FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT (FBA)

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a student-centered team process used in instances when behavior negatively impacts a student's learning or that of the student's peers. Effective classroom management approaches based on FBA data and embedded within effective instructional design and delivery appropriately address the majority of behavioral issues occurring in classrooms.

FBA is an evidence-based process for gathering information to understand the function (purpose) of behavior in order to write an effective positive behavior support plan (Riffel, 2007). FBA has been used with students who have disabilities, as well as those who do not. 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 behaviors of concern, developing positive proactive behaviors, and increasing academic achievement (Sprague & Golly, 2005; Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, Lane, 2007).

For students with disabilities, an FBA is generally understood to be part of a comprehensive evaluation of a student that assists in determining the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the student needs, including the need for a positive behavior support plan. **As with other individualized evaluation procedures and consistent with regulatory requirements, parental consent is required for an FBA to be conducted as part of the initial evaluation or reevaluation when new data are collected. When teams use previously obtained data (e.g., schoolwide screening and/or disciplinary data), consent is not required; however, parental involvement in the FBA process is essential.**

An FBA must be conducted and behavioral interventions implemented when:

- The Individualized Education Program (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.

- A behavior violates a code of student conduct resulting in removals that constitute a change of placement (removal of more than 10 consecutive or more than 15 cumulative school days) and the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability.

- The school refers the student to law enforcement. An FBA must be conducted, as appropriate, when a behavior violates a code of student conduct resulting in removals that constitute a change of placement (removal of more than 10 consecutive or 15 cumulative school days) and the behavior is determined not to be related to his/her disability.

There is no one way to complete an FBA; rather the goal of the FBA process is to develop a hypothesis statement. The hypothesis is based on measurable and observational data, which leads a school team to identify the function of the behavior of concern. The procedures used to conduct an FBA include both direct and indirect methods (Figure 1). Regardless of the methods selected, there are four steps in the FBA process:

1. Define the behavior of concern.
2. Identify setting events, if present, that increase the likelihood of the occurrence of the behavior of concern.
3. Identify antecedent events that reliably predict (trigger) the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the behavior of concern.
4. Identify consequences that maintain the behavior.

Figure 1. FBA Methods

Indirect	Direct
• Archival Record Review • Problem-Solving Teaming Process • Behavioral Questionnaire/Survey • Functional Assessment Interview • Initial Line of Inquiry	• Scatterplot • A-B-C Anecdotal Observation • A-B-C Observation Checklist • Structured Direct Observation

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

When this occurs (antecedent) _____ , the student does (behavior of concern) _____ , in order to get or avoid (function) _____ .
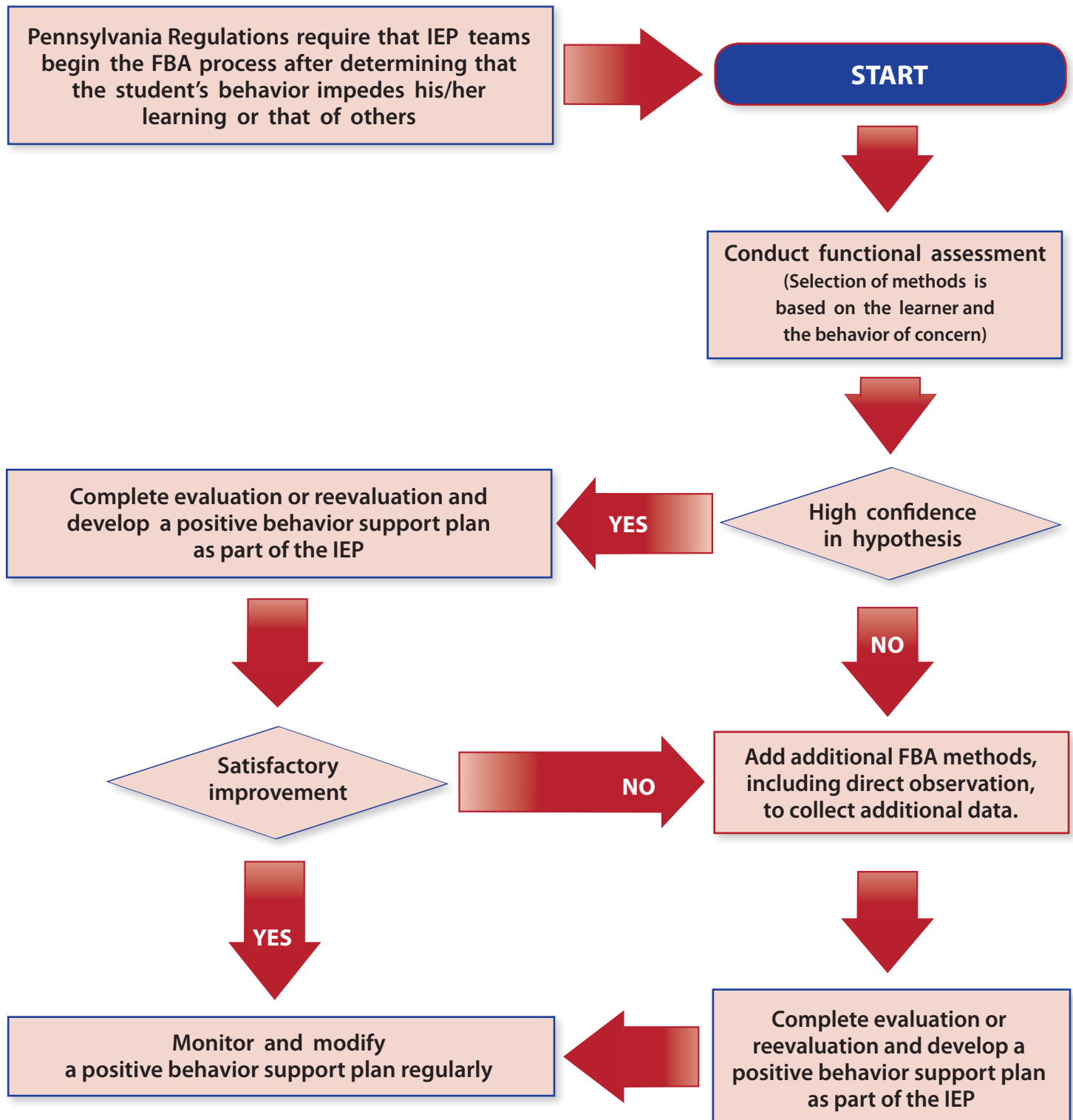
Below is a representation of the hypothesis statement:

Setting Event/ Antecedent (when this occurs)	→	Behavior of Concern (the student does)	→	Maintaining Consequence/Function (in order to get or avoid)
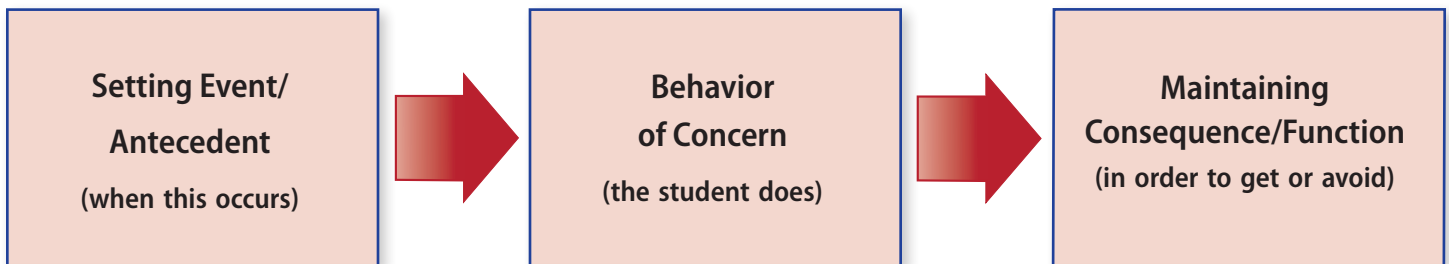
Under PA Chapters 14 and 711, when the IEP indicates in the special considerations portion of the IEP that the student's behavior impacts his/her learning or the learning of others, a positive behavior support plan based on a functional assessment of the behavior is required.

The flowchart in Figure 2 is provided to assist teams as they move through the process of developing a testable hypothesis. The hypothesis provides the basis for the development of a positive behavior support plan.

Figure 2.

Pennsylvania Regulations require that IEP teams begin the FBA process after determining that the student's behavior impedes his/her learning or that of others

START

Conduct functional assessment (Selection of methods is based on the learner and the behavior of concern)

High confidence in hypothesis

YES → Complete evaluation or reevaluation and develop a positive behavior support plan as part of the IEP

NO →

Satisfactory improvement

NO → Add additional FBA methods, including direct observation, to collect additional data.

YES → Monitor and modify a positive behavior support plan regularly

Complete evaluation or reevaluation and develop a positive behavior support plan as part of the IEP

Adapted from Horner, R. & Sugal, G. (2007). Function based support: Selected topics. Retrieved 3/27/15: http://tinyurl.com/n9pnh6f

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

References

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Tom Wolf, Governor