Guidance for Conducting a Functional Behavioral Assessment & Behavioral Intervention Plan

This document describes the purposes and components of a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and a behavioral intervention plan (BIP). These procedures, coupled with a well-defined school-wide PBIS system, are integral parts of an effective behavioral support system for a student whose behavior interferes with their learning or the learning of others in an educational setting.

A **functional behavioral assessment** (FBA) is a problem-solving strategy utilized by educators, parents, and agency personnel to design an effective plan for helping students learn and choose more appropriate behaviors. These interventions assist the student by specifically identifying these behaviors, as well as the overall context within which they occur. The outcome of an FBA is a behavioral intervention plan that defines the team's strategy for addressing the behaviors, including timelines, role responsibilities, and consequence methods.

Documentation regarding intervention strategies that have already been tried, as well as the positive or negative results they achieved, is very important for ensuring a quality FBA and BIP.

If the team determines that a student's behavior(s) is interfering with his or her learning, or that of other students, a **behavioral intervention plan** (BIP) must be developed. This plan consists of the positive intervention strategies and supports selected by the team to address the student's inappropriate behaviors. As with an FBA, however, a BIP is not only used to react to disciplinary situations, but may be created for any student demonstrating challenging behaviors. This is a tool that is often very effective in reducing the need for more extreme disciplinary measures, such as suspension or expulsion.

Conducting an FBA and creating a BIP, may be fairly simple or quite complicated depending on the specific concerns of the student being addressed. Each of these procedures is described below in more detail.

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT

**Definition**

As noted above, an FBA is a procedure for gathering information that can be used to help identify the function of a student's behavior. The specific components of an FBA are described next.

**Components and Processes**

A functional behavioral assessment requires educators to be observant and to consider the world from the student's perspective. The components and steps in the process are the following:

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| 1. | **Define the problem:** Ask yourself, "What is the behavior, or behaviors of most concern?" If there are several behaviors identified, choose one or two on which to focus.  *Outcome:* A clear written description of the problem behavior. |
| 2. | **Gather information**: Consider medical, physical, social concerns, eating, diet, sleep routines, substance abuse history, and stressful events. Ask the student and parents for information related to the behavior selected.  *Outcome:* Specific biological, physiological, or environmental factors that have a causal effect on the behavior may surface. |
| 3. | **Identify events, times, and situations:** Answer key questions that consider when the behavior usually occurs and usually does not occur, such as, "Who is there? What is going on at the time? When does it happen?"  *Outcome:* The ability to predict when the problem behaviors will and will not occur across the full range of typical daily routines. |
| 4. | **Identify the consequences that maintain the behavior:** This includes information about what happens after the behavior that increases the likelihood the student will perform the behavior again in the same circumstances.  *Outcome:* Determination of what function each problem behavior appears to serve for the student. |
| 5. | **Development of a theory:** This would include one or more summary statements as to why the student uses the problem behavior. What is the functional intent of the student's behavior?  *Outcome:* One or more hypotheses that describe specific behaviors, the situations in which they occur, and the outcomes maintaining the behavior in that situation. |

Adapted from O'Neill, Horner, Albin, Sprague, Storey, Newton. (1997). Functional *Assessment and Program Development for Problem Behavior*: Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishers.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLAN

**Definition**

A behavioral intervention plan (BIP), guided by information gained from an FBA, is the overall strategy the team has designed to increase or reduce a definable set or pattern of behaviors demonstrated by a student. This strategy may include the following:

* Teaching preventative and de-escalation techniques to staff, parents, and peers,
* Teaching crisis-response techniques,
* Teaching the student appropriate replacement behaviors,
* Providing positive and negative consequences to the student

**Components of a Behavioral Intervention Plan**

Although each BIP will differ according to the needs demonstrated by different students, some common aspects of most BIPs include the following:

* Defining the target behavior in measurable terms,
* Changing some of the who, what, when, and where information derived from the FBA,
* Teaching the student new ways to meet his or her needs (i.e. identifying another behavior or skill that will be taught so the student can accomplish his or her purpose in a more acceptable way,
* Teaching others, including staff members and peers, how to react to the student’s behavior in a way that will reinforce appropriate behavior,
* Teaching how to manage a crisis situation, if appropriate,
* Creating an appropriate data collection system that measures progress,

A sample form for recording the BIP is provided. However, districts are not required to use this form.

**Prior to the Implementation of the Behavior Intervention Plan**

Prior to implementing a behavior intervention plan, all staff dealing with the student must be trained to execute the plan consistently. A time line for collecting necessary materials, making environmental arrangements, training staff, and starting the plan also needs to be established. Specific tasks should be clearly assigned to all the individuals involved. Once this is accomplished, the plan is ready to implement.

**Following the Implementation of the Behavioral Intervention Plan**

After the BIP has been implemented for at least two weeks, the team should meet and review the impact the plan is having. Part of this review should consider how successfully the BIP has been implemented and followed by staff members, as well as how successful the BIP has been in preventing or changing the target problem behavior. If the procedures and steps that have been taken are determined ineffective, alternative interventions may be selected. If interventions are repeatedly found to be ineffective, the team may wish to consider further evaluation or a different placement.