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Functional Behavioral Assessments

This is one in a series of policy briefs prepared by the New York State Education Department, on topics pertaining to implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in New York State.

What is a Functional Behavioral Assessment?

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) means the process of determining why a student engages in behaviors that impede learning and how the student's behavior relates to the environment.

When must an FBA be conducted?

A student's need for an FBA must be considered whenever:

- a student with a disability is exhibiting persistent behaviors that impede his or her learning or that of others, despite consistently implemented general school-wide or classroom-wide interventions;
- the student's behavior places the student or others at risk of harm or injury;
- the Committee on Special Education (CSE) or Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) is considering more restrictive programs or placements as a result of the student's behavior; and/or
- the student is subject to disciplinary actions and a determination has been made that the behavior is related to the student's disability.

What must an FBA include?

The FBA must include, but is not limited to:

- identification of the problem behavior;
- definition of the behavior in concrete terms;
- identification of the contextual factors that contribute to the behavior (including cognitive and affective factors); and
- formulation of a hypothesis regarding the general conditions under which a behavior usually occurs and probable consequences that serve to maintain it.

What information must an FBA include?

The FBA must:

- provide a baseline of the student's problem behaviors, across activities, settings, people and times of the day, with regard to:
 - frequency (how often a behavior occurs)
 - duration (the length of time the behavior lasts)
 - intensity (how severe the behavior is)
 - latency (how long it takes for a behavior to begin after a specific verbal demand or event has occurred)
- include the information on why the student engages in behaviors that impede learning and how the student's behavior relates to the environment in sufficient detail to form the basis for a behavioral intervention plan for the student that addresses:
 - antecedent behaviors;

- reinforcing consequences of the behavior;
- recommendations for teaching alternative skills or behaviors; and
- assessment of student preferences for reinforcement.

What information is an FBA based on?

The FBA must, as appropriate, be based on multiple sources of data (such as structured interviews, behavior rating scales, standardized assessments, checklists) and must include, but is not limited to:

- information obtained from direct observation of the student;
- information from the student, the student's teacher(s) and/or related service provider(s); and
- a review of available data and information from the student's record and other sources including any relevant information provided by the student's parent.

The FBA cannot be based solely on the student's history of presenting problem behavior.

Is a FBA the same as a Behavioral Intervention Plan?

When an individual behavioral intervention plan is developed for a student with a disability, it must be based on the results of an FBA. The results of the FBA must also be considered at meetings of the CSE or CPSE for the development of a student's individualized education program (IEP).

Is consent required to conduct an FBA?

Yes. An FBA for a student with a disability is an evaluation requiring parent consent pursuant to the requirements in section 200.5(b) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

Legal Reference

8 NYCRR – Sections 200.1(r), 200.5(b)(1), 200.22(a) and 201.3

NOTE: Please reference the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulation of the State of New York (8 NYCRR) for regulatory language. An unofficial compilation of these regulations can be found at: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/info/nyocr.htm>.