

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT (FBA)

Individualized Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is used in instances where behavior interferes significantly with the student's learning or that of his/her peers. Effective classroom management approaches embedded within effective instructional design and delivery appropriately address the majority of behavioral issues occurring in classrooms.

FBA is a process for gathering information to understand the function (purpose) of behavior in order to write an effective Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) (Riffel, 2007). The identification of the function or purpose of a behavior of concern, guides a team through the development of function-based strategies. Function-based behavior plans are an effective method of eliminating target behaviors, developing positive proactive behaviors and increasing academic achievement (Sprague & Golly, 2005; Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, Lane, 2007).

An FBA is generally understood to be an individualized evaluation of a child in accordance with 34 CFR §300.301 through §300.311 to assist in determining whether the child is, or continues to be a child with a disability. The FBA process is frequently used to determine the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs, including the need for a positive behavior support plan (PBSP). ***As with other individualized evaluation procedures and consistent with 34 CFR §300.300 (a) and (c), parental consent is required for an FBA to be conducted as part of the initial evaluation or a reevaluation.***

An FBA must be conducted:

- Whenever the IEP team (1) determines that a student's behavior is interfering with his/her learning or the learning of others, and (2) requires additional information to provide appropriate educational programming.
- When a behavior violates a "code of student conduct" and is determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to be a manifestation of the student's disability.
- When the school refers the student to law enforcement.
- When a student is removed from his/her current placement as a result of weapon possession, and/or illegal drug possession/use, and/or serious bodily injury.
- When the student is removed from his/her placement for more than 10 consecutive or 15 cumulative school days and the behavior is determined not to be related to his/her disability.

The ultimate goal of an FBA is to develop a testable hypothesis. The hypothesis is based on measurable and observational data, which leads a school team to identify the function of the behavior of concern. The information gathered through the FBA process identifies the situations or circumstances when the student engages or does not engage in a target behavior, and identifies the consequences that reinforce the student's engagement in that behavior. This identification process leads to the development of a testable hypothesis (Figure 3).

A hypothesis derived from a completed FBA must provide (a) a precise definition of the target behavior, (b) the antecedent conditions under which the behavior does or does not occur, (c) the consequences that consistently maintain the behavior, and (d) the perceived function the behavior serves the student.

A completed FBA fills in the missing information of the hypothesis statement.

When this occurs (antecedent) _____, the student does (target behavior) _____, in order to get or avoid (function) _____.

Below is a representation of the hypothesis statement:



There is no one way to complete an FBA; rather the goal of this process is to develop a testable hypothesis. Horner & Sugai (2007) define three levels of FBA as: Informal FBA, Indirect/Simple FBA, and Complex FBA (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

FBA LEVELS	Informal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archival Review • Problem-solving Meeting
	Indirect/Simple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklist • Functional Assessment Interview • Initial Line of Inquiry • Brief Observation/Scatter Plot
	Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A-B-C Data • Structured, Direct Observation

An Informal FBA is conducted in school by staff who regularly interact with the student. It is conducted as part of school team problem-solving activities. An Indirect/Simple FBA is conducted by a school specialist such as a school psychologist or guidance counselor in collaboration with the student team. This level of FBA typically involves interviews, checklists, and brief observations. The most intense level of FBA, known as a Complex FBA, is conducted by a behaviorally trained member of the school, district, or intermediate unit with the school-based student team. This level is the most time intensive, and involves interviews and extensive direct observations. Figure 2 on the following page depicts staff involvement at the various levels.

Regardless of the level of the FBA, an FBA is generally understood to be an individualized evaluation of a child in accordance with 34 CFR §300.301 through §300.311 to assist in determining whether the child is, or continues to be a child with a disability. The FBA process is frequently used to determine the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs, including the need for a positive behavior support plan (PBSP). As with other individualized evaluation procedures and consistent with 34 CFR §300.300 (a) and (c), parental consent is required for an FBA to be conducted as part of the initial evaluation or a reevaluation.

Figure 2.

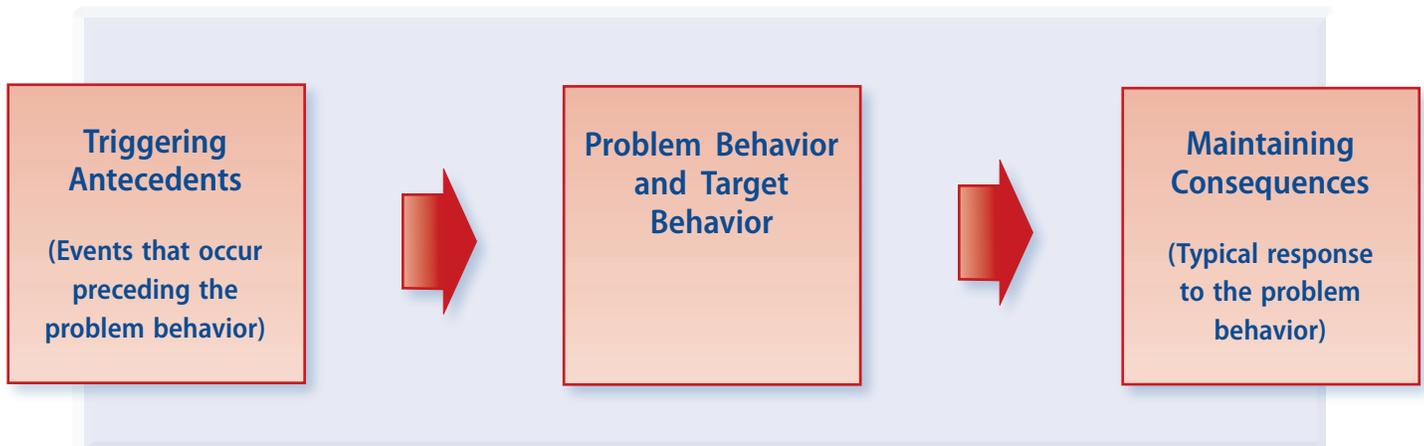
	Teachers/Staff	School Specialist	Behavioral Trained Specialist
Informal FBA	X		
Indirect/Simple FBA	X	X	
Complex FBA	X	X	X

All three levels of FBA maintain the same goals:

- Define the target behavior.
- Identify the events/antecedent triggers that reliably predict the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the target behavior.
- Identify the consequences that maintain the behavior.
- Identify setting events that increase the likelihood of the occurrence of the targeted behavior (refer to Figure 3).

A complex FBA provides high reliability in the identification of the function of a behavior.

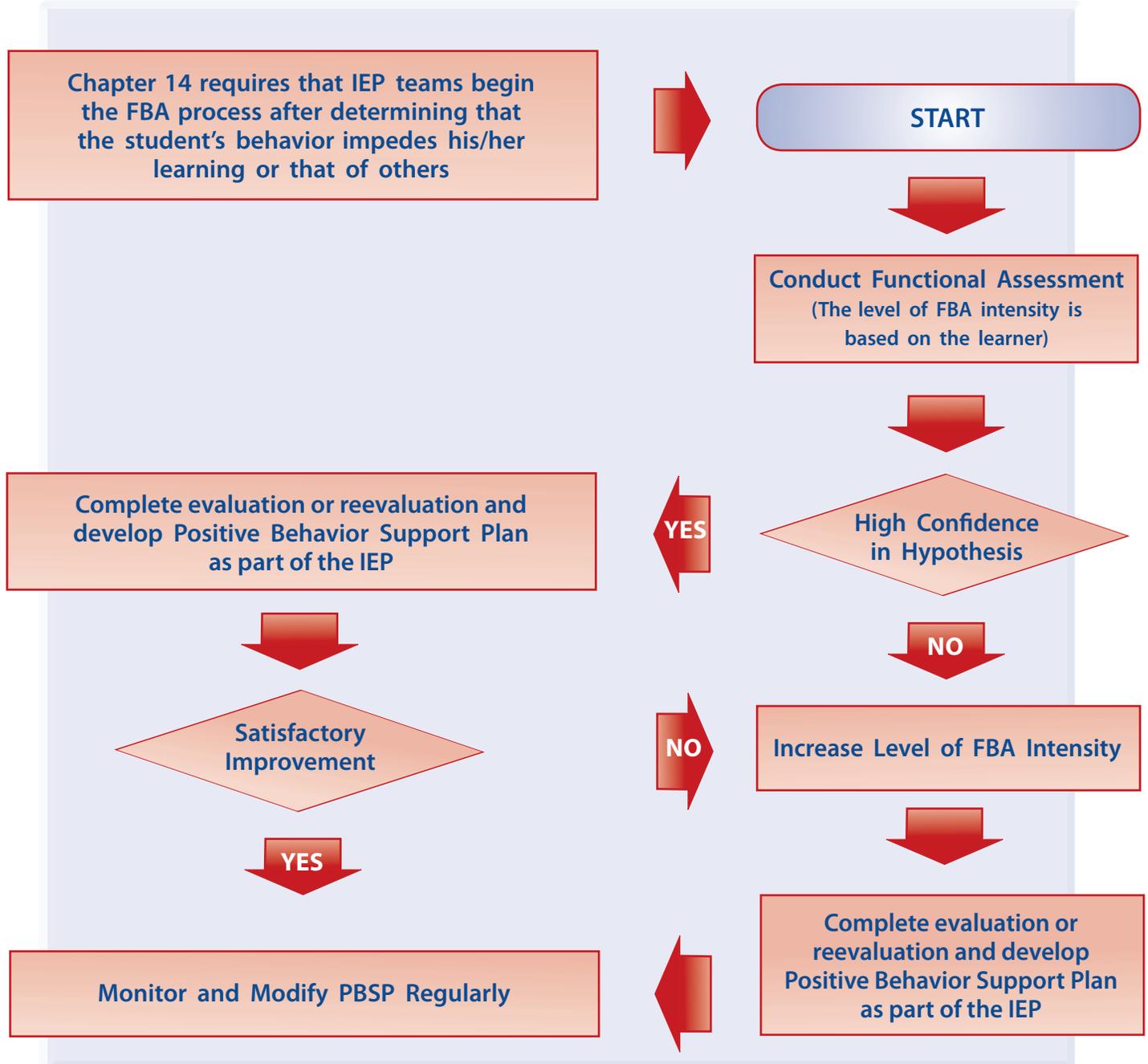
Figure 3. The ultimate goal of an FBA is to develop a testable hypothesis.



As a result of new language in Chapter 14 and 711 regulations, school teams are required to develop a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) based on a functional assessment of the behavior. This requirement means that when a team indicates in the special considerations portion of the IEP that the student’s behavior impacts his/her learning or the learning of others, a functional assessment is required.

The flow chart in Figure 4 is provided to assist teams as they go through the process of determining the appropriate level of FBA required to develop a testable hypothesis. The hypothesis provides the basis for the development of a PBSP.

Figure 4.



Homer, R. & Sugal, G. (2007). Function based support: Selected topics. Retrieved from web 5/31/08 http://www.pbis.org/files/1107_gsbriefba.ppt

For more information about FBA, visit the PaTTAN website at www.pattan.net.