

Many students with disabilities exhibit inappropriate behaviors that interfere with learning. Some behaviors can cause harm to the student or others. There are many reasons why a student might exhibit problem behaviors. All behaviors, even inappropriate ones, serve a purpose. Some behaviors are a part of their disability. Some are behaviors they cannot control. And other behaviors can be changed or replaced with more acceptable ones. Functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans can be used by families and professionals to understand the reason for the behavior and to manage or change the behaviors.

### **What is a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)?**

A functional behavior assessment involves gathering information in order to determine the cause or function of a behavior. In most circumstances a FBA should be conducted before developing a behavior intervention plan. There are many different tools that could be used for a FBA. Tools should be selected on a case-by-case basis for each individual student. The information that is collected in a FBA is used to help understand why and in what conditions problem behaviors occur. The information will help the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team develop a behavior intervention plan.

### **What Should a FBA Include?**

- A definition of the behavior that you want to change: What is the student doing that is interfering with learning or causing harm to the student or others? What is the behavior we want to change? This behavior must be observable and measurable.
- Measurement of the behavior: When does it happen? Where does it happen? How often does it happen? How long does the behavior last? Who is present when it happens? What happens before the behavior is exhibited (antecedent)? What happens after the behavior is exhibited (consequence)? Does it happen only at certain times of the day?
- Data collection and assessment: This can include parent, student and teacher interviews whenever possible. It may include record reviews. It could include completing checklists or questionnaires. It may include observations of the student in different settings.
- A summary (hypothesis): This means that the team uses the information collected to try to understand the function or purpose of the behavior (why the student is exhibiting the behavior).

### **What is a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)?**

A behavior intervention plan includes positive interventions, strategies and supports to address the target behavior. The BIP is created by a team of school staff and the parents. The BIP is used to teach or encourage new behavior. A BIP should address the problem behaviors identified in the FBA. If the team is presented with enough data and knowledge about the causes and circumstance of your child's behavior, a FBA may not have to be completed. The BIP should be modified as the student's behavior changes. Use this [hyperlink to view a sample behavior intervention plan](#).

### **What Should a BIP Include?**

- Information from the FBA: This includes the target behavior, the data that was collected, and the best ideas about the purpose or function of the behavior.
- Positive strategies to avoid or prevent the behavior: These can include changes in routines, changes in classroom instruction, opportunities for choice, etc.
- New skills to replace the target behavior: These can include communication skills, social skills, self-management skills, choice-making, etc.
- Ways to teach the new behaviors: These may include modeling, practice, social stories, prompts, direct instruction, etc.
- Consequences: These include what happens if the target behavior is exhibited and also what happens when the desired behavior is exhibited.
- Dates when the plan will be implemented. Names of people who will implement the plan.
- Materials, training and support for persons implementing the plan.
- Collecting and reviewing data.
- Timelines for team meetings, reviewing the data and monitoring the plan.

### Additional Facts You Should Know:

- ✓ FBAs and BIPs may be developed for any behaviors that affect learning or violate a student code of conduct.
- ✓ A FBA can be requested by a parent or a school at any time, or as part of an evaluation or reevaluation process.
- ✓ Parental consent must be obtained before a FBA is done for the purpose of evaluation. The results of the FBA should be reviewed at an IEP meeting to help with IEP planning.
- ✓ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows parents to request an independent educational evaluation. When a FBA is for the purpose of evaluation and the parents disagree with the school's FBA, they may request an independent educational evaluation.
- ✓ If a student's behavior results in a disciplinary action that keeps him or her out of school for more than ten (10) days during any school year, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team must conduct an FBA and develop a BIP. If a BIP already exists, the team must review the BIP and revise it, if needed, to address the new behavior.
- ✓ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not provide specific guidelines regarding the procedures for conducting a FBA or developing a BIP. These procedures for implementation are left up to each district. The Georgia DOE does provide districts with guidance for implementing FBAs and BIPs. Use this hyperlink to learn more. [Special Education Rules Implementation Manual](#).

### Tips for Families:

- ✓ If your child often has frequent office referrals or suspensions and a FBA has not been done, or not done in at least three years, ask for a new one. Put your request in writing to the school.
- ✓ You may ask for a FBA at any time if your child's problem behaviors are becoming worse, or the team does not know why the problem behaviors are occurring.
- ✓ Review your child's disciplinary records or behavior data and talk to your child's teacher and other school staff about his or her behavior.
- ✓ Schools may use teachers and other staff to conduct FBA's. You can ask about the training, educational background and experience of the individual(s) conducting the FBA. And remember, if you disagree with the school's FBA, conducted for the purpose of evaluation you may request an independent evaluation by a professional outside of the school system.
- ✓ Make suggestions about how to define the target behavior on the FBA. Remember, the target behavior must be one that can be observed. Good examples of observable behavior are hitting, biting, running away, or putting one's head down on a desk. Behaviors such as disrespectful, lazy, disruptive are not observable and should not be identified as target behaviors.
- ✓ If your child's BIP only focuses on the problem or target behavior, ask the team to include objectives to increase new behaviors. A good BIP will have at least one objective to decrease the target behavior and one objective to increase the new behavior.
- ✓ Your child's BIP should include skills that he or she needs to work on and ways that teachers and staff will help. If the BIP only includes skills for your child to work on, ask how the staff will help your child learn those new skills.
- ✓ Make suggestions about strategies that might work with your child and could be included in the BIP.
- ✓ Do not agree to include emergency strategies such as calling the School Resource Officer or using physical restraint in the BIP. Your child's BIP needs to focus on reducing problem behaviors, teaching new behaviors and increasing your child's learning opportunities at school.

### Where to go for more information:

**Parent to Parent of Georgia**  
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038  
[www.p2pga.org](http://www.p2pga.org)

**Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Supports**  
404- 656-3963 or 800-311-3627 and ask to be transferred to Special Education  
[http://www.gadoe.org/ci\\_exceptional.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx)

Additional resources: Contact the **Special Education Director** for your school system.