

Q&A: Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans

What is a functional behavioral assessment (FBA)?

An FBA is a process that gathers information about behaviors of concern in a student. These behaviors can be **academic, social, or emotional** and may include behaviors such as not completing assignments or class work, getting up from the desk frequently, hitting others or calling them names, or refusing to follow classroom norms and expectations. FBAs allow schools¹ to gather information about the student, such as:

- What the challenging behavior is in observable and measurable terms;
- Where, when, and with whom the behavior occurs;
- What typically occurs before the behavior;
- What consequences reinforce or maintain the behavior (what typically occurs after the behavior);
- What interventions and strategies have been tried previously and their effects; and
- What events make the behavior worse or more likely to occur.

Who conducts FBAs?

All members of the student's IEP team are responsible for ensuring completion of an FBA. This usually includes the child's general education teacher, a special education teacher, a school psychologist, social worker, or counselor, school administrators, the child's parent(s)/guardian(s), and, if appropriate, the student.

How is an FBA conducted?

A variety of tools can be used to conduct an FBA; however, people trained in the use and interpretation of those tools must be included. An FBA should be designed to gather specific information from specific people. There are two techniques for information-gathering in an FBA:

1. Indirect. This includes reviewing a student's education records, conducting interviews, and completing questionnaires with and by the student, teachers, and parent(s)/guardian(s).
2. Direct. These are observations in settings where the challenging behavior is occurring.

When is an FBA conducted?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires schools to conduct FBAs when a child with a disability has been removed from their educational placement for **more than 10 days**. The IDEA recommends, but does not require, an FBA for students at risk of suspension or those having been suspended less than 10 days.

What is a behavior intervention plan (BIP)?

Once an FBA is conducted, the FBA team will put together a BIP. A BIP contains strategies and supports that teachers and the school can use to assist a student with challenging behavior. These strategies can include:

- Changing systems
- Teaching skills
- Altering environments
- Appreciating positive behavior

The BIP must include teaching and reinforcing good behaviors that are supposed to replace the challenging behavior. The goal of the BIP is to make the challenging behavior irrelevant, inefficient, and ineffective.

¹ In this document, "school" is a term used to describe public K-12 schools, including charter schools.

What is in a BIP?

The **essential components** of a BIP are:

1. A detailed description of the behavior;
2. A summary statement describing the function of the behavior;
3. Interventions used and their results;
4. Behavioral goals;
5. A plan for teaching and supporting the new behavior, including a crisis intervention plan, if needed;
6. A description of success, including criteria and consequences;
7. How fidelity of the plan will be measured; and
8. Follow-up activities.

The BIP targets 1-3 behaviors with interventions. Each intervention should specifically address a measurable, clearly stated targeted behavior. **Interventions may include:**

- Environmental modifications
 - Examples: allowing a student to sit in a certain place, providing a place to work free of distractions
- Academic modifications
 - Examples: shortened assignments, taking oral tests, working in small groups
- Adaptation of curriculum materials
 - Examples: supplemental materials, providing sample tests, teaching pre-requisite and study skills
- Social skill instruction designed to teach a student more appropriate behavior
 - Examples: modeling, role play, coaching, behavioral rehearsal, feedback, reinforcement
- Individual or group counseling designed to improve the student's ability to function socially or emotionally
 - Examples: meeting with a counselor, meeting with a group to improve social skills

Can a student be removed from school for the entire term for being "habitually disruptive" without a BIP?

No. Colorado Revised Statute 22-32-109.1 (2) (B) states that students cannot be removed from classrooms for the remainder of a term for habitually disruptive behavior (which is typically allowed after three instances of disruptive behavior) unless a behavior support plan has been developed and implemented.

What can I do if I am being denied an FBA or BIP?

If you need help or have questions about your rights, you can contact [Disability Law Colorado](#). You may also pursue dispute resolution through one of the available complaint processes explained in Disability Law Colorado's [Dispute Resolution Fact Sheet](#).

Where can I go for more information?

- [Colorado Department of Education](#)
- IDEA [Section 300.530\(f\)](#)
- Colorado Revised Statutes [§22-32-109.1\(2\)\(B\)](#)