Arc Guide to Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

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A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) "means a process for gathering information to maximize the efficiency of behavioral supports." (Minnesota Rule 3525.0210, Subp. 22)

ABCs of Behavior
We, as individuals, are constantly behaving one way or other. Everything we do is a behavior. A FBA is a strategic approach to understand why a behavior is occurring. Through a FBA, the team of individuals attempts to determine what a student is trying to communicate and the function, or use, or purpose of the behavior. The team also looks at what is causing the behavior of concern. It is done based on an examination process called the ABCs of behavior.

- **A**ntecedents – what happens before the behavior occurs
- **B**ehavior – what is the specific behavior that is occurring
- **C**onsequences – what happens after the behavior occurs

A parent or school staff can request a FBA.

The IEP team decides to do a FBA
As with any assessment, the IEP team should meet to discuss the FBA. At the end of the meeting or shortly thereafter, the parent will be given prior written notice. The prior written notice (PWN) will describe the FBA including the area(s) being assessed, the name of the any test(s) being done and who will be administering the test(s). The notice typically gives the parent three options, to:

- Give the school permission to proceed,
- Request further information,
- Deny permission.

In each event, the parent has 14 calendar days to sign and return the form. If the parent does not sign and return the form within 14 calendar days for the initial evaluation, the district cannot proceed. After the initial evaluation (for re-evaluations), the district can proceed with the evaluation if the parent does not return the form.

A FBA should identify:

- The specific behavior(s) that is a problem
- Where the behavior occurs and does not occur, in what situations or environments it occurs
- When the behavior occurs
- With whom the behavior is occurring and with whom it is not occurring
- What happened before the behavior started – what is the history, has anything different been happening

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- If a pattern of behavior exist
- What the student is getting out of the behavior and/or what the student is trying to avoid by doing the behavior, speculation as to why the student may be doing it and benefiting from it
- What factors maintain or worsen the behavior
- Are there are other factors that could be causing the behavior – how the student is feeling, physical concerns, new stressors, any changes that have occurred in the student's live
- Things that can change the behavior, any interventions
- Replacement behaviors which can be taught to the student. This should include alternative behaviors. A focus should be on skill acquisition.
- Possible hypothesis or theory of the cause of the behavior

Information for a FBA can be gathered in a variety of ways including questionnaires, tests and checklists. Observations and interviews should be done. Interviews should be conducted with school staff, the parent(s) and possibly, the student.

Data from the assessment should be used to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) that involves positive interventions and supports that focus on replacement behaviors. This information is then included into the IEP.

For information on FBA and discipline issues, see The Arc Guide to Manifestation Review

Revised June 2016

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