



Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs)

Sometimes it may be difficult to know what causes certain behaviors to occur with children at home, school, or in the community. Some behaviors cause concerns for an individual's learning, safety, or well-being but serve a function (or purpose) for the individual by getting a need or want met. Examples of behaviors which may cause a problem with living or learning include tantrums, hitting, biting, verbal aggression, blurt outs in class, not staying on task, not staying seated, and many others.

Functional behavior assessments (FBAs) are based on the science of behavior. An FBA is a process to collect and study data to better understand what may be prompting the behavior which occurs and to understand the *function* of the behavior. FBAs are also addressed in the *Individuals With Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). Parents of a child with an individualized education program (IEP) can request an FBA when their child's behaviors interfere with learning or when their child has a placement changed due to disciplinary reasons. The results of the FBA may aid teachers, parents, and providers in using strategies and supports to reduce or replace the behavior with more appropriate behavior.

Importance of Data for FBAs

Data is important to help understand why behaviors are happening. Data needs to be recorded by observing what happens before and after the behavior of concern. Before the FBA, additional information needs to be collected by talking to parents and teachers about when, where, and how often the behavior occurs, and who is around when the behavior happens. The person completing the FBA must be trained and data must be recorded accurately. More than one person can observe and collect data and results are then compared for agreement. Taking these steps and involving parents in the process can result in a more successful and higher quality FBA. Data collected from the FBA will be used in creating the behavior intervention plan (BIP).

The ABCs of FBAs

- A** **Antecedent:** What happens right before the behavior occurs (e.g., asked to do something, something is taken away)?
- B** **Behavior of Concern:** What is the specific behavior causing concern?
- C** **Consequence:** What happens right after the behavior occurs (e.g., gets attention, doesn't complete homework, doesn't put toys away)?

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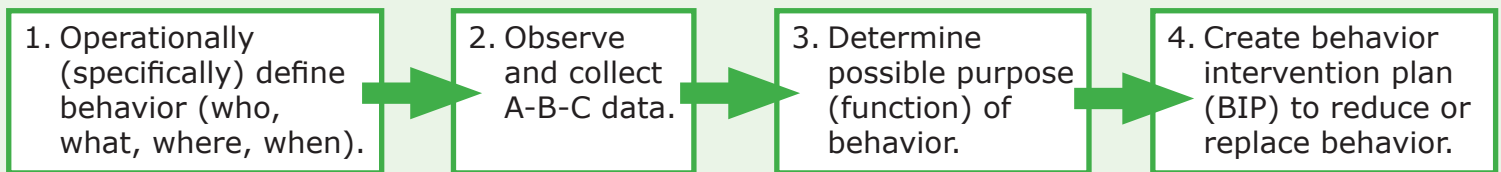
Reinforcement

Reinforcement is an important consideration for FBAs and is part of the consequence in the ABCs of FBAs. When a behavior increases or is continued, the behavior is being reinforced by something. Reinforcement is different for everyone, and things that are reinforcing to one person may not be reinforcing to another. It is important to understand the behavior being reinforced in order to set up strategies to reduce or replace the behavior with another behavior which can serve the same function.

Functions of Behavior

- **Attention:** *Get* attention (e.g., from a parent, peer, teacher, or someone in the environment).
- **Tangibles:** *Get* an item or activity (e.g., a toy, a gadget, a video, food, an activity, or something else).
- **Escape:** *Get away* from something unpleasant (*won't do*) or something they do not know how to do (*can't do* with current skills or knowledge).
- **Sensory:** *Gets* a good feeling from certain movements or actions (e.g., rocking, toe walking, twirling hair).

Steps for Completing an FBA



Challenging Behavior

When unwanted behaviors become a concern for your child's learning or the learning of other children, the behavior needs to be addressed. Many schools have adopted [Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports](#) to encourage positive behavior. PBIS recommends using FBAs to understand the causes of behaviors and determine strategies for improving behaviors.

Resources



[Michigan Alliance for Families: Functional Behavior Assessments](#)

- [Michigan Department of Education: Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports \(PBIS\)](#)
- [Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education: *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*: Functional Behavior Assessments](#)