MONONGALIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
Conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):
A Manual for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools
Student Assistance Team (SAT)
Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT)
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

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I.   **OVERVIEW**
In a review of the school-based literature on FBAs, the overwhelming majority (98.7%) of studies using FBAs to derive interventions, produced behavior change in the desired direction (Ervin et al., 2001). Furthermore, recent studies have demonstrated the efficacy of FBAs for students with disruptive behavior in the general education environment (e.g., Boyajian, DuPaul, Handler, Eckert, & McGoey, 2001; Broussard & Northup, 1997; Lewis & Sugai, 1996; Northup et al., 1995). Monongalia County Schools recognizes three key factors in the development of an effective method of conducting high-quality FBAs for use with general and special education students.

a.   Identify the root cause(s) of maladaptive student behaviors: Understanding that maladaptive behaviors serve a needed purpose for a student and replacing the equal (serves the same function as the negative behavior), but opposite (socially appropriate behavior) replacement behaviors will produce better outcomes.

b.   Systematic school-team approach: The FBA Team should be comprised of professionals knowledgeable in the area of behaviorism (i.e., guidance counselor, emotional behavior disorders teacher, classroom teachers, and school psychologist). Each school should establish a FBA Team who will share the responsibilities of the entire FBA process for SAT-level, MDT-level, and IEP-level FBAs. FBAs should not be the sole responsibility of one individual. The FBA facilitator will oversee the process and assign each Team Member responsibilities. The Team will be responsible for collecting the observational and other data, report on the findings, and help develop "good fit" behavioral interventions.

c.   IDEA 2004 regulations: If a child's behavior impedes his or her learning or the learning of others, you must consider positive behavior supports or other strategies to address that behavior. The IEP Team will determine the need to conduct a FBA in consultation with the special education specialist or school psychologist.

II.   **MANAGING BEHAVIOR REFERRALS**
Behavior problems in children manifest from mild to severe disturbances and schools must respond with informal/formal interventions. This section explains how to match interventions proportionate to the type of referral behavior using SAT and IEP Teams.

a.   Specialized classroom behavior management strategies: When a teacher or staff member observes non-normative, disruptive, or developmentally inappropriate behavior of a student, the teacher must use the classroom behavior plan with modifications along with the school's Positive

Behavior Support (PBS) program. Modifications could include: giving specific reminders (verbal/physical) to the student to encourage the desirable behavior, use a more frequent reinforcement schedule, and/or make environmental changes (seat change, schedule change, use of different classroom materials). Other possible interventions at this level could involve: consultation with the teacher from the previous school year, inquire about family/community interferences that could be affecting the student, or consult with a staff member who is skilled in managing disruptive behaviors (emotional behavior disorders teacher, guidance counselor, school psychologist).

b. Documentation of appropriate behavior interventions/SAT, IEP: The SAT/IEP Teams develop appropriate behavioral interventions that focus on the problem behavior prior to conducting a FBA. Sufficient time should be given to allow for intervention success to document progress and analyze data. Quantitative data collection should be charted based on target behaviors and day to day student performances. If no progress occurs, the Team should modify the behavior plan by changing reinforcement options/schedules or method. **If the inappropriate behavior(s) increases in frequency, intensity, or duration and generalizes to other environments after revisions to the interventions have occurred, request a SAT-level FBA.** FBAs should be completed within 45 school days to discuss at the next scheduled SAT meeting. For IEP purposes, consultation must occur between the special education teacher and the special education specialist or school psychologist and different timelines apply for these evaluations.

c. Requesting and conducting a FBA: A representative from the FBA committee should be invited to the referral meeting, assuming a request for a FBA is being made, in order to start the information gathering process. Parent permission is obtained through the appropriate channels (SAT/IEP) with the appropriate personnel present (school psychologist, special education specialist).

d. Function-based behavioral interventions: Following review of the FBA, an appropriate behavior plan will be developed to increase the desirable replacement behavior based off of conclusions and data collected in the FBA**.**

Note: A student may come to staff attention immediately because of very extreme, dangerous, or abnormal behavior that is occurring continuously. These rare, yet acute conditions should be consulted upon immediately, whereas different intervention and procedures would be used (crisis plan, referral to MDT, and/or supervision).

III.   COMPONENTS OF FBA
The following necessary components of an FBA are incorporated in the Monongalia County Schools Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) Worksheet.

a. Parent permission: At the SAT-level, an FBA is requested by using the Informed Consent for SAT-Level Evaluations form that the parent or custodial guardian signs. At the IEP-level permission is requested with direct consultation with the school psychologist or special education specialist.

b. Team roles and responsibilities: At the FBA referral meeting, the FBA Team Members will be assigned specific locations and times for observations and determine who will conduct the student interview. Additionally, the Team can decide which data collection methods will most appropriately measure the target behaviors. The FBA Team Leader also assigns the motivation and reinforcement surveys. The Team should meet regularly to review the observations, determine the functions of the behavior, and complete the FBA Worksheet.

c. Identifying student strengths (FBA Worksheet): Identify at least 3 strengths or contributions that the student brings to school.

d. Defining target behaviors (FBA Worksheet): Operationally define up to 3 problem behaviors in order of severity. Clearly describing the behaviors will assist during future observation times.
Example:
   Clearly Defined: 'Doesn't follow teacher directions when given orally'
   Not Clearly Defined: 'Doesn't listen'

e. Identifying patterns of behaviors, location and intensity (FBA Worksheet): This area documents where and when the behaviors are most likely to occur.

f. Other background information (FBA Worksheet): List any behavioral/medical data relevant, such as, medical diagnoses, medication regimens, family stressors, divorce or loss, traumatic life events, neurological problems, skill or performance deficits, developmental delays, foster placement, office referrals, absences/tardies, re-teach sessions, in-school suspensions, out-of school suspensions, Saturday school, and juvenile referrals.

g. Initial Line of Inquiry (FBA Worksheet): This aspect of the FBA should be conducted upon receipt of permission, ideally at a SAT/IEP meeting. The Initial Line is a method of behavioral data collection which investigates maladaptive behaviors, the consequences that follow, fast triggers, and slow triggers that influence the student at home and at school.

The parent should be present to assist in gathering this information. **Since the Initial Line is completed prior to observations, it provides a basis for perceiving the function(s) of the behaviors.** The facilitator of the Initial Line of Inquiry should guide this investigation one behavior at a time, actively listening to the participants' contributions and asking probing questions to complete each behavior pathway. (Llewellyn 1999) http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/presentations/C6ILI_charts_protocol.pdf

1. *Slow Triggers*: Describe the conditions that adversely influence the student's behavior (i.e., medical/mental diagnoses, death, divorce/separation, family/friend factors, losses, or needs)
2. *Fast Triggers*: Precipitating events in the immediate environment that ignite the problem (i.e., reprimand/correction, structured activity, physical demands, unstructured time, social isolation, tasks too simplistic, teacher directive, activity too long, high stimulation, tasks too difficult)
3. *Problem Behaviors*: Operationally define the behavior in working terms
4. *Perceived Functions*: What is the student trying to accomplish?
5. *Actual Consequences*: What is happening in the environment to maintain the problem behavior?

h. Student Functional Assessment Interview (FBA Worksheet): This component of the FBA investigates a student's cognitions surrounding either a recent situation or their current behavioral status. The interview is an important tool for understanding why children, especially teenagers, behave in the manner that they choose. The intention of the interview is to recognize a child's thoughts and feelings that they are experiencing. The student may reveal thought patterns that may be incorrect or irrational which influence their behavior. This information directly relates to the behaviors in question. The FBA Team Member who conducts the student interview should have an established rapport with the student.

i. Student Reinforcement Survey/ Forced-Choice Reinforcement Survey (FBA Worksheet): The Reinforcement Survey is important for choosing a desirable reinforcer for the behavior plan. In order to identify possible classroom reinforcers, a series of "controlled choice" survey items are presented to identify individual reinforcement preferences. The Forced-Choice Reinforcement Survey is ideal for younger children, lower language development, and intellectual deficiencies as it eliminates the risk of random responses and assists with better understanding of what is asked of the student.

j. Problem Behavior Questionnaire: Developed by Project Facile and Lewis, Scott, and Sugai (1994). A teacher will complete this form who is familiar with the challenging behaviors of which a child presents. The 15 item

questionnaire takes into account a typical episode of a problem behavior and indicates the frequency of occurrence. The purpose is to assume a probable function of behavior: peer escape, peer attentions, adult escape, or adult attention. Additionally, the functions are listed in order from least to greatest, including possible setting events. The form is scored by the FBA team and the results will be reported as rankings typed or written into the FBA Worksheet.

k. Direct observation: Direct observation data is collected to determine the occurrence and nonoccurrence of disruptive behavior, as well as the antecedents (environmental events that immediately precede the problem behavior) and consequences (environmental events that immediately follow the problem behavior) surrounding that behavior.

1. *Multiple Observers*: The FBA Team will conduct the observations which reflect the multi-disciplinary approach. Observers should attempt to be as least obtrusive as possible when in the observation environments to reduce bystander effect.

2. *Environment*: The observations should be conducted in environments where the child is having difficulty and successful environments over multiple sessions of time and day.

3. *Timeframe*: Care should be taken to evenly distribute the observation sessions over the evaluation period.

4. *Length of Observations*: Observation should include an accumulation of at least 6 hours of direct, documented data collection within the school environment.

l. Data collection methods: The following data collection methods can be used in isolation or in combination depending on the type and frequency of the target behaviors.

1. *Event/Frequency recording*- Used when a specific behavior has a defined start and stop and can be easily tallied, such as 'out of seat' behavior or 'calling out in class.'

2. *Durational recording*- Used when the length of time of the target behavior varies and is better represented with the documentation of time rather than indicating the incident as one occurrence. For example, a student engages in a long-lasting verbal tirade versus one single remark to a peer.

3. *Latency recording*- Used when the initiation of a desirable behavior does not occur. For example, a student's nervous behaviors begin sooner in math class versus reading class or the teacher gives a whole-class directive to take out the reading book and timing begins until the student complies.

4. *ABC analysis*- Used when a trained observer can observe the existence of target behaviors and/or pro-social behaviors and consider many environmental influences. Use an ABC data collection chart.

5. *Narrative/Anecdotal*- Used to gather information and to record in chronological order the sequence of events which allows the Team to gain insight. This method is used when the behavior is very complicated and not easily summarized (i.e. self-injury).

IV. **Drawing Conclusions**
Once behavioral data/observations are collected, this information must be synthesized to fully understand the problem behaviors. The data must be explained in **numerical/quantitative** and **narrative/qualitative** forms. Using multiple sources and settings to make each statement is needed. Further understanding of the behavior occurs in the 'Antecedent and Consequence Analysis' section which organizes each behavior and multiple antecedents and consequences that could possibly accompany each behavior.

a. Summarizing the observations (FBA Worksheet): The FBA Team should meet after all observations are completed to summarize the findings. Attempt to find a pattern across observed settings. These statements can be quantitative in nature by stating percentages or durations that occur similarly across observations. For example, "Bob was out of his seat for an average of 15 minutes in observed math settings." Qualitatively, make statements about observed behaviors that are notable yet not measurable. For example, "Bob pays less attention when there are not clear directions."

b. Hierarchy of Behaviors (FBA Worksheet): Escalation Staircase
After the observations and other data collection is gathered, a student's escalation pattern may be evident. The FBA team will list a typical scenario of the student's behavior on each of the "stair steps". For instance, the student starts complaining about work, then begins to scream, then run around the room and throw objects, and finally hits adults. This chart will be used as a visual understanding of how a student moves from Calm to Crisis and how staff can intervene at appropriate times.

c. Antecedent and Consequence Analysis (FBA Worksheet):
The antecedents and consequences are analyzed to see which function(s) the behavior fulfills. Problem behavior can also serve more than one function, further complicating the matter. Multiple antecedents can be listed for each target behavior along with a maintaining consequence. This information should be determined through identifying behavioral patterns from direct observations across settings and times.

V. **Determining the Function(s)**
Multiple functions can sustain a problem behavior. Analyzing each behavior and the interaction of antecedents and consequences allow you to determine the hypotheses.

a. <u>Making hypotheses (FBA Worksheet)</u>: The interviews, combined with direct observations of the behavior, and conclusions drawn from the antecedent and consequence data are used in determining the function of the behavior. This methodology of determining the function of the behavior(s) is sufficient when the data collected on the antecedents and consequences is clear. The FBA Team will make hypothesis statements, such as 'If given an independent math task, Bob leaves his seat or is off-task in order to avoid starting a math activity. It is advised to format the hypotheses in an **IF…..THEN……BECAUSE** manner to assist in clarity and understanding for the reader of the FBA.

b. <u>Indicating the function (FBA Worksheet)</u>: Based on the hypothesis statements, the function(s) is assumed and will be indicated on the FBA Worksheet.

c. <u>Report writing</u>: Attach all pieces of information, such as Initial Line of Inquiry and all observations. When all pages of the FBA Worksheet are completed, the FBA Team Members will sign and date. A copy will be placed in the student's confidential file.

VI. **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) Implications:**
The Function of the behavior must be considered when choosing the appropriate replacement behavior in order to design methods in dealing with inappropriate behaviors. Additionally, keep in mind the outcome of the reinforcement survey when linking expected, socially appropriate behavior to positive/negative reinforcement strategies when developing the formal behavior plan.

a. <u>Making recommendations (FBA Worksheet)</u>:   The FBA Team should make individualized recommendations based on the findings of the FBA to assist the student in the school day. These suggestions could come in the form of a formal behavior plan or independent suggestions in dealing with the target behaviors.

b. <u>Linking the FBA to the BIP</u>: Using the FBA process to determine the types of behaviors that are occurring and under what conditions allow you to describe the socially appropriate behaviors that will be taught/expected and rewarded in the behavior plan. Moreover, once the FBA determines the triggers of disruptive behavior, the BIP should also be used as a prevention in order to change environments and circumstances and predict when/if behaviors will occur.