavior, one or more strategies to promote a replacement behavior, and any supplementary aids or supports required to address the behavior. It is also important to consider any staff support or skill training necessary to implement the proposed plan.

There will be more than one intervention for most problem situations that can result in a positive outcome. In some cases, the team might wish to present a list of possible interventions (NJ PBSIS, [Tier 2](#), and [Tier 3](#)) and have the student rank order them from least to most acceptable. Regardless of the actual intervention, it is important to ensure that the student has frequent opportunities to engage in and reinforce the replacement behavior. The family must realize the importance of its role in providing support and reinforcing the new replacement behavior. As a rule, the student should be given at least twice as many opportunities to be reinforced for engaging in the replacement behavior; otherwise, no behavior change is expected. For example, if students physically hit others twice a day on average, we should aim to give them positive reinforcement for the replacement behavior (e.g., keeping hands to themselves or not hitting) four times per day. This might mean giving positive reinforcement every hour that they do not exhibit the behavior.

When analyzing behavior, it's important to remember that students come from a variety of backgrounds; and that standards and expectations differ from one student to the next, as well as their individual social interaction patterns (Townsend, 2000). Thus, in developing BIP's, IEP teams should consider gender, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences among students, and family input. It is essential to remember that each BIP is individualized to the student and that no one intervention is appropriate for all students who demonstrate the same problem behavior.

The willingness and ability of the student to engage in acceptable behavior without continual external help is critical to the success of an intervention plan. As a result, teams must include strategies to encourage the continuation and generalization of appropriate student behavior. One strategy is to teach peers and other adults in the school and/or community and home to prompt and reinforce the positive behavior of classmates; another is to instruct the student in the use of self-management, self-talk, and/or self-cueing engage in the replacement behavior.

The team must make decisions on the most appropriate intervention based on function. The team may need to adapt the intervention's complexity based on the severity of the problem and 'bundle' numerous interventions (e.g., changes in instruction and reinforcement).



Develop and Implement an Intervention Plan

Teams typically develop an intervention plan that includes one or more of the following strategies or procedures:

1

Student Learning Behavior Goals

Instructional goals designed to support behaviors that improve classroom performance. For students with IEPs, these goals are addressed in the IEP.

2

Replacement Behavior Goals

Goals to increase "desired" behaviors that the student exhibits instead of the target behaviors. (Example: Student will gain adult attention appropriately by raising hand and asking for attention from an adult.)

3

Educative Strategies

Methods to teach replacement behaviors or skills that can achieve the same function as the target behavior. List examples of how the student will be taught the appropriate student learning behaviors (e.g., social stories, modeling and role-playing, specific self-regulation strategies, specific problem-solving strategies). Educative strategies may include direct instruction, differentiated instruction, student support plans, ongoing review of classroom rules and expectations, social skills training, conflict resolution, and self-monitoring strategies.

4

Preventative Strategies

Interventions that will address the antecedent(s) so that the event(s) will no longer trigger the target behavior(s). Preventative strategies include promoting an instructional match with the student's current academic skills, such as curriculum modifications and adaptations, and/or providing positive supports, visual supports, schedule changes, environmental modifications, anticipating predictable, challenging behaviors, and intercepting them before they occur.

5

Reinforcement Plan

Strategies to Strengthen Positive and/or Replacement Behaviors

Strategies that are used to encourage positive behaviors.

6

Responsive Strategies

Ways to manage the target behavior, including how the target behaviors should be handled when they occur to not reinforce the behaviors and prevent any potential injury. Responsive strategies include strengthening the desired behavior by increasing positive reinforcements and identifying meaningful consequences for students and reduction-oriented strategies such as redirection, planned ignoring, planned breaks, and "time away" areas within the classroom.

7

Who, What, Where, and When for Each Strategy

Individuals who are responsible for implementing the specific components of the plan, including information regarding the strategy, when it will be taught/practiced/reviewed, and where this will occur.



Evaluate the Fidelity of the Plan Implementation

Fidelity of implementation refers to how an intervention is delivered in the way it was intended to be delivered (Lane et al., 2006). The precision and consistency with which the intervention plan is implemented must be monitored by the IEP team. Otherwise, the team will be unable to distinguish between an ineffective intervention and a possibly effective but badly implemented intervention. To monitor implementation, the team must write the various components of the intervention plan, along with the individuals responsible for its implementation. Then, for each individual responsible for carrying out the intervention plan, a checklist of steps or a script—a full explanation of the intervention and its implementation—can be created (Lane et al., 2006).

The form should be filled out on a regular basis.

Modify the Intervention Plan as Needed

An intervention plan should be reviewed on a frequent basis and amended anytime the IEP team believes that a change is required. Modifications to the intervention plan may be necessary for a variety of reasons, including:

- The problem behavior is no longer displayed by the student.
- The circumstance has changed, and the plan no longer addresses the needs of the student.
- During a manifestation determination review, the IEP team concludes that the behavior intervention tactics are incompatible with the student's IEP or placement.
- The original plan is not producing the changes expected in the student's behavior.
- The student changes learning environments.

FBA's

FBA's are intensive team assessments that are student-centered and involve a collaborative effort. To change the behavior of students who have behavioral challenges in positive and significant ways, school personnel need to better understand the relationship between environmental events and student behavior (Steege & Watson, 2019). By conducting an FBA and developing a BIP that is aligned with the function of the behavior, IEP teams can draw upon a growing number of evidence-based practices to provide academic and/or behavioral supports that increase the likelihood students will attain more positive outcomes (Gable et al., 2014). With adequate in-service training and administrative and technical assistances, research has shown that IEP teams can resolve a wide range of problem behaviors within classrooms and schools.

Functional Behavior Assessment Glossary

This resource provides access to a list of commonly used terms and acronyms in special education and throughout the process of conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment.

A

Antecedent: A stimulus such as a verbal cue, physical prompt, person or event that precedes a behavior.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): The science of studying the observable patterns of behavior and environmental interactions. The techniques allow the observer to have clear knowledge of how specific interventions or techniques may be affecting certain behaviors.

Assessment: The process of gathering information to make a decision about what actions should be taken.

B

Baseline: The condition or phase in which there is no intervention. The baseline data are then compared to data collected during an intervention to determine whether behavior change has occurred.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A complete description of the assessment and interventions conducted and/or planned for a student's problem behavior. The plan contains specific information regarding the functional assessment conducted, the hypothesis statement stating the possible function of problem behavior, an explicit description of the antecedent and consequent interventions implemented or planned, and the new skills that will be taught to replace the problem behavior.

C

Challenging Behaviors: Behavior that interfere with learning of themselves or others or is a risk of harm to self or others (e.g., aggression, self-injury, property destruction etc.).

Collaboration: Two or more individuals or agencies working to accomplish common goals.

Contingency: The relationship that develops between a behavior and a consequence. If a consequence is presented after a behavior occurs, the consequence is said to be contingent on the behavior.

Consequence: The stimulus or event that occurs immediately following a behavior.

Correlational: The co-variation of two or more variables that indicate the likelihood of a common relationship or interaction between those variables.

Functional Behavior Assessment Glossary

This resource provides access to a list of commonly used terms and acronyms in special education and throughout the process of conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment.

D

Direct Observation: Observing the individual to clearly identify when problem behaviors occur, what happens right before a problem behavior, what the problem behavior looks like, and how people respond to the occurrence of problem behavior. Direct observation data are used to develop a hypothesis about why a problem behavior occurs and to confirm that a hypothesis is correct.

Duration: A dimension of behavior, specifically the time from the onset of the behavior to the offset of the behavior. Duration is how long an instance of the behavior lasts.

E

Environmental Setting: The physical events, routines, activities, and individuals surrounding an individual. Environmental events are specific situations that exist within a setting during a given time period.

F

Facilitators: People who serve as leaders in a person-centered planning process, making sure that the goals of the process are met.

Frequency: A dimension of behavior, specifically, the number of times a behavior occurs in a specific time period. The number of responses (frequency) divided by the time equals the rate of the behavior.

Functional Assessment: Also known as Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). The process for collecting information in order to develop a hypothesis regarding the variables that maintain and predict problem behavior. Functional behavioral assessment strategies include indirect assessment methods, direct observation, and functional analysis.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): A tool that is used to gather information to create an environment that makes problem behavior unnecessary and to develop interventions so that new skills can be taught to replace problem behavior with socially appropriate ones. Functional behavioral assessment, also called functional assessment, is a critical part of identifying why a student exhibits challenging behaviors.

Functional Relationship: A relationship between a behavior and an environmental event (or events) in which the occurrence of the behavior is controlled by the occurrence of the environmental event. A functional relationship is demonstrated in a research design by manipulating the environmental event and showing that the behavior changes if and only if the environmental event occurs.

Functional Behavior Assessment Glossary

This resource provides access to a list of commonly used terms and acronyms in special education and throughout the process of conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment.

G

Guardian: A person who is given legal authority by a state court to serve as another individual's legal spokesperson including making medical, legal, and other decisions.

H

Hypothesis: An end product or summary of the functional assessment. A hypothesis statement provides information about environmental events that may increase the likelihood of problem behavior, the environmental events that precede problem behavior, and the probable function of the problem behavior.

Hypothesis Statement: A statement regarding what may be maintaining a problem behavior. It contains information regarding the possible setting events related to the problem behavior, the antecedents that trigger problem behavior, a description of the problem behavior itself, and the consequences that may be maintaining the problem behavior.

I

Independent Variable: The arrangement of environmental events that are manipulated, often an intervention of some kind.

Indirect Assessment: A method of collecting information about the possible functions that a problem behavior may serve that can be used in hypothesis development. These methods rely on information via checklists, questionnaires, or interviews from informants or caregivers that know the student well.

Intensity: A dimension of behavior, specifically, the physical force or magnitude of the behavior. Often measured with a recording instrument or on a rating scale.

Interdisciplinary Team: A group of people from different fields and those who are close to the student with whom the team supports. The interdisciplinary team meets to problem solve and develop action plans for improving the student's behavior and appropriate skills. Examples of possible team members include the student, parents or other family members, teachers, therapists, job coaches, speech therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, nursing personnel, etc.

Interval Recording: A type of behavior recording procedure in which the observation period is divided into several consecutive time intervals and the behavior is recorded as occurring or not occurring in each of the intervals.

Interventions: Often known as the independent variable. These are efforts to change a particular set of circumstances such as changing a student's behavior.

Functional Behavior Assessment Glossary

This resource provides access to a list of commonly used terms and acronyms in special education and throughout the process of conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment.

L

Latency: A dimension of behavior, specifically the time from some object/event to the onset of the behavior. For example, the time the teacher states "start work" to the time the student begins their work.

O

Outcomes: The results of an assessment or intervention.

P

Partial Interval Recording: A method of collecting data that requires the observer to record simply whether the behavior was present or absent at any time during the pre-determined interval.

Problem Behavior: Behavior such as aggression, self-injury, property destruction, etc. that impedes the learning of the student or others.

Product Recording: A type of behavior recording in which the outcome or permanent product of the behavior is recorded as an indication of the occurrence of the behavior.

R

Rate: The frequency of the behavior divided by the time of the observation period (e.g., responses per minute).

Real-Time Recording Instruments: A recording method in which you record the exact time of each onset and offset of the behavior in the observations period. Results in frequency and duration of the behavior.

Reinforcement: The process in which a consequence immediately following a behavior increases the future probability of that behavior.

T

Time Sampling Recording: A behavior recording procedure in which the observation period is divided into intervals, and the behavior is recorded during a part of each interval. In time sample recording, the observation intervals are discontinuous.

Topography: The physical or visible characteristics of a behavior; the way a behavior looks when observed.


W

Whole-Interval Recording: A method of data collection that requires that the behavior be present throughout the entire interval if it is to be scored as an occurrence.



The References


20
23

- 
- Alter, P., Conroy, M., Mancil, G. & Haydon, T. (2008). A comparison of functional behavioral assessment methods with young children: Descriptive methods and functional analysis. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 17*, 200-219.
- Dunlap, G., Kern-Dunlap, L., Clarke, S., & Robbins, G. (1991). Functional assessment, curricular revisions, and severe behavior problems. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 24*, 387-397.
- Dunlap, G., Kern, L., de Perczel, M., Clarke, S., Wilson, D., Childs, K., & Falk, D. (1993). Functional analysis of classroom variables for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 18*, 275-291.
- Ervin, R., Radford, P., Bertsch, K., Piper, A., Ehrhardt, K., & Poling, A. (2001). A descriptive analysis and critique of the empirical literature on school-based functional assessment. *School Psychology Review, 30*, 193-210.
- Gable, R., Park, K., & Scott, T. (2014). Functional behavioral assessment and students at risk for or with emotional disabilities: Current issues and considerations. *Education and Treatment of Children, 42*, 106-119.
- Gable, R., Quinn, M., Rutherford, R., & Howell, K. (1998). Addressing problem behavior in schools: Use of functional assessments and behavior intervention plans. *Preventing School Failure, 42*, 106-119.
- Goh, A., & Bambara, L. (2010). Individualized positive behavior support in school settings: A meta- analysis. *Remedial and Special Education, 33*, 271-286.
- Gage, N., & Lewis, T. (2010). Structural analysis in the class. *Beyond Behavior, 19*, 3-11.
- Gage, N., Lewis, T., & Adamson, R. (2010). An examination of 35 years of behavioral disorders: What, how and who has been published. *Behavioral Disorders, 35*, 280-293.
- Hershfeldt, P., Rosenberg, M., & Bradshaw, C. (2010). Function-based thinking: A systematic way of thinking about the function and the role it plays in changing student behavior problems. *Beyond Behavior, 19*, 12-21.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, P.L. 108-446.
- Kern, L., Dunlap, G., & Clarke, S., & Childs, K. (1994). Student-assisted functional assessment interview. *Diagnostic, 19*, 29-39.



The References

20
23

- 
- Kerr, M. M., & Nelson, C. M. (2010). *Strategies for addressing behavior problems in the classroom (6th ed.)*. New York, NY: Macmillan
- Lane, K., Bocian, MacMillan, D., & Gresham, F.(2004). Treatment integrity: An essential but often forgotten component of school-based interventions. *Preventing School Failure, 38*(3), 36-43.
- Lewis, T., Scott, T., & Sugai, G. (1994). The Problem Behavior Questionnaire: A teacher-based instrument to develop functional hypotheses of problem behavior in general education classrooms. *Diagnostique, 19*, 103-115.
- March, R., Lewis-Palmer, T., Brown, D., Crone, D., Todd, A.W.,& Carr, E. (2000). *Functional assessment checklist for teachers and staff (FACTS)*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, Education and Community Services.
- McIntosh, K., Brown,J. A., & Borgmeier, C. J. (2008).Validity of functional behavior assessment within a response to intervention framework: Evidence, recommended practice, and future directions. *Assessment for Effective Intervention, 34*, 6-14.
- Nichols, P. (2000). The role of cognition and affect in a functional behavioral analysis. *Exceptional Children, 66*, 393-402.
- Reed, H., Thomas, E., Sprague,J., & Horner, R. (1997). Student-guided functional assessment interview: An analysis of student and teacher agreement. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 7*, 33-49.
- Scott, T. M. (2013,July). *Function-based thinking and a simplified approach to FBA*. Paper presented at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.
- Scott, T. M., Alter, P. J., & McQuillan, K. (2010). Functional behavior assessment in classroom settings: Scaling down to scale up. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 46*, 87-94.
- Scott, T. M., & Kamps, D. M. (2007). The future of functional behavioral assessment in school settings. *Behavioral Disorders, 32*, 146-157
- Sprague, J., & Golly, A. (2005). *Best behavior: Building positive behavior supports in schools*. Longmont, CA: Sopris West Educational Services.



The References

20
23



Steege, M. W., & Watson, T. S. (2019). *Conducting school-based functional behavioral assessments. (3rd ed.)*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Sugai, G., Lewis-Palmer, T., & Hagan-Burke, S. (1999). Overview of the functional behavioral assessment process. *Exceptionality, 8*, 149-160.

Townsend, B. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsion. *Exceptional Children, 66*, 381-291.

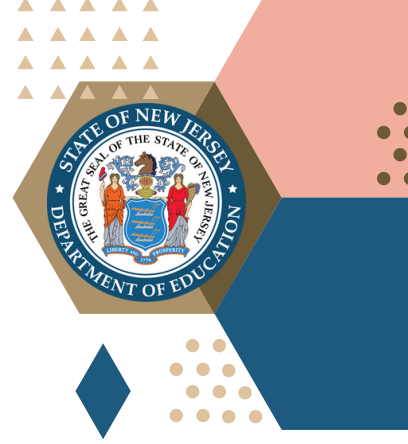
Umbreit, J., Liaupsin, C., & Gresham, F. (2007). A treatment integrity analysis of function-based intervention. *Education and Treatment of Children, 29*, 549-571.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). (2009, June). Questions and answers on discipline procedures. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CQaCorner%2C7%2C>

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). (2013, April 2). Letter to Glenna Gallo. U. S. Department of Education, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/acc-12-017845r-ut-gallo-fba-4- 2-13.pdf>

Worthington, L.A. & Gargiulo. (1999). *Student functional assessment interview and reinforcement survey*. Found in Positive behavior supports: A strategic planning model for conducting functional assessments, writing IEPs and behavior management plans, and conducting manifestation determinations.

Acknowledgements



The preparation of this guide represents an effort by the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

The New Jersey Department of Education offers its appreciation to the following individuals who provided their input and review.

Dr. Damian Petino

Assistant Director - Office of Special Education

Dr. Amanda Philp

Autism Specialist - Office of Special Education

Mrs. Alexandra Pensiero

Federal Reporting & Engagement Specialist - Office of Special Education

Ms. Erice Reid

Inclusion Specialist - Office of Special Education

Dr. Mary Haspel

TES - Office of Special Education

We thank you for your continued support.

Contact Us



Office of Special Education
New Jersey Department of Education
www.nj.gov/education/specialed



(609) 376-9060



oseinfo@doe.nj.gov