INDIRECT FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT PROCESS
Department of Special Education
Lincoln Public Schools
Lincoln, Nebraska

What is a Functional Behavior Assessment?

A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a process that identifies specific target behavior, the purpose of the behavior, and what factors maintain the behavior that is interfering with the student's educational progress. A target behavior may be "Johnny is off task 80% of the time during seat work." This target behavior may include several "off task" actions (e.g. Johnny talks to other students, leaves his desk, and drums his pencil on his desk instead of following directions). This process leads to development of intervention plans to teach acceptable alternative behavior. The resulting intervention plan focuses on teaching new behavior and social skills but usually also requires modification of the school or classroom environment and activities, adaptation of curriculum and instructional delivery, and changes in the teacher/student relationship that maintain the undesirable behavior.

When to do a Functional Behavior Assessment?

An FBA should be used for students with behavioral or emotional problems that are interfering with their educational progress or the progress of other students. The FBA can be a part of the SAT process, be used to develop an Individual Education Plan, or provide information for verification of a disability. However, any student who is exhibiting challenging behaviors that are not responding to typical school interventions may benefit from a functional assessment. Conducting a functional assessment before a behavior escalates into a disciplinary action allows both the teachers and parents to focus on positive outcomes and can help build a positive relationship between the teacher and the student and family.

What Happens During the FBA?

There are two distinct types of FBA processes, the **Indirect** and the **Direct** process. Both processes include 5 assessment and intervention development steps. The key is that there is a direct and natural link between the target behavior, the collection of unbiased and observable data about the behavior, and the intervention plan to change the behavior.

The Indirect FBA Process

The Indirect FBA includes the 5 steps of the assessment process in a condensed format. The Indirect FBA is most appropriate when the behavior incident requires immediate action, for behavior that is less serious and/or occurs infrequently, or as part of early intervention using the SAT process. The Indirect FBA is helpful when only a small group of individuals are involved (i.e. teacher, student, administrator). The Indirect FBA focuses on using simple verbal or written interviews with teachers, the student, and others involved in the target behavior. In the interview process, the target behavior, the circumstances that support the behavior, and the function of the behavior are identified. Based on this information, a hypothesis can be developed and a written plan can be formulated by the team. Follow up interviews or other data (e.g. disciplinary referrals, attendance record etc.) can be used to determine the success of the intervention or if the more comprehensive Direct FBA needs to occur.

The Direct FBA Process

The Direct FBA is a comprehensive assessment process that is appropriate when the target behavior is severe in duration, frequency, and intensity and/or is complex and deeply ingrained in the student's behavior patterns. The process is also appropriate when critical decisions are being made in regard to verifying a disability, making placement decisions, or choosing intervention methods that are intensive or intrusive.

Step 1 Defining the Target Behavior

The team (either SAT or IEP) will use interviews, school records, behavior observation documentation, incident reports, and other appropriate methods to identify the most severe and difficult behavior as the target behavior.

Step 2 Collecting Data

The team will collect measurable and observable data by direct observation of the target behavior in the environment in which it occurs. Documentation of possible functions of the behavior and environmental factors that support the behavior are part of the observation process. Direct observation, using chartering and narrative data, provides a baseline to compare to data collected after implementation of the intervention. In addition rating scales, school records, narrative documentation, academic performance, and other related information are important. The data will include:

- Charting the frequency and/or duration of the behavior. This is the primary method of data collection. This data can be samples taken periodically through the day or continuous charting done through the day. This information may help pinpoint critical times and situations at which the behavior occurs.
- Where the behavior occurred
- Who was involved (peers and adults)
- What happened just before the behavior (predictors/antecedents)
- What happened just after the behavior (consequences)
- What was done to prevent or intervene in the behavior
- How did the behavior resolve or end
- Possible reasons for the behavior (attention, avoidance, opposition)
- The classroom environment and structure at the time of the behavior
- The instructional delivery used and level of adult attention given
- Academic and behavioral expectations
- Recent changes in student's life in or out of school
- Community, medical, or other related issues/other agencies involved when appropriate

Step 3 Developing an Hypothesis

The data collected about the target behavior is used to make a best guess (hypothesis) as to the function or purpose of the behavior. This step may be the most difficult because the team must make conclusions about behavior that is usually intertwined with other behaviors and the motivation for the behavior may be unclear or complex. The best course of action is to focus on the target behavior and the hypothesis of why you think the behavior occurred. The intervention steps of FBA test the hypothesis and allow for refinement of the intervention plan or to reject the hypothesis and return to the data to form a new hypothesis and intervention strategy.

Step 4 Planning Interventions

A written Behavior Intervention Plan specifically identifying the new skills to be taught, modifications to be made in the environment and instructional delivery, accommodations made to the curriculum, and changes in behavior management strategies will be developed by the team. It is important to make clear who is responsible for implementing the plan and monitoring the effects of the plan. Techniques such as reinforcement types and schedules, structure and instruction provided, the type of progress feedback to be given to the student, and data to be collected to monitor the plan are specified. Remember to consider the student's strengths and weaknesses and what strategies have been helpful or unhelpful in the past. If appropriate, the student should be involved in developing the intervention. For complete details see the Behavior Intervention Plans handbook.

Step 5 Evaluating Effectiveness of the Plan

The team uses data that is relevant to the target behavior (i e. usually the same data collected in Step 2) to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Data that is measurable and observable is collected during the intervention process. Direct observation of the student's behavior should be compared to the baseline data collected in Step 2. In addition collecting data on the occurrence of the new skill shows progress and provides positive feedback to the student. If the data is favorable the intervention continues. If the data is not favorable the team returns to Step 1 and reevaluates the target behavior and data collected, reformulates the hypothesis, makes appropriate modifications to the intervention, implements the new plan, and collects data to reevaluate the new plan.

STUDENT INFORMATION
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ **ID#:** _____

School: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Gender:** ❏ M ❏ F **Birthdate:** _____

Student Legal Name: _____ Social Security No.: _____

Living With Female: _____ (402) _____ (Work)

Living With Male: _____ (402) _____ (Work)

Family Address: _____ (402) _____ Unlisted? Y (Home)

Mailing Address: _____ Home Zip Code: _____

Last School: _____

Permit: ❏ Y ❏ N **Ward:** ❏ Y ❏ N **Counselor:** _____ **504:** ❏ Y ❏ N

ELL: ❏ Y ❏ N **Special Ed:** ❏ Y ❏ N **IEP Mgr.:** _____ **Social Worker:** _____

AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Caseworker:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Probation Officer:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Physician:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Other:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

COMMENTS:

INDIRECT FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT
Department of Special Education

Student: _____ **Date:** _____

ID#: _____ **Grade:** _____ **School:** _____

Persons Involved: _____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

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1. **Identify the target behavior.** (Please state in observable and measurable terms.)

2. **Under what circumstances is this behavior most likely and least likely to occur?**

Predictors:	*MOST LIKELY*	*LEAST LIKELY*
When:		
With whom:		
Where:		

3. **What other factors in the student's life may be affecting the occurrence of this behavior at school?**
   - ❏ Medical History
   - ❏ Medications
   - ❏ Nutritional Factors
   - ❏ Other:
   - ❏ Attendance
   - ❏ Sleep Factors
   - ❏ School Performance
   - ❏ Home Factors
   - ❏ Substance Abuse
   - ❏ Agency Involvement

   Comments:

4. **What are the student's strengths?**

5. **What function or purpose does this behavior serve for the student?**
   - ❏ Power/Control
   - ❏ Justice/Revenge
   - ❏ Escape/Avoidance
   - ❏ Attention
   - ❏ Other_____

6. **Summary Hypothesis Statement: (Refer to Summary Statement Form)**

Setting/Event (what makes it worse?)	Predictors (when, where, etc.)	Target Behavior	Function (what purpose is served?)