



What's the Big IDEA? #19

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. This series is designed to offer information about IDEA as amended in 2004. Each fact sheet will focus on a different aspect of IDEA.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

What is a BIP?

When a student's behavior interferes with his/her learning and/or the learning of others, the parents and school staff must meet to develop a plan to address the challenging behavior. The first step in developing a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is to complete a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), which is described in our IDEA fact sheet #18. Once the FBA is completed, the school team, which includes the parent, reviews and discusses the information they have gathered. The team will develop an "educated guess" (hypothesis) about the function of the challenging behavior – *why* the student engages in the behavior. Next, the team designs a positive plan to address the behavior – a BIP.

The purpose of a BIP is to *change* the problematic behavior. For example, the team may review the FBA information and hypothesize that Richard, a 4th grade student, shouts out in class in order to get his classmates' attention. So the team will develop strategies for Richard to get positive attention from his classmates in another way. The plan should include teaching Richard some new skills that will help him get his peers' attention. For example, one strategy could be to teach Richard some games that he can play with his classmates. As a result of not shouting out in class, Richard could be given time to receive positive attention from a classmate by playing a game. In this case, Richard's classmates also need to be included in the plan. They need to be taught to ignore Richard when he is shouting out in class. They also need to provide positive attention when he is behaving appropriately. The focus of a BIP is on developing *positive* behavioral intervention strategies.

Although we think of a BIP as a way to change a student's behavior, oftentimes, it is the people who interact with a student who need to change. They may need to change their approaches or responses to the student. This is why everyone who works with a student needs to be consistent in following the BIP.

A Behavior Intervention Plan:

- Uses the information collected through a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). A successful plan is closely aligned to the FBA.
- Specifically defines the problem behaviors and is based on the student's needs.
- Includes input from the student, family, special educators, general educators, administrators, and others who work with the student. *The plan is built on a student's strengths.*
- Describes what the student needs to learn and the supports that will be provided for the student to reach identified, measurable goals. The plan should be focused on teaching skills. It should also include any supports that are needed by the school staff.
- Clearly outlines the responsibilities of everyone involved in the plan – school staff, student, and parents.
- Includes a process for data collection to measure and report progress.
- Should be a work in progress that is continually monitored and revised as needed. It must be a plan that everyone, especially the student, is willing to follow. If it looks great on paper, but is never followed, it is worthless and should be updated by the IEP team.



A behavior contract is not a Behavior Intervention Plan. Behavior contracts are generally drawn up as punitive measures with little or no thought about the function of problem behavior and no supports offered to the student. Punishment often makes behavior worse. The student is not learning how to change the behavior; he or she is only experiencing a negative consequence for the behavior.



Crisis Plan

There are some students whose challenging behavior may cause or result in a crisis (the threat of the child harming him/herself or another). For those students, the team should incorporate a crisis or emergency provision in the student's BIP. A crisis plan outlines the steps the team will take after a problem behavior has happened. The focus is on the immediate elimination of the dangerous behavior and outlines an agreed upon approach to stopping the behavior. By having a crisis plan in place, the team can respond appropriately and better protect your child's safety in a dangerous situation. The BIP should spell out the exact conditions under which a crisis or emergency plan can be used. As a parent, you should be involved in developing the BIP. Pay particular attention to the types of interventions that are suggested for the crisis plan. This is where restraint and seclusion are often offered as interventions. There are strict policies regarding the use of restraint and seclusion. Ask your school for a copy of their policy. Be aware that you can object to these practices being used with your child. Work with the team to develop some positive non-invasive alternatives.

Here are some other considerations for developing a crisis plan:

- The staff involved with implementing a crisis plan should be appropriately trained.
- Emergency steps are appropriate only when less intrusive or restrictive interventions have been unsuccessful.
- Parents, guardians, and school personnel should be notified regarding any incident that requires the use of the crisis plan.
- Following an incident, the team should write a crisis report that includes ways to *prevent* future occurrences of the behavior.
- A thorough evaluation should be part of the plan so the team can assess both the impact and possible negative effects of the crisis plan.

When the BIP is part of a student's IEP, it **must** be reviewed at least annually. However, a BIP should always be re-evaluated whenever any member of the team that developed the BIP (remember, that includes you, the parent) feels that it is necessary and/or the challenging behavior remains an issue. The team may need to change the hypothesis, interventions, and the supports provided for the student or staff.

For more detailed information about Behavior Intervention Plans, consult our handbook, *Positive Directions for Student Behavior*. Call Parents Reaching Out at 1-800-524-5176 to request your copy or visit our website at www.parentsreachingout.org to download the handbook.

"What's the Big IDEA?" fact sheets are developed by Parents Reaching Out under a grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education. Views expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the federal government.