Module: Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

Overview of Functional Behavior Assessment

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Functional behavior assessment (FBA) is a systematic set of strategies that is used to determine the underlying function or purpose of a behavior, so that an effective intervention plan can be developed. FBA consists of describing the interfering or problem behavior, identifying antecedent or consequent events that control the behavior, developing a hypothesis of the behavior, and testing the hypothesis. Data collection is an important part of the FBA process. Often, teachers/practitioners use functional communication training (FCT), differential reinforcement, response interruption/redirection, extinction, and stimulus control/environmental modification to address these behaviors in learners with ASD.

Evidence

FBA meets evidence-based criteria with five single-subject and one group design studies across ages, as well as in the domains of behavior and communication.

With what ages is FBA effective?

According to the evidence-based studies, learners with ASD ranged in age from 3 to 15 years with the majority of studies showing the effectiveness of functional behavior assessment with elementary age learners.

What skills or intervention goals can be addressed by FBA?

FBA targets skills in the domains of behavior and communication, usually with a focus of decreasing inappropriate behavior and teaching or increasing appropriate communicative alternatives. The studies in the evidence base targeted behaviors described as severe, stereotypical, disruptive, escape-motivated, rejecting, and leading. Replacement skills included more appropriate forms of communication such as signing, pointing, talking, and the use of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices.

In what settings can FBA be effectively used?

In the evidence base, functional behavior assessment procedures were implemented in a variety of home, school, and community settings.

Evidence Base

The studies cited in this section document that this practice meets the NPDC on ASD's criteria for an evidence-based practice. This list is not exhaustive; other quality studies may exist that were not included.

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Preschool

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Elementary

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Middle/High School

Butler, L. R., & Luiselli, J. K. (2007). Escape-maintained problem behavior in a child with autism: Antecedent functional analysis and intervention evaluation of non-contingent escape and instructional fading. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 9*(4), 195-202.

Selected Additional References

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Aspy, R., & Grossman, B. G. (2007). *The ziggurat model*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Bregman, J. D., Zager, D., & Gerdtz, J. (2005). Behavioral interventions. In F. R. Volkmar, R. Paul, A. Klin, & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Handbook of autism and pervasive developmental disorder, 3rd ed.* (pp. 897-924). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Carr, E. G., Horner, R. H., Turnbull, A. P., Marquis, J. G., McLaughlin, D. M., McAtee, M. L., et al., (1999). *Positive behavior support for people with developmental disabilities: A research synthesis.* Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.

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Fox, L., Dunlap, G., & Buschbacher, P. (2000). Understanding and intervening with children's interfering behavior: A comprehensive approach. In A. M. Wetherby & B. M. Prizant (Eds.), *Autism spectrum disorders: A transactional developmental perspective, Volume 9* (pp. 307-332). Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Company.

Henry, S., & Myles, B. S. (2007). *The comprehensive autism planning system (CAPS) for individuals with Asperger's syndrome, autism, and related disabilities: Integrating best practices throughout the student's day.* Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

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Martin, C. A., Drasgow, E., Halle, J. W., & Brucker, J. M. (2005). Teaching a child with autism and severe language delays to reject: Direct and indirect effects of functional communication training. *Educational Psychology, 25*(2&3), 287-304.

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O'Neill, R. E., & Sweetland-Baker, M. (2001). Brief report: An assessment of stimulus generalization and contingency effects in functional communication training with two students with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 31*(2), 235-240.