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# STRENGTHENING FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR IN AN IEP

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## Introduction

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) document is a legal plan for special education which is created by a team that includes educators and you, the child's family. The IEP contains goals to promote your child's success in school and should, if needed, include goals on improving their behavior. The IEP provides information about the specifically designed instruction, related services, and other supports for your child (often referred to as accommodations and modifications), the educators who will provide supports, and how progress on the IEP will be collected and reviewed. The IEP team meets to create an IEP, for a yearly update, or for a new concern. Families might find it helpful to plan ahead for IEP meetings. For example, be prepared to talk about other areas of your child's life, such as health, eating habits, social behaviors, emotions, or academic level. This brief is designed for families in preparing for an IEP meeting and provides tips to help strengthen the team discussion on behavior goals and supports needed for your child.



## IEP Document

Depending on the needs of your child, the school might use some of the following types of assessments: cognitive, academic, speech, and/or functional behavioral assessment (FBA). The results from these assessments will become part of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The assessment portion of an IEP is called the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP). This section includes the results of the evaluation, the current level of your child in several areas, and is used to develop goals to address any needs. This section might also identify areas of strength that can be included in the IEP.

When there is a concern about your child's behavior, schools might use different assessments. This might include observations in the school and classroom, behavior rating scales, and/or surveys completed by teachers, families, and students. Sometimes a more specific assessment of the behavior is used that is called a functional behavior assessment (FBA). An FBA looks at the reason for the behavior and should be completed by an individual with behavioral training who might be part of the school team (i.e., School Psychologist) or an outside consultant that helps the school (i.e., BCBA). For more information on FBA's see Behavior Assessment, Plans, and Positive Supports.

## Behavioral Needs in the IEP

### IEP Goals

Based on the information in the assessment part of the IEP (i.e., PLAAFP), the IEP team will develop goals. Goals should start with how your child would do in their classroom but can be adjusted based on their individual

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) document is a legal plan for special education. The IEP often includes assessment, goals, services, and accommodations that address the needs for your child across academic, behavioral, and social-emotional areas.

### Tip

If you have a concern about your child, raise it to the IEP team. If you can do this before the IEP meeting it will help to make sure your needs are addressed in the development of the IEP. Some example questions could be: How has my child been doing academically? Behaviorally? Socially? Are there specific activities that seem more challenging than others?

needs. Some areas of focus for behavior goals could be to increase desired behaviors. For example, if your child is not completing homework, the goal could focus on homework completion. Similarly, there might be a need to decrease behaviors. If your child's behavior has been displaying aggressive behaviors, then the goal could focus on learning social skills or increasing self-regulation.

IEP goals should be specific, measurable, objective, and able to be measured in a reasonable amount of time. A goal might measure the percentage of completion of a task, the number of times (trials) that your child shows the desired behavior, an increased number of times (frequency) of the desired behavior, or a quicker response to a request (latency). For example, if it takes the student too long after lunch to get started on homework, a goal could be that after transitioning from lunch, the student will start their seatwork within 3 minutes or 85% of the time.





## Behavior Support Plan

Sometimes a child with social or behavioral needs will also have a behavior support plan (BSP) also known as a behavior intervention plan (BIP). A BSP is a document that describes a plan to address the behavior and its reason (function) that was identified in the FBA. It might include strategies that can be used before the behavior, that address the behavior, and/or that address what happens after the behavior occurs. The ultimate goal is to have your child use appropriate behaviors. Often the most desirable behavior is difficult to learn right away. When that happens, a BSP might identify a “replacement behavior” (or “in between goal”) that serves the same reason (function) as the inappropriate behavior. For example, if your child is ripping up homework, the ultimate goal is still to have them complete homework. A replacement behavior might have them do some part of the homework to earn a break. Once they start doing any part of the homework, the BSP can include strategies to reward homework completion.

Along the way, other strategies might be used—such as making sure your child can do the homework and does not need additional academic instruction. Overall, the BSP should support your child’s success and behavioral development. Refer to the following for more information on BSPs and their connection with IDEA (Dear Colleague Letter on Supporting Behavior of Students with Disabilities) and positive behavior interventions and support (PBIS) for students with behavior needs (Behavior Assessment, Plans, and Positive Supports).



If your child’s educational progress is being negatively impacted by behavioral issues, behavioral goals and objectives should be addressed by the IEP team and included as needed in the IEP. This might include IEP goals, a behavior intervention plan (also known as a behavior support plan), or accommodations and/or modifications to help them succeed in school.

### Tip

Families should feel comfortable discussing strategies that have worked at home, including those that have been unhelpful. Some example questions could be: Do you see any common patterns that occur before and after the behavior? What types of data will we use and for how long? How are my child’s current goals progressing on the IEP? Are there other goals and supports we should consider?



## Accommodations and/or Modifications

Accommodations and/or modifications are often found within a child's IEP plan. Accommodations help to improve access for education (ex. extended time on tests or preferred seating). Modifications change the way that material is taught to or expected from students (ex. a change in behavioral expectations). Refer to the Center of Parent Information & Resources for more information on accommodations and/or modifications (Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students).

Families should request and review a list of accommodations and modifications to help the team choose the most appropriate ones to help their child. Make sure that if a specific accommodation and/or modification is in the IEP, the service plan contains details confirming when and where the accommodation(s) and/or modification(s) will be used.

## Monitoring and Follow Up

The IEP team should track the progress of your child's behavior, reviewing the data as a team, and making adjustments to the strategies if needed.

## Tracking Progress & Reviewing Data

- Collecting data helps to ensure that any goal, BSP, or accommodation is meeting the needs of your child. This includes that the behavior is decreasing (if undesired) or increasing (if desired). The method by which progress and data are monitored and collected is extremely important. IEP goals need to list the type of monitoring that will occur with each goal. Simply stating "data will be collected" is insufficient.

- The IEP team will select a reasonable amount of time to come together to see how the student is responding to the strategies within the behavior support plan and meeting the IEP goals.

## Making Adjustments

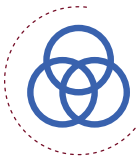
If your child's behavior is not improving (progressing towards their goals), the first consideration might be that the behavior support plan is targeting the wrong reason (function) for the behavior. This could lead to more observation to collect data or a review of the data already collected.

The IEP team should be able to observe a child's progress on behavioral goals. This can be done through on-going monitoring and data collection.

### Tip

Ask the team to describe any graphs or data that they show you and explain what it means for your child's goals. It can be helpful to know where and when the data were collected. Some example questions could be: What do the data say regarding my child's progress on these goals? Based on the data, should we continue, increase, or fade supports? If the data show my child is not progressing, can we revisit the FBA?

The IEP is an important document that directs how your child receives special education in school. Families play an important role in special education, as you know your child best. Sharing what you know about your child, raising concerns, and celebrating triumphs help to ensure that your child receives special education that addresses their needs and promotes their success.



## Additional Resources

[Supporting Students with Disabilities in a Classroom Brief<sup>1</sup>](#)

[An Overview of Endrew F. Brief<sup>2</sup>](#)

[Strategies for Setting Data-Driven Behavioral IEP Goals<sup>3</sup>](#)

[PBIS.org Families Topic<sup>4</sup>](#)

[PBIS.org Disability Topic<sup>5</sup>](#)

## Embedded Hyperlinks

1. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-students-with-disabilities-in-the-classroom-within-a-pbis-framework>
2. <https://www.pbis.org/resource/an-overview-of-endrew-f-implications-for-student-behavior>
3. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED604948>
4. <https://www.pbis.org/topics/family>
5. <https://www.pbis.org/topics/disability>

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