Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP)

What is a functional behavioral assessment?

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a process for gathering information about behaviors of concern, whether the behaviors are academic, social or emotional. Academic-related behaviors could be not completing homework assignments or class work. Behaviors that are social or emotional in nature may be hitting others, getting up from the desk frequently, calling others' names, or refusing to follow classroom or school norms and expectations. FBAs are appropriate for use at all three tiers of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), but are often used in Tier 3 with students requiring individualized behavioral support. At Tiers 1 and 2, FBAs can be used to determine the function of behaviors that may be occurring school-wide or among a certain population of students. From there, school teams can work to clarify school-wide expectations, teach appropriate replacement behaviors and provide opportunities for students to generalize skills. FBAs have also been shown to be an effective with a broad range of populations and in a variety of educational settings.

FBAs are rooted in the theory that behavior is functional (meaning it has a purpose), predictable and changeable[1]. Understanding the function or purpose underlying a student's behavior can help a school team develop a plan to teach the child more appropriate replacement behaviors for a setting or provide support for the development of more desirable behaviors.

FBAs should provide the team with the following information:
- what the challenging behavior is in observable and measurable terms, and where, when, and with whom the behavior occurs;
- what the antecedents are (what typically occurs before the behavior);
- what consequences reinforce or maintain the behavior (what typically occurs after the behavior);
- what interventions and strategies have been tried previously and their effects; and
- what the setting events are (what makes the problem behavior worse or more likely to occur).

Resources

[CDE Behavior Tools Wiki](#)
[CDE Behavior Intervention Plan Form (English)](#)
[CDE Behavior Intervention Plan Form (Spanish)](#)
[Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports](#)
[Intervention Central](#)

There are three types of functional behavior assessments. The three types of FBAs each have different goals and require more or less time to be completed:

- Brief functional behavior assessment
    - Goal: to define the challenging behavior
    - Process typically only involves a short interview with teachers, staff or parents who have dealt with or witnessed the challenging behavior previously.
- Full functional behavior assessment
    - Most commonly used
    - Goal: to build an understanding of when, how, and why a problem behavior occurs, includes a summary statement describing the function of the behavior
    - Process typically involves short and extended interviews, a record review, and direct observations of the challenging behavior.
- Functional analysis
    - Goal: to test the hypothesis generated by a full functional behavioral assessment so that an effective intervention can be implemented
    - Combines direction observations and systematic experimental manipulations of the environment (antecedents and consequences) to confirm an understanding of the function of a specific behavior.

Who is responsible for completing a functional behavior assessment?

All members of the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) team, or the behavior support or multidisciplinary team, are responsible for insuring that the functional assessment is completed. Since a variety of instruments and data collection tools may be used, persons collecting the information will vary; however, a person trained in the interpretation of each instrument and/or tool is essential. Those persons who are typically involved in this information gathering process include the child's general education teacher, a special education teacher, a school psychologist, a school social worker and/or a school counselor, in addition to administrators and parents/guardians and other family members.

How is the information gathered?

An assessment plan should be designed that designates specific information to be gathered and assigns specific persons to obtain that information. Techniques for gathering the information fall into two categories:

- Indirect, including reviewing the student's education records, interviews, and rating scales or questionnaires completed with and by students, teachers and parents.
- Systematic Direct Observations in settings where the challenging behavior is occurring using an Antecedent- Behavior-Consequence (ABC) observation structure.

For example, if the student is hitting other students and the behavior occurs primarily at recess and during other unstructured times, observations should occur during recess, cafeteria time, and other times when the student is not following a designated schedule. Teachers who monitor these times could be interviewed to gain information on what typically happens before and after the student hits another student.

Reviewing a student's education records can help identify setting events and determine factors that may be influencing the occurrence of the inappropriate behavior such as any negative events in the student's education

history. Additionally, disciplinary records from previous years can help the school team determine if there is a long or short history of inappropriate behaviors and what interventions were tried in the past to change those behaviors.

Is there a law that requires that a functional behavioral assessment be done?

The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 included language requiring schools to conduct an FBA when a child with a disability has been removed from his/her current educational placement for more than 10 days. However, for students
at-risk for suspension or those suspended for less than 10 days, school districts should complete a functional assessment
and develop a behavior support plan to prevent future suspensions.

Additionally, Colorado HB 12-1345 states that a student cannot be removed from teacher's classroom for the remainder of a term, which is typically allowed after three instances of disruptive behavior, unless a behavior support plan has been developed and implemented (C.R.S. 22-32-109.1 (2)(B)). A behavior support plan is recommended to be developed and implemented after the first instance of removal for disruptive behavior, but must be developed after the second instance of disruptive behavior that results in a student being removed from the classroom. Parents and guardians are required to be notified throughout this process and should be included in the development of a behavior support plan.

What is a behavior intervention plan?

After the assessment is conducted, the team of professionals at a child's school will develop a behavior intervention support plan. A behavior intervention plan contains strategies and supports employed by the school team to assist a student with challenging behavior, including: changing systems, altering environments, teaching skills, and appreciating positive behavior. The plan should also include how to explicitly teach and reinforce behaviors that are intended to replace the challenging behavior, as well as how and when the student will be reinforced for using their replacement behaviors. The strategies that support a child in learning new behaviors are incorporated into a behavior intervention plan (BIP). These interventions may include:

- environmental modifications such as allowing a student to sit in a specific place in her/his classes or providing a quiet place, free of distractions for a student to complete class work;
- academic accommodations such as shortened assignments, taking tests orally, or working in small groups for instruction;
- adaptation of curriculum materials such as using supplemental materials, providing sample tests, teaching pre- requisite skills, or teaching study skills;
- social skills instruction designed to teach a student more appropriate behaviors may also be determined by the team to be a helpful strategy for improving behavior; and/or
- individual or group support/counseling to improve the student's ability to function social or emotionally at school.

What is the purpose of a behavior intervention plan?

The goal of a behavior intervention plan is to make a student's challenging behavior irrelevant, inefficient, and ineffective[1]. A BIP is written to address behavior concerns that interfere with a student's ability to gain reasonable benefit from the learning environment. This is accomplished through teaching and supporting the development of more appropriate behaviors. The essential components of a BIP are as follows:

- a detailed description of the behavior;
- summary statement describing the function of the behavior;
- interventions used and their results;
- behavioral goals;
- plan for teaching and supporting the new behavior, including a crisis intervention plan (if needed);
- description of success (criteria and consequences);
- how fidelity of the plan will be measured; and
- follow-up activities.

What role do the student's parents play in the FBA and BIP process?

Parents are important members of the team that is conducting a FBA and developing a BIP. Parents can provide information to the school team about where, when, and with whom the behaviors occur. A parent may also know which intervention strategies have been tried before (at home or at school) and which strategies have worked.

Parents should be included as a partner in the development of the BIP. Information and/or training should be provided to parents so the strategies and techniques used at school can also be used at home and in the community. Parents can continue to teach and reinforce the use of more appropriate behaviors in these settings. Communication between school personnel and parents should occur on a frequent basis about modifications or changes in the plan to
encourage success.

References:
CDE- FBA/BIP Workgroup, Exceptional Student Services Unit and Office of Learning Supports
[1]Crone, D., Hawken, L., & Horner, R. (2015). Building positive behavior support systems in schools: Functional behavioral assessment (2nd ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.