Information **UPDATE**

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TO: District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators,
              Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent
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SUBJECT: Addressing the Behavioral Needs of Students with Disabilities
              (Replaces Bulletin 00.01)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) continues to place an emphasis on positive strategies and interventions to programmatically address the behavior of children with disabilities when that behavior interferes with the child's learning or that of others. The goal is to develop behavioral intervention plans that are based on child specific data gathered through the process of functional behavioral assessments. Local education agencies (LEAs) have a responsibility to focus on proactive approaches related to the behavioral needs of children with disabilities by working with the student to change his/her behavior rather than by relying solely on exclusionary practices. It is good practice to proactively address challenging behavior in an early and ongoing fashion even when that behavior will not result in a change in placement.

1.   *What are positive behavioral supports or interventions?*

Positive behavioral supports or interventions, which are based on functional behavioral assessment, attempt to **understand the purpose of a problem behavior** so the problem behavior is replaced with new and more appropriate behaviors that achieve the same purpose.

In general, positive approaches are developmentally, chronologically, cognitively, and functionally appropriate for the student and focus on two areas: (1) modifying the environment to try to prevent challenging behaviors; and/or (2) addressing behavior programmatically by teaching replacement behaviors and skills.

There are three reasons why school personnel should strongly consider positive behavioral supports and interventions:

A. Simply suppressing a problem behavior does not have long-term effects and often leads to increased counter-aggressive behaviors from students.
B. Once school personnel know why a student's behavior occurs, they can respond more appropriately by teaching the student a more appropriate way of responding. This serves the long-term interests of both student and teacher.

C. Traditional punishment focuses on "fixing the student." The focus of positive behavioral support is fixing student skill deficiencies, classroom settings, instructional delivery, and/or curricular adaptations.

2. *What are some examples of positive interventions, strategies and supports?*

As noted in question 1, the two main areas to consider are modifying the environment and addressing behavior programmatically by teaching replacement behaviors and skills. When modifying the environment, the goal is to prevent the behavior from occurring by adjusting the antecedents of the behavior, the consequences, or both. Examples include:

- modifying or adjusting instructional strategies, curriculum and materials
- modifying or adjusting classroom seating, arrangement, or traffic patterns
- modifying or adjusting testing and evaluation procedures
- providing increased opportunities for students to make choices
- providing predictable classroom routines
- foreshadowing change
- cueing students
- having clear, consistent expectations and consequences in classrooms and throughout the school.

Addressing behavior programmatically by teaching replacement behaviors and skills means identifying alternative and more acceptable behaviors that serve the same function for the student; teaching general complementary skills (such as reading comprehension if the student is avoiding classes where reading is stressed); and providing instruction in self-regulatory or self-control skills to assist the student in coping with and tolerating situations which have led to behavioral outbursts in the past. These skills also lead to generalization and to intrinsic motivation rather than reliance on an external reward system.

3. *Why is there an emphasis on positive behavioral interventions?*

Unless acceptable replacement behaviors are taught and established as part of a child's repertoire, long-term behavior change will probably not occur. It is necessary to address behavior as a subject, and the goal is to make the appropriate behavior automatic. This means providing instruction and opportunities for the student to practice, reinforcement and feedback, and generalization skills so that the student learns the behavior in a variety of settings. If behavior is not addressed as a learning issue, the child will revert to what she/he knows in a crisis.

4. *What is functional behavioral assessment (FBA)?*

FBA is a continuous process (not a one-time event) for identifying, (1) the purpose or function of the behavior, (2) the variables that influence the behavior, and (3) components of an effective behavioral intervention plan (BIP). If the hypothesis about the function or purpose of a problem behavior is correct, it results in ideas for alternative skills or strategies that can be taught, as well as ideas for meaningful consequences for the student.

5. *What is the basis for FBA?*

FBA is based on the theories of applied behavior analysis (ABA), and is concerned with the analysis and modification of human behavior. It is often represented by one of the following paradigms:

A □ B □ C or A □ R □ C

- The "A" in either paradigm is **antecedent** – that which precedes the behavior of concern. The antecedents may include external factors such as settings, tasks, people, activities, and events. Antecedents may also be internal factors such as moods, medical conditions, disabilities, or psychiatric conditions.

- The "B" represents **behavior**, while the "R" stands for **response**. It is important to define behavior or response in observable, factual terms. Stay away from emotions or projected feelings, such as "he felt bad" or "his feelings were hurt." A better description might be "he puts his head down and cries." Everyone involved needs to understand the meaning of the behavior. For example, what is meant by "in seat," "disruptive," "on time," or "verbal aggression"?

- The "C" is **consequence** – that which follows the target behavior. It is important to consider factors such as what the student does, what other students do, what teachers or other adults do, and whether there are meaningful consequences.

If the behavior can be understood within its context, a hypothesis regarding the function of the behavior can then be developed.

6. *What are some of the common functions of behavior?*

The "function" of any given behavior is the underlying reason(s) people behave in a certain way. Many FBAs attempt to define "functions" into a set of pre-determined categories. Traditional functions of behavior which many people are familiar with include:

- Attention
- Escape
- Demand
- Automatic Reinforcement (self stimulation)

For the purposes of determining functions as part of a functional behavior assessment in an educational context, it is important to keep in mind the role of educators in teaching and supporting student academic and social emotional behavior.

Examples may include: Student is attempting to…

- cope with a situation she/he feels is stressful
- assert a need she/he feels
- accomplish something they feel is important
- gain social approval/interaction
- gain access to items, activities, or environment
- achieve a sense of safety

- avoid/escape from activities or environment
- avoid/escape from social attention/interaction
- avoid/escape from overwhelming sensory stimulation
- gain power/control over her/his life or circumstances

Educators may consider other categories of "function." Understanding the student's point of view, unique disability related needs, or history of possible trauma may assist teachers in planning and supporting students in educational settings. Other information educators may consider when determining functions of behavior include FBA interviews, skill versus performance deficits, and information collected from other data sources.

7. When is FBA used?

FBA is legally required when a disciplinary change of placement occurs and the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the disability. These specific requirements are more fully addressed in Information Update 06.02, Legal Requirements Relating to Disciplining Children with Disabilities, questions 15 and 16. A FBA is also required when an individualized education program (IEP) team determines the use of seclusion or restraint is reasonably anticipated. These requirements are addressed in 2011 Act 125 Seclusion and Restraint Frequently Asked Questions.

If there is a change of placement and the behavior is not a manifestation of the disability, a FBA should be conducted "as appropriate."

In addition to when legally required, it is good practice to conduct FBA:

- when challenging behaviors are a concern, regardless of the disability of the child – this is not just a process for children identified with emotional behavioral disabilities;
- when the current program is not effective;
- when the student or others are at risk for harm or exclusion;
- when a more restrictive placement or a more intrusive intervention is contemplated; and
- when there are repeated and serious behavior problems.

8. Must we do this for every child with a disability?

If the IEP team determines the student's behavior is interfering with his/her learning or that of others, the IEP team must consider strategies, including positive interventions and supports, to address the behavior. This is true regardless of the disability label of the student. FBA is a useful process in developing appropriate interventions. It is not necessary to address FBA and behavioral interventions if behavior is not an issue for an individual.

9. How do we decide when to conduct a FBA?

Consider the following factors:

- Are you spending more time on behavioral issues than on other needs with this student? Is behavior a primary issue with this student (regardless of the student's disability)?
- Is the misbehavior more than just occasional? Is it pervasive?
- How does the student's behavior compare to peers? Is the behavior chronologically and/or developmentally appropriate?
- Is the behavior responding to typical school and/or classroom interventions?

- Can you point to a reason why the child may be misbehaving (for example, a recent divorce or illness in the family)? Would you expect or predict the behavior given the circumstances? Do you expect the behavior to naturally diminish over time?
- Is the current program effective? Is the student at risk for harm or exclusion? Are others at risk for harm? Is a more restrictive placement or a more intrusive intervention being considered?
- Is a FBA legally required (see question 7)?

10. Who is responsible for FBA?

The IEP team conducts the FBA. See question 16, Information Update 06.02.

11. Is the process the same in every case?

No. Neither federal nor state law requires a specific format for FBA; it will vary on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, review of records and existing information may be sufficient; in other cases, it may be necessary to conduct interviews, do observations, and/or complete formalized assessments.

12. Do we need parent consent to conduct a FBA?

In many cases, a FBA can be conducted using data obtained in the normal course of the student's educational program. Parent consent is not required in such cases. Specifically, parent consent is not required if the data to be used in the FBA:

- is collected as a service specified in the student's IEP;
- is part of ongoing classroom observation and assessment conducted in the normal course of the student's program; or
- is part of ongoing review of the effectiveness of the behavioral intervention plan (BIP) included in the student's IEP.

In some cases, it may be necessary to administer additional tests or other evaluation materials to obtain the information needed to conduct the FBA. In such cases, an evaluation process must be initiated and parent consent must be obtained before administering additional tests or evaluative materials. Assuming the student has already been determined to be a child with a disability, the evaluation in such circumstances would focus on determining the nature and extent of the special education and related services the student needs.

13. How do we begin data collection?

A single source of information generally does not produce sufficiently accurate information so multiple sources and methods are needed. For example, an interview does not stand alone, but if the same conclusions are supported by direct observation and a second interview source, the information is then more reliable. The first step is to review existing records and other information to determine whether additional data must be gathered and to decide whether indirect methods, direct methods, or both will be used.

14. What are indirect and direct methods of data collection?

Indirect methods include gathering information by talking to, or interviewing, those individuals who know the student best. The information is secondhand in that it is filtered through the interviewees, including the student, or is contained in written records. This is important to remember when interpreting interview data.

Examples include record review (attendance, cumulative file, health, discipline, report cards, previous evaluations and interventions), permanent products (work samples, test papers, projects), and interviews.

<u>Direct methods</u> involve observing the student with the problem behavior in typical daily activities and routines. Observations are only snapshots of the settings and behaviors, and students may be aware they are being observed. They may be on their best behavior or may show-off for this new audience. Data from observations should be verified, as observations do not stand alone.

15. Are there any other decisions to be made prior to collecting data?

It may be important to consider whether the behavior is a skill deficit or a performance deficit. A skill deficit is one the student cannot do; the student lacks the necessary information or component skills. The intervention is to teach the skills. A performance deficit is one the student is not motivated to do; she/he has performed the skill previously or does it in some settings but doesn't generalize to other settings. The intervention is to provide opportunities for the student to perform and to reinforce the desired behavior while not reinforcing the undesired behavior.

16. What are some good practices when observing in the classroom and other school settings?

Observe a student across settings and at a variety of different times. Rather than observing for two hours during the morning, for example, it may be more useful to break that two-hour block into six smaller blocks of 20 minutes each. Those observations could take place at different times of the day, different days of the week, and during different activities such as academic classes, recess or lunch. It may be helpful to observe the student in settings where behavior is not a problem to identify the features of that context that support success and appropriate responses. Multiple observations also help give a clearer picture of the behavior, rather than a one-time snapshot.

Keep the recording system as simple as possible to efficiently record information. It takes some practice to determine what method works for a particular individual and to develop some shorthand codes such as "o" for 'out-of-seat' or "p" for 'playing with an object without permission.' Trying to write things out in longhand takes time and the observer often misses key information.

Accurately define the behavior being observed. Be clear as to what "out of seat" means; does that mean the student must be completely out of the desk, or can the student be on his/her knees yet still be "in" the chair? Try to be more precise than "aggressive behavior" by clarifying that it means hitting, kicking, or pinching. This also helps to determine what will be tallied and what will be ignored. Look for specific, observable behaviors that either occur or do not occur. It is also important to consider the critical dimensions of the behavior (see question 17).

When observing in someone else's classroom, **background information** from that person prior to the observation is helpful. What activities will be going on? How does the student typically behave during those times? The teacher should conduct business as usual, including consequences for inappropriate behaviors during the observation.

17. What are critical dimensions of behavior?

Critical dimensions of behavior include:

- Frequency – how often the behavior occurs;
- Topography – the description of the behavior; what it looks like (in seat, on task);

- Duration – how long the behavior lasts;
- Latency – the amount of time that elapses between "A" and "B"; for example, the amount of time between a teacher giving a direction and the student complying with that direction;
- Magnitude – force or power of the behavior (5 minute tantrum vs. a 30 minute tantrum; mumbling vs. talking loudly);
- Locus – where the behavior occurs (gym class vs. English class; structured time vs. unstructured time).

18. Are there any other issues pertaining to the environment that may surface?

One issue is the function of the teacher behavior with regard to the student being observed. An intervention may require a modification of the teacher's behavior. Therefore, we must attempt to identify key behaviors and explore the function that the teacher's behaviors might serve for both the student and the teacher. For example, a teacher might choose to ignore a serious behavior problem in a child in an attempt to avoid an escalation of the problem. In turn, the fact that the teacher ignores the child may allow the child to avoid an unpleasant task. Thus, both the teacher and the student are being negatively reinforced in the interaction.

19. How are the results of FBA incorporated into a child's IEP?

The IEP is the centerpiece of instructional programming for a student with a disability. If the student's behavior is interfering with his/her learning, or that of others, the IEP must address that behavior. A FBA provides baseline data for appropriately addressing the student's behavioral needs. Information from the FBA can be incorporated as part of the present level of educational performance (PLOP) and may also provide the basis for annual goals, short-term objectives, and benchmarks. Use the data from the FBA to describe the student's current level of functioning, including situations or settings in which the student is most or least appropriate, and consequences that may positively or negatively influence the behavior.

The emphasis in IDEA continues to be on <u>positive</u> interventions, strategies, and supports to address problem behaviors. If the student's IEP contains only negative consequences and punishments, the IEP may not be appropriate for meeting the child's needs. If it becomes necessary for the IEP team to conduct a manifestation determination, that team must determine whether the student's current IEP and placement are appropriate, including whether behavior has been addressed.

20. How is a behavior intervention plan (BIP) incorporated into an IEP?

There is no required format for a BIP in either the federal or state law. Generally, a plan to address behavior (BIP) may be included in an IEP in any or all of the following ways:

A. Special factors – if the student's behavior interferes with his/her learning, or that of others, the IEP team must consider appropriate positive interventions, strategies, and supports;
B. Annual goals and short-term objectives/benchmarks – instructional approaches could be incorporated into the goals and objectives (i.e., replacement behaviors, social skills); and
C. Attached behavior plans – sometimes it is awkward to try to fit an intervention plan into a goal/objective/benchmark format, and the IEP team may develop a plan and then attach it to the IEP. The BIP attached to the IEP becomes part of the IEP.

Whenever supplementary aids and services or program modifications and supports for school personnel are needed to appropriately implement an IEP, those issues must also be addressed by the IEP team.

21. What are some considerations in developing a BIP?

It is important to include an operational definition of the problem behavior(s); summary statements resulting from a functional behavioral assessment addressing setting events, antecedents to the problem behavior, and maintaining consequences for the problem behavior. The plan should address expected outcomes and goals and a general approach for making problem behaviors ineffective. Intervention strategies will consist of setting event strategies, immediate predictor strategies, teaching strategies, and consequence strategies. In addition to these strategies, consider both short- and long-term prevention strategies.

The BIP should include:

- specific descriptions of typical routines and most difficult problem situations for the student;
- a monitoring and evaluation plan;
- identification of the case manager who will be responsible for the overall coordination of the behavior intervention plan; and
- identification of individual responsibilities for data collection, specific interventions described in the plan, and reporting.

If it is necessary to have a crisis intervention plan for the student, be sure to also include the positive interventions, strategies, and supports to balance the plan. A crisis intervention plan should address the least restrictive alternative related to interventions, and should include plans to intervene during escalation of the behavior, during eruption of the behavior, and during de-escalation.

22. How can we judge whether the BIP is working or not?

Look at what the data indicates and consider the following questions:

- Is the problem behavior decreasing (in frequency, intensity)?
- Is the student using the replacement behavior regularly?
- Has the student generalized the use of this new behavior to various settings?
- Are there some positive effects (better grades, improved self-esteem, less stress)?
- Are people satisfied with the plan (student, parents, regular education and special education staff, administrators)?

If the plan is not working, it may be necessary to continue to evaluate and redesign the BIP.

23. When designing behavioral intervention plans, what should we consider in evaluating those plans?[1]

There are five areas to evaluate:

A. Antecedent or Setting-Event Modifications

- Does the plan include antecedent and setting-event modifications to prevent problem behavior from occurring?
- Does the plan include modifications to make desired behaviors more likely?

B. Teaching Alternative Skills

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1 Adapted from a handout by T. Knoster for OSEP Institute on Discipline, 9/98

- Did the IEP team consider all three approaches to alternative-skill training (e.g., replacement skills, general skills, coping and tolerance skills)?
- Do replacement skills serve the same function as the problem behavior?
- Do general skills help the individual prevent problem situations from occurring?
- If the plan targets multiple alternative skills, are the ones that produce the most immediate effect for the person taught first?

C.   Consequence Interventions

- Does the plan include consequence strategies for, (a) strengthening alternative skills, (b) reducing the payoff for problem behavior, and (c) crisis management if necessary?
- Do consequences for alternative skills produce outcomes that are more effective or efficient than the problem behavior?
- Are desired outcomes for the problem behavior reduced or eliminated?
- Does the crisis management plan address the three phases of a crisis?
  a. Escalation
  b. Eruption
  c. De-escalation

D.   Lifestyle Interventions

- Does the plan include supports that will improve the individual's quality of life?
- Does the plan include long-term adaptations that will (a) help the individual maintain new skills, and (b) prevent problem behaviors from occurring?

E.   Overall

- Are the intervention strategies logically linked to the hypothesis?
- Does the plan reflect individual and family preferences?
- Are all the intervention strategies, (1) age-appropriate, and (2) acceptable for people without disabilities?
- Can the plan be carried out in everyday settings without stigmatizing the individual?

Questions related to the content of this bulletin may be directed to the Special Education Team, at (608) 266-1781. This information update can also be accessed through the Internet:
 http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_bulindex