

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

The phrase “Functional Behavioral Assessment” describes both a process of gathering information and the document summarizing the information gathered. The purpose of conducting a FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT is to collect detailed information about your student’s problem behaviors at school. When all the needed information has been collected, the IEP team meets to discuss, analyze and summarize the information in a document called a FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT. That document is then used to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) that describes interventions and strategies that will be used to address your student’s inappropriate behaviors. A FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT should always be done before developing the Behavior Intervention Plan.

A Functional Behavior Assessment should be conducted when any of the following occurs:

- The student’s behavior is interfering with her learning
- The student is removed from her placement for more than 10 days in a school year, and the student has no Behavior Intervention Plan
- The student is placed in an Interim Alternative Educational Setting because of behavior related to drugs, weapons, or dangerous behavior (“serious bodily injury”) and the student has no Behavior Intervention Plan

Before a Functional Behavioral Assessment is conducted, it is essential for the IEP team to identify the specific behaviors of concern. The team must define the behaviors using concrete terms so the behaviors will be easy to measure. For instance, a statement such as, “Johnny manipulates his teachers”, is not concrete enough for the behavior to be easily measured; a more useful description of the behavior could be, “Johnny often asks to leave class early.”

Once the IEP team has defined the behavior of concerns, the next step is for the team to gather information about the behaviors. The questions that the team should be trying to answer include the following:

- How often does the behavior occur?
- What happens immediately before the behavior? (possible triggers/antecedents)
- What benefit does the student gain from the behavior?
- Is the behavior happening because the student lacks a particular skill?
- When is the behavior most and least likely to happen? (consider environment factors such as time of day, types of activities, seating arrangements, and so on)

For the Functional Behavior Assessment to be complete, the problem behaviors must be assessed at varying times of day and in varying types of situations. Methods that can be used to collect information include interviewing the student and parents, reviewing existing records, interviewing support providers, and observing the student at school.

After gathering information about the behaviors, the IEP team meets to review and analyze the information. The goal is to identify patterns related to the behavior. The team then composes the Functional Behavior Assessment document, which describes the behaviors of concern, the likely purposes of the behaviors, and any environmental factors that appear to affect the behaviors. The IEP team will then use the Functional Behavior Assessment to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan.

For additional information contact:

Disability Right New Mexico (DRNM)
(505) 256-3100 or 1-800-432-4682

Families-Advocacy, Support, and Access Project (Families-ASAP)
(505) 292-7414 or 1-888-292-7415

Parents Reaching Out (PRO)
(505) 247-0192 or 1-800-524-5176

Educating Parents of Indian Children with Special Needs (EPICS)
(505) 767-6630 or 1-888-499-2070

New Mexico Family Network
(505) 265-0432 or 1-800- 273-7232

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