





## PURPOSE

An **FBA** (Functional Behavior Assessment) is a process in which multiple data sources (interviews, surveys, questionnaires, direct observation, student records etc.) are collected and analyzed to help teams understand **why** a student is engaging in certain behavior. We engage in behavior to get access to something preferred/desired or to avoid something non-preferred/undesired. This is simplified into four main categories of functions: Sensory, Escape, Attention, and Tangible. The results of an FBA reveal the function of behavior. An FBA will help teams develop an effective BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan). An **FBA is required** when the IEP team determines that a problem behavior is a manifestation of a disability and the student does not have a behavior intervention plan (BIP) –*Idaho Special Education Manual, Chapter 12, Section 4B.*

## CONSENT FOR ASSESSMENT

Written parental consent is required when conducting student assessments. Before beginning the FBA process, visit the [Challenging Behavior Flowchart](#) and accompanying module. These resources guide the team through common environmental modifications that often result in decreased problem behavior. If the team has considered all environmental modifications possible, then the team may wish to move forward in obtaining *Consent for Assessment* to conduct an FBA.

## STUDENT SUMMARY

The student summary section is one of the first sections on the FBA form. In the student summary, the team will want to explain why the FBA is needed and describe the current problem behavior. Consider the following questions:

- a.) Why does the student need an FBA?
- b.) What problem behavior is occurring? How might you describe it to someone who has not seen it?
- c.) How has the team attempted to resolve or problem solve this problem-behavior, and what were the results?
- d.) What are at least three strengths that the student has? How might these help support the student?

## STEP 1: IDENTIFY PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Behavioral Label	<p>The first step in the FBA is to identify a general label for the problem behavior.</p> <p>The team should select one behavior at a time for assessment. If there are multiple problem behaviors, the team should select the most interfering or impactful behavior to assess and address.</p> <p>Once the team has assessed and addressed the problem behavior, effectively reducing it, the team may consider assessing and intervening on other problem behaviors, if they remain. It is most beneficial to dedicate resources to the most impactful behavior. Other problem behaviors may fade away as an effective intervention plan is developed for the most interfering behavior.</p>
Operational Definition	<p>Once an overall label for the problem behavior has been identified (i.e., aggression, non-compliance, disruptive behavior etc.) the team will develop an operational definition.</p> <p>An operational definition explains exactly what the problem behavior is and sometimes includes what it is not. An operational definition is important for data collection. It allows everyone on the team to know what “counts” as a behavior and what doesn’t “count” as a behavior. This informs our ability to make data-based decisions.</p>

	<p>When creating an operational definition, teams should ask: “Would someone who has never seen this behavior, be able to picture it in their head, exactly as it occurs?” The team will want to be especially explicit and clear.</p> <p>For example – the behavioral label of aggression could look like many different things. When describing aggression, some might picture hitting, some might picture biting, some might even picture hair pulling or head butting. Does it count if the student attempts to hit but is blocked or misses? The more detail included, the better.</p> <p>An example of an operational definition of aggression could be: “Any attempt or success to hit with an open or closed fist, kick, spit, or bite, with another person as a target”.</p>
<p><b>STEP 2: DATA COLLECTION AND SYNTHESIS</b></p>	
<p>Sources of Data for Assessment</p>	<p>An FBA should include at least two sources of data, one of which should always be ABC data. Common sources of data include: observation data, ABC data, parent and educator interviews about the behavior, questionnaires/rating scales, and records review. The team should gather information from at least two of these sources.</p> <p>ABC data is the most helpful form of data collection and provides the team with the most reliable hypothesis statement (the end result of the FBA). Teams can learn how to take ABC data and access data collection forms by visiting the behavior topics page, under the FBA tab of the Idaho Training Clearinghouse, <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Structured interviews and questionnaire forms can be found under the behavior topics page, on the FBA tab of Idaho Training Clearinghouse, <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p>Baseline Data</p>	<p>Baseline data is essential to progress monitoring. The FBA will guide teams in developing a BIP that the team will progress-monitor for success. The team will need a minimum of 3 data points of the problem behavior (preferably at least 6). The only exception to this is if the student engages in high intensity – low frequency behavior. This might be behavior that is extreme or dangerous in nature and warrants an FBA but does not occur frequently; so that if the team were to wait for 3 to 6 baseline data points, they would be putting the student at a significant disadvantage. High intensity – low frequency behavior could be extreme crisis or dangerous behavior that only occurs a couple times a school year.</p>
<p>Setting Events</p>	<p>A setting event is anything that happens before an immediate antecedent or trigger. For example, a student may be presented with a difficult assignment right before they rip up their paper and leave the class. While being presented to the difficult assignment was the immediate trigger, there could be other things that happened prior to that event that impacts the probability of the student engaging in problem behavior.</p> <p>Some examples of setting events could be lack of sleep, hunger, a missed medication, breaking up with a significant other, getting in a fight with a sibling or parent, a specific class the student finds most challenging (English/Math/Music etc.).</p>

	<p>Often setting events are hard to immediately identify, but when adults have rapport and develop a relationship with the student, they are more likely to be aware of setting events that could impact behavior.</p> <p>Document potential setting events identified through observation or interviews.</p>
Antecedents	<p>Antecedents are anything that happens immediately prior to the problem behavior. They can often be referred to as the “trigger”. In the example above, a student was presented with a difficult assignment and then they ripped up their paper and left the class. Being presented with a difficult assignment would be an example of an antecedent.</p> <p>Identify a minimum of 1 antecedent for the FBA. If there are multiple, identify the most frequently occurring antecedent(s) for the problem behavior, in order.</p> <p>Teams also need to know what DOESN'T trigger problem behavior. Are there times that the student is especially successful? What are those times? Those can be incorporated into the FBA under “Antecedents to Desired Behavior”. If teams can figure out when the student is most likely to be successful, they can talk about how to set up more of those opportunities for the student.</p>
Consequences	<p>For purposes of an FBA, consequences are anything that happens immediately following a problem behavior. These can be both positive or negative. Consequences aren't always “punishments”. In our example above, when the student was given a difficult work assignment (antecedent), and then they ripped up their paper and left the room (problem behavior) ...what happened next? Did the student get to wander the halls for a bit until someone was able to find them and redirect them? Did the teacher chase after them and make them immediately come back to class? Did they go straight to a quiet calm down room to self-regulate? All of these options are potential consequences.</p> <p>Identify at least one consequence for the problem behavior. If there are multiple consequences, identify the most frequently occurring, in order.</p>
Summary	<p>The summary section of the FBA is an opportunity to provide a narrative, or “paint a picture,” for the FBA team about the data that was collected and what data the tells the team.</p> <p>Some questions to consider for the narrative may be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a.) What does the data tell us about what most frequently triggers the problem behavior?</li> <li>b.) What is the most frequent consequence or outcome as a result?</li> <li>c.) Are there times the student is successful? What do those times look like?</li> <li>d.) Are there things such as sleep, being sick, hunger, chaotic mornings, etc. that seem to make the problem behavior more likely?</li> </ol>
<b>STEP 3: HYPOTHESIS STATEMENT</b>	
Summary Statement	<p>The hypothesis statement, also known as summary statement, is the primary goal of the FBA. This statement tells the team under what conditions the problem behavior occurs (the antecedent and setting events) and what is likely maintaining the problem (the consequence), which is often a preferred or desired outcome from the student's perspective.</p>

Function	<p>The FBA will always result in the identification of the function of behavior. There may be many things that influence the likelihood of problem behavior. Ultimately, the behavior is occurring most frequently for one of four main reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a.) <b>Sensory/Automatic</b> – This means the student has a sensory need that they are trying to meet. They may need to escape a noisy and overstimulating environment, access preferred input like deep pressure, or relieve or get rid an uncomfortable feeling like anxiety or stress.</li> <li>b.) <b>Escape/Avoidance</b> – This means there is something aversive in the student’s environment that they are trying to escape or avoid. This could be a difficult assignment they feel they won’t be successful with, or it could be an encounter or interaction with a non-preferred peer.</li> <li>c.) <b>Attention/Social Reinforcement</b> – This means the student has a social need that isn’t met. This could be a need for peer interaction, attention, or relationships. It could also be a need for negative attention or reprimands from adults, as this may be what they are used to and most comfortable with.</li> <li>d.) <b>Tangible/Access</b> – This means the student has a need to gain access to a preferred item or activity. It could look like wanting a specific swing on the playground, access to the computer or internet, or access to food, snacks, or drinks.</li> </ol> <p>It is important to remember that there is nothing wrong with each of these functions. These functions represent very basic and human needs that we all have. Some of us have learned more socially appropriate ways to get our needs met or have been taught more appropriate self-regulation or coping skills.</p> <p><i>Note: Although an FBA results in identifying a student’s function of problem behavior, it is important to note that this function does not negate or dismiss any other experiences or diagnoses a student may have. A student with a history of trauma may be more likely to engage in problem behavior to escape or avoid an aversive experience, or to access attention and social reinforcement they were previously deprived of. In the above example, we wouldn’t say a student’s function of behavior is trauma. We would say the student’s function of behavior is attention or escape, but the student’s motivation to engage in problem behavior to get attention or to access escape is greatly impacted by their history of trauma. Similarly, a student with a diagnosis of ADHD may struggle more with impulsivity, and that may impact motivation to engage in problem behavior as it relates to the function of tangible/access. This is how a student’s FBA still accounts for and considers mental health diagnoses and challenges.</i></p>
<b>STEP 4: COMPETING BEHAVIOR PATHWAY</b>	
Competing Behavior Pathway – Middle Pathway	<p>The final step in the FBA is completing the middle portion of the Competing Behavior Pathway (CBP). Teams can access a Competing Behavior Pathway chart under behavior resources on the BIP tab of the Idaho Training Clearinghouse, <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Through the FBA, the team has gathered all the necessary information to fill in the middle portion of the pathway. Identify the problem behavior, the immediate trigger or antecedent to that problem behavior, setting events that make the problem</p>



# FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT PRACTICE GUIDE



behavior more likely to occur, and what happens immediately following the problem, or the consequence.

Leave the top portion of the Competing Behavior Pathway (Desired Behavior and Consequence) as well as the bottom portion of the Competing Behavior Pathway (Replacement Behavior and Reinforcing Consequence) blank until the team moves forward with the student's Behavior Intervention Plan.