SPECIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE

Functional Behavioral Assessments

Using the results of the FBA

Once an FBA has been completed, the IEP team uses the results (the data collected and the identified function and root cause) along with other relevant information, to plan effective interventions and support. IDEA requires the IEP team to consider all relevant information when creating or changing the IEP and the conclusions of the FBA will be used to inform adult practices, strategies and interventions that are to be monitored to better support the student.

As the IEP team moves from data collection and analysis to IEP development, review, or revision, the team should continue to focus on the role of adults who address and respond to student behavior that interferes with a student's learning or the learning of others. When thinking about "changing student behavior" the focus should be on how all adults are teaching and supporting the student, not just about changing the behavior of the student. The team should focus first and foremost on adapting the response or approach of those who interact with the student, as well as changes to the student's environment. In addition, adults should continue to examine and address their own biases and beliefs about student behavior, race, ability, socioeconomic status, and other factors that influence their interactions and responses to students. Additional learning can be found in the Inclusive Strategies to Address Behavioral Needs of Students with IEPs.

The data collected through the FBA process is used to inform the services and supports in the student's IEP. After the team has developed a hypothesis of the function of behavior and root cause, the team develops individualized interventions specifically designed to address the function and root cause, taking into consideration the student's strengths, needs, and unique circumstances. As the IEP team makes IEP service decisions, teams should avoid relying on one-size-fits-all interventions or interventions that the team may be most familiar with but that have not been matched to individual student needs.

Using the Results of an FBA to Develop or Revise the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the primary vehicle for providing a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is through an appropriately developed IEP. IDEA requires IEP teams to consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports to address behaviors that interfere with a student's learning or the learning of others. This applies to all students, aged 3-21, regardless of the student's category of disability.

> ***Tip: Addressing Bias When Identifying Services in the IEP***
> *Similar to addressing bias throughout the FBA process, it is equally important to address bias when developing a student's IEP. IEP teams can apply the same culturally responsive problem-solving approach to acknowledge and address biases as they consider services that are best matched to the function and root cause of behavior identified through the FBA. The IEP team should ensure IEP service decisions are based on the data from the FBA, and select evidence-based, culturally specific, or adapted interventions and supports that directly address the function and root cause of the behavior.*
>
> For additional information, see the Culturally Responsive Problem Solving Guide: An Evidence-based Guide for Team Practice.

High quality data from a culturally responsive FBA allows the IEP team to accurately describe the settings and conditions in which a student does and does not engage in behaviors that interfere with learning. The FBA data is used to inform the present level of academic achievement and functional performance, help identify disability-related needs, develop measurable annual goals, and align the supplementary aids and services, specially designed instruction, related services, and program modification and supports for school personnel required to ensure the student receives a free and appropriate public education.

> ***Tip: Think about the Purpose of Each IEP Service and How It May Benefit the Student***
> *One way to think about the four types of IEP services is to think about how each type of service benefits the student. The IEP team uses FBA information including the hypotheses of the function and root cause of the behavior to develop a plan to match student needs. This may include providing environmental supports (i.e., supplementary aids and services), teaching a skill or skills (i.e., specially designed instruction or related services), or creating a system of support so adults working with the student can best meet the student's needs (i.e., program modifications or supports for school personnel).*

Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance and Special Factors

The relevant FBA data and the hypothesis about the function and root cause of the behavior should be incorporated into the IEP as part of the statement of present level of academic achievement and functional performance. The IEP team can use the data from the FBA to describe situations or settings in which the behavior is most and least likely to occur, and to describe adult behavior and ecological factors that may positively or negatively influence the behavior. The description of the behavior that interferes with learning should be stated in clear, specific, and observable terms and can be documented in the special factors section of the IEP and as Effects of Disability. The identified root causes will help inform the Disability-Related Needs

Student Strengths and Concerns of the Family

An FBA is likely to yield data and information related to student strengths and interests, concerns of the family and student, and effects of the student's disability. This information can guide the development of goals, services and supports. A comprehensive FBA should result in information and data on activities, relationships and environments that the student is most interested in and where the student feels most successful. Information from the family can offer details on strategies and supports that work best for their child to address any challenges they face.

Effects of Disability and Disability-Related Needs

The target behaviors identified by the team during the FBA process can be documented as additional effects of the student's disability. The analysis of function and root cause completed during the FBA process may also identify new or different disability-related needs that must be addressed through the IEP.

Goals

FBA data can be used to develop annual IEP goals. Each IEP goal must address at least one of a student's disability-related needs. Results of the FBA can be used to establish a baseline, determine the desired level of attainment, and project the rate of improvement required to reach that level of attainment. Results of the FBA can also be used to establish procedures for measuring progress toward meeting the annual goal. Each IEP goal created based on the results of an FBA should focus on developing, improving, increasing, or generalizing a skill.

> ***Tip: Ensure That IEP Goals Focus on What Students Will Do and Learn***
> *IEP goals should focus on skill growth or generalization. IEP goals should not focus on reducing or eliminating a behavior (e.g., the student will demonstrate zero*

*instances of leaving the classroom without permission) as this goal does not include the skill that the student **should** demonstrate (e.g., requesting a break). IEP goals should have a clear connection to the skills a student is learning during their specially designed instruction or related services.*

Program Summary

After present levels are discussed and documented, effects of disability and disability related needs are identified, special factors are considered, and IEP goals are developed, the IEP team aligns services to directly address the disability-related needs and IEP goals. Special education services may include supplementary aids and services, specially designed instruction, related services, and program modifications and supports for school personnel. The IEP services are specifically designed to help the student access, engage, and make progress in age- or grade-level curriculum, instruction, environments, and activities.

Tip: Including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

The IDEA requires the use of positive interventions, supports, and strategies to address behaviors that interfere with the student's learning or the learning of others. Through the FBA, the IEP team identified the function and root cause of those behaviors. The IEP team should think beyond traditional behavioral strategies based on rewards that typically address only the function of the behavior. Including positive proactive interventions, instruction that teaches new skills, and providing supports that contribute to a sense of safety and belonging in the school community to address root causes are more likely to create sustained behavior change.

Positive behavioral interventions and supports also include environmental changes and changes to adult behavior to reduce or prevent the occurrence of any behavior that interferes with the student's learning or the learning of others. These types of environmental changes are typically included under the supplementary aids and services section of a student's IEP.

Supplementary Aids and Services

Supplementary aids and services are aids, services, and other supports provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings to enable students with IEPs to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. 34 CFR 300.42.

Using the data gathered from the FBA, including input from the student and family, and the hypothesized function and root cause, the IEP team should consider supplementary aids and services that include but are not limited to:

- **Academics**: working in small groups, extended timelines, flexible seating, using a word processing device, text-to-speech or other Accessible Educational Materials matched to the unique needs of the student.
- **Cognitive Learning:** graphic organizers, mnemonic devices, or tools to help with sequencing or problem solving.
- **Communication**: simplify directions, visual schedules, social scripts, or augmentative and alternative communication.
- **Independence and Self Determination:** self-monitoring systems, social narratives, opportunities to volunteer and help, and video modeling.
- **Physical and Health**: physical devices that assist with vision, hearing, balance, endurance, alertness, attention, auditory and visual processing, orientation and mobility, and other areas of physical health.
- **Social and Emotional Learning**: regulation supports, breaks, peer supports, structured time to engage with preferred peers, adults, or activities, or other social, emotional, or cognitive behavioral supports.

The above supports do not come close to the vast array of potential evidence-based accommodations that have been shown to improve student outcomes when matched to an individual student's needs. Any of the supports described above may meet one or more academic or functional skill needs. In addition, evidence-based supports such as the use of positive reinforcement can be used along with any and all of the examples mentioned. Finally, any support described as a supplementary aid and service may also require specially designed instruction or related services to help teach the student the skills needed to access the support or to generalize its use across educational environments, such as how and when to utilize a break or how and when to use a graphic organizer.

Specially Designed Instruction

The results of an FBA may point to a need for specially designed instruction when the underlying root cause of a student's behavior is related to missing or undeveloped skills in one or more of the six areas of academic and functional skill. Information from the FBA can help the IEP team individualize teaching strategies that directly address the root cause of the behavior, rather than just manage symptoms.

Related Services

The FBA may identify a root cause requiring specialized intervention from a related service provider. Additionally, if the root cause is being addressed with specially designed instruction, related services may be required in order for the student to benefit from that instruction and make progress toward IEP goals. There are some evidence-based interventions that require the specialized knowledge and skills of related service providers, including but not limited to:

occupational and physical therapy, counseling services, school psychological services, and speech and language therapy. Refer to DPI Bulletin 10.07: Describing Special Education, Related Services, Supplementary Aids and Services, and Program Modifications and Supports for additional information.

Program Modifications and Supports for School Personnel

Addressing the root causes of a student's behavior may require school personnel to participate in professional learning, consultation, or other support. This is to ensure the people responsible for implementing any of the student's services have the knowledge and skills to do so. For example, IEP team members may need training in trauma sensitive practices, using assistive technology, or implementing an evidence-based intervention. There may also need to be ongoing coaching or collaboration to support fidelity of the implementation of an evidence-based intervention and for progress monitoring.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Using the BIP to Clarify the Services Identified in the IEP Program Summary

IEP teams often decide to use a behavior intervention plan (BIP) to further clarify or provide more detail about the services found in the program summary of a student's IEP. The IEP program summary typically does not provide specific details such as how supplementary aids and services, specially designed instruction, related services, or program modifications and support for school personnel are provided. The IEP program summary is only required to state the type of service and clearly identify the frequency, duration, amount, and location of each IEP service.

> ***Tip: Remember the Circumstances Under Which a BIP is Required***
> *A BIP is required if a manifestation determination occurred and the conduct was found to be a manifestation of the student's disability. In this circumstance, the IEP team must conduct an FBA, unless one had been conducted before the behavioral incident, and must develop and implement a BIP to address the student's behavioral needs.*

A BIP can provide specific strategies, actions, and responses adults should implement to meet the unique behavioral needs of a student that go beyond the frequency, duration, amount, or location of special education services. The BIP is a part of a student's IEP that provides additional details, further clarity, or expands upon what is documented in the program summary.

For example, the program summary may include a supplementary aid and service to provide the student with a specific reinforcement when the student

demonstrates a specific skill, e.g., asking for help, in all locations in the school. The BIP may include additional clarity that describes what is and is not used to provide the reinforcement, how often the reinforcement inventory will be updated, where the items used for reinforcement are located, or specific directions for adults on how to provide verbal, gestural, or tangible reinforcement. Similar to other sections of a student's IEP, if updates are required to a BIP to change any details or improve clarity, either an IEP meeting is held or, if the parent and LEA agree not to convene the IEP team to make the changes, the I-10 sample IEP form can be used with the parent to communicate and agree on changes to a BIP without an IEP team meeting.

To ensure a clear connection between the IEP program summary and the BIP, the BIP should reference the connection to a service in the program summary when applicable. **If any new IEP services are identified in a BIP, the IEP team should also ensure that the frequency, duration, amount, and location of the service is documented and clear to everyone on the IEP team.**

> ***TIP: Engage Students in Developing a BIP***
> *Similar to engaging students in the IEP decision-making process, students should also be involved in the development of their BIP. It is important to make use of the student's thoughts and feelings as well as their perceptions of which people, places, and things are supportive to them and which are not.*

Ensuring the BIP Focuses on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

The IDEA requires that positive interventions, supports, and strategies address any behavior that interferes with a student's learning or the learning of others. Therefore, the BIP should include:

- positive proactive interventions or instruction that teach new skills,
- supports that provide a sense of safety and belonging in the school community, and
- environmental changes, changes to adult behavior, or other positive interventions to reduce or prevent the occurrence of any behavior that interferes with the student's learning or the learning of others.

Additional details that could be included in the BIP include but are not limited to:

1. **Environmental and Setting Events**: Behavior is related to the context, environment, and adult and peer behavior in which it occurs. The BIP should identify the settings where the student is most successful in order to replicate that success. The BIP should also identify which environmental factors may contribute

to the behavior that interferes with the student's learning or the learning of others to determine needed environmental strategies or changes.

The BIP can direct the adults responsible for the student's educational environment to eliminate or neutralize situations or events that increase the likelihood of behaviors that interfere with learning. The IEP team decides how to modify the environment, including adult behavior, to better support the student and prevent the occurrence of the behavior that interferes with learning. The BIP can also provide specific information for the adults to ensure the student has daily structured opportunities to engage in positive relationships with adults and peers. The BIP may also direct adults to ensure the student is able to incorporate their strengths or interests during specific times or activities or throughout the school day, and to ensure the adults provide opportunities for the student to engage in preferred activities or interests.

When describing environmental and setting events in a BIP, the supports to reinforce and increase the use of the new skill or behavior, and the strategies to reduce behavior that interferes with learning should be included. IEP teams can use the Adult Response Chart, found in the BIP template, to document in clear, objective, and specific terms the environmental supports and accommodations that are needed by the student throughout the cycle.

2. **Proactive and Response Strategies**: The BIP should describe the needed adult and environmental supports and strategies across a variety of contexts. To do this, the IEP team should discuss and agree on how to prevent or modify known triggers or the events that happen before the behavior that interferes with the student's learning or the learning of others. Strategies that eliminate or alter the antecedent (trigger) should be identified as proactive and preventative measures that support the student and minimize the behavior that interferes with learning. Such strategies may include clear directions in the BIP on how adults should or should not engage with the student through their words and actions. This includes describing adult response strategies when:

- the student is calm and engaged and is not having difficulties (e.g., to provide instruction, reinforcement, recognition, and encouragement), and

- when the student is in danger of escalating to a behavior that interferes with the student's learning or the learning of others (e.g., de-escalation strategies), and

- when a behavior interferes with the student's learning or the learning of others (e.g., ensuring student safety and responses that do not further escalate the student).

The BIP should plan for and include a variety of proactive and reactive strategies across all contexts in which the student engages in learning and interacts with others. This could include explicit instruction in social and emotional learning skills, cuing the use of the new skill or response, redirection, distraction, pause and give space, or other steps that the team determines meet the individual needs of the student. The BIP should also include the strategies and supports the student needs from adults during each phase of the acting out cycle. Additional information can be found in The Response Cycle from the Inclusive Strategies to Address the Behavioral Needs for Students with IEPs.

3. **Competing Behavior Pathways:** The BIP can summarize behavior patterns identified through FBA data collection and analysis. Those patterns often result in a clear "pathway" a student typically follows in response to their environment, adults can better understand how to proactively support, teach, and modify the expectations to help the student get their needs met. An example of the Competing Behavior Pathways worksheet can be found on the DPI Sample Data Collections webpage

4. **Crisis Response or Safety Plan**: If data supports the need, the IEP team may include a crisis response plan that provides a description of how adults should provide support to the student in an emergency or crisis. The crisis plan should include the conditions under which the plan will be used and document the required procedures or steps required to ensure the physical safety of the student and others while protecting the privacy, dignity, and autonomy of the student experiencing the crisis. The plan should include actions adults should take during the incident, and the approach adults should avoid. The crisis response or safety plan should be reviewed to ensure that it is in compliance with any state statutes and rules, and with district policies and procedures regarding the use of more restrictive or disciplinary responses to student behavior.

> ***Tip: A Crisis Response Plan is not a Behavior Intervention Plan!***
> *IEP teams must understand that a BIP composed of a crisis plan alone, without other changes to the IEP, is not likely to include the positive behavioral interventions and supports that are legally required when addressing student behavior that interferes with the student's learning or the learning of others. Without instruction and proactive, positive interventions and supports, a crisis plan alone will likely not result in a meaningful and educationally relevant BIP.*

Prioritizing IEP Revisions and BIP Focus Areas

Based on the student's strengths, needs, and unique circumstances, the IEP team may decide to focus on the more immediate function of behavior, before the deeper root cause, when the behavior presents an imminent physical risk to the student's safety or the safety of others (e.g., running out of a classroom or building, acts of physical aggression that harm self or others). For these types of behavior, the team should consider creating and implementing a function-based intervention targeting the specific intense behavior. A function-based intervention often includes teaching or reinforcing a replacement behavior that serves the same function as the problem behavior.

For example, if the IEP team identifies that the function of behavior is escape or avoidance when a student frequently runs out of the classroom, they may prioritize an initial intervention to reinforce a replacement behavior that is within the student's current skill set. Simultaneously, the team may determine that the root cause of the escape or avoidance behavior is underdeveloped skills in collaboratively working with peers in the classroom.

In order to address the more immediate safety concerns associated with leaving the classroom, the student will be taught how to and reinforced for asking the teacher for help or taking a break within the classroom in order to temporarily escape the task. This short-term function-based intervention can help the team address immediate behaviors of concern, but in and of itself may not address the root cause of the behavior. The team will monitor progress and may plan to meet in 4 weeks, or more often if needed, to determine if the intensity of the function-based intervention should be increased, maintained, or faded.

When the IEP team meets again to review the data and further discuss the root cause, the team may engage in a deeper level of analysis to identify interventions and supports to help the student develop new skills that better meet the student's needs. Strategies that address root causes take a broader, long-term view of student functioning. The team may identify specially designed instruction and supplementary aids and services to teach the student the additional social and emotional learning skills needed to work with peers. With targeted specially designed instruction and environmental supports, skills are more generalizable than the function-based interventions that only target replacement behaviors.

By being intentional about addressing both function and root cause, adults are better able to meet a student's needs by creating a safe and supportive environment and by teaching, practicing, and reinforcing new skills for long term success in school and beyond.

Reflection and Discussion Activities

1) Reflect on the following statement. Do you agree or disagree with it? Explain why you agree or disagree

   > When thinking about "changing student behavior," the focus should be on how all adults are teaching and supporting the student (i.e. adult behavior), not just about changing the behavior of the student.

2) What are some reasons why an FBA should result in changes to a student's IEP?
3) Provide some examples of how the results of an FBA may lead to changes in a student's IEP. Discuss which sections of the IEP might be updated. Try to provide examples for each of the sections of an IEP (e.g., present level of academic achievement and functional performance, special factors, effects of disability, disability-related need, goals, and program summary of services).
4) When thinking of the four types of IEP services (supplementary aids and services, specially designed instruction, related services, and program modifications and support for school personnel), provide examples of how an FBA might lead to changes in each type of service.
5) What are the differences between providing "instruction" such as specially designed instruction and providing "support" such as accommodations through supplementary aids and services?
   a) Why might the IEP team need to consider both instruction and support when using the results of the FBA?
6) Describe the circumstances or examples when program modifications or support for school personnel may need to be updated based on the results of an FBA.
7) Describe a process that teams might use to identify and prioritize the types of interventions a student may need based on the results of an FBA.
8) Describe the circumstances or examples of when a BIP is required.
9) What are some additional circumstances or examples of when the team may determine that a BIP is needed?
10) What are some strategies to engage students and families in the development of a BIP?

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