In developing behavioral intervention plans, IEP teams should take into account gender, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences among students.

Most authorities agree that it is usually ineffective and often unethical to use punishment as the only means of addressing student misconduct. With functional assessment, the emphasis is on teaching students new skills with which to become more effective and efficient learners.

The success of an intervention plan rests on the student’s engaging in the appropriate behavior without continued external support. Accordingly, teams may need to incorporate strategies to promote the maintenance, durability, and longevity of appropriate student behavior. One strategy is to teach peers to prompt and reinforce the positive behavior of classmates; another is to instruct the student to use self-management, self-talk, and/or self-cueing.

In some cases, supplemental aids and supports may be necessary to help the student to maintain the appropriate behavior. For example, the student may need to work with classmates to satisfy a need for peer attention in appropriate ways. Supports may also include curricular modifications to decrease a student’s avoidance of academic situations or instruction to increase the student’s verbal skills and ability to respond appropriately to stressful situations.

8. Evaluate Fidelity in Implementing the Plan

It is especially important that the IEP team monitor the accuracy and consistency with which the intervention plan is implemented. Otherwise, it will be impossible for the team to distinguish between a flawed intervention and a potentially effective intervention that was poorly implemented. To do so, the team might spell out the various components of the intervention plan, along with the individual(s) responsible for its implementation. Then, a checklist of steps or a script—a step-by-step description of the intervention and its application, can be developed for each person responsible for implementing the plan.
9. Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Intervention Plan

A second evaluation procedure should be developed to evaluate changes in the behavior itself. Initial or baseline information can serve as a standard against which to judge any changes in behavior. Evaluating the effects of the intervention will yield data upon which the team can judge future changes in the intervention plan. Subsequent review of the data collected on student behavior can help to determine the effects of the intervention across time. In many cases, it is appropriate to collect data on changes in both the inappropriate behavior and the replacement behavior. Collecting these data allows the IEP team to more closely evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention plan.

10. Modify the Intervention Plan

IDEA states that a behavioral intervention plan must be reviewed and revised whenever the IEP team feels that an adjustment is necessary. The circumstances that may warrant such a review include the following:

- The student no longer exhibits problems in behavior and the team terminates the plan.
- The situation has changed and the plan no longer addresses the student’s needs.
- The IEP team determines during a manifestation determination review that the behavior intervention strategies are inconsistent with the student’s IEP or placement.
- The original plan is not producing positive changes in the student’s behavior.

In the end, the process of functional behavioral assessment is not complete until we see meaningful changes in student behavior.
Summary and Conclusion

By following the steps involved in conducting a functional behavioral assessment, IEP teams can devise behavioral intervention plans and provide academic and behavioral supports to teach students how to achieve better results in school. The actual composition of the team responsible for conducting the functional behavioral assessment may vary from school to school and according to the severity of the problem behavior. With in-service training, experience, and technical support, IEP teams can successfully conduct functional behavioral assessments and develop sound behavioral intervention plans to address a wide range of problem behaviors that impede the teaching/learning process.

As mentioned earlier, most student behavior problems reflect errors in learning that can be decreased or eliminated by providing quality instruction that promotes skill mastery. The Virginia Department of Education fully supports a positive approach to addressing the disciplinary provisions of IDEA and its implementing regulations. Behavioral supports should be identified and developed in response to minor episodes of student misconduct to prevent their escalation into more serious behavior problems.

Research and experience substantiate that incorporating functional behavioral assessment into a larger organizational framework of proactive school-wide and classroom-level academic and behavioral supports will make Virginia schools safer and more effective learning environments for all students. For that reason, the Virginia Department of Education is committed to increasing the capacity of local school divisions to implement functional behavioral assessment and positive behavioral intervention plans and supports. Statewide training is being offered on Effective Schoolwide Discipline (ESD) and positive intervention practices, of which functional behavioral assessment is only one part. Effective Schoolwide Discipline is a proactive, multi-tiered approach to creating a positive teaching and learning environment and is complementary to response-to-intervention (RtI) which is another part of the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA.
Based on the assertion that all children can learn, the Virginia Department of Education supports five basic assumptions about increasing student academic achievement. All students learn best in an educational environment where:

1. Safety and security is maintained and mutual respect is nurtured.
2. School-wide and classroom-level academic and behavioral supports are routinely available.
3. Emphasis is on prevention of and early intervention for academic and behavioral problems.
4. Administrators, faculty, and parents assume a collaborative relationship in addressing the teaching/learning process.
5. A school/home partnership promotes positive academic and behavioral outcomes for all students.

This material has been reviewed by the National Advisory Board for the Commonwealth Institute for Positive Academic and Behavioral Supports

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Selected Readings on Functional Assessment

The following references served as the basis for this monograph and represent useful sources of additional information on functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plans.


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Appendix C

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