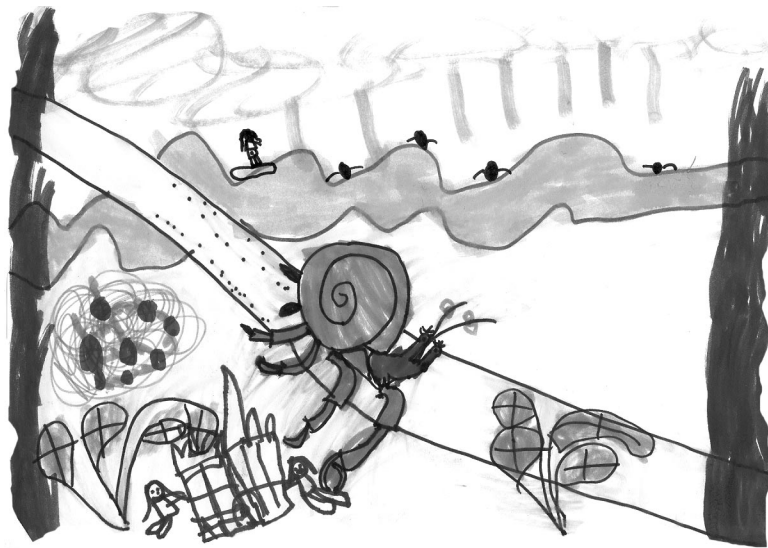


9. BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS

Many children in dependency exhibit inappropriate behaviors. These behaviors can be learned or may develop as a result of the child's experiences or disability. These behaviors can interfere with the child's ability to learn, maintain meaningful relationships and function in everyday life. These behaviors may also interfere with the learning or safety of others.

When a child is exhibiting negative or inappropriate behaviors, the advocate should investigate further. Often negative behaviors are a symptom of other problems.

Communication can also help to minimize problems. If possible, the advocate should keep teachers and services providers informed of situations that may lead to negative behaviors (acting out) such as:



- Child is removed or returned to biological parent
- Recent abuse or neglect
- A change in visitation or placement
- Extreme stress (i.e., child is preparing to testify in court)
- Health or emotional problems

Informed service providers can be prepared and are often able to respond more appropriately to the child's needs, minimizing unwanted behavior.

Behaviors require attention when they continue over a period of time. Such behaviors include:

- Impatient, angry or disruptive behavior
- Inappropriate language
- Inappropriate treatment of peers, teachers, caregivers, etc.
- Uncooperative
- Chronic absenteeism or truancy at school
- Self-isolation

- Excessive sadness or depression

If the child continues to exhibit disruptive behaviors at school even with counseling, classroom interventions and modifications, the child should have a Behavioral Assessment. The assessment will attempt to reveal the causes of negative behaviors and offer potential solutions for addressing the behaviors.

Indications of a need for a Behavioral Assessment include:

- Exhibiting the behaviors listed above
- Multiple suspensions
- Multiple calls from teacher
- Multiple requests to remove child from school (for less than a day- i.e. after lunch)
- Child often sent out of classroom to spend time in office, etc.
- Many missed recesses/field trips due to discipline problems
- Multiple absences/tardies

The IDEA requires a Functional Behavioral Assessment whenever a child with a disability has his or her educational placement changed for disciplinary reasons. A change of placement occurs if the child is removed (suspended) for more than 10 school days. The 10-day rule applies if the removal is consecutive (10 days in a row) or cumulative (10 days in total) (see section on “Discipline”)

The Behavioral Assessment can be included as part of the assessment plan formed when a child is referred for assessment to special education. A Behavioral Assessment can also be conducted independently.

A reassessment should be considered if the child has a current Behavioral Intervention Plan (a formal written plan to address the child’s negative behaviors) but continues to exhibit negative, disruptive or anti-social behaviors.

PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

The goal of the Behavioral Assessment is to discover the reasons for the child’s negative behavior. The IEP team and relevant professionals will try to determine if a behavior is the direct result of the child’s disability (such as ADHD), a symptom of unmet needs related to his or her disability (a child with a reading disability is embarrassed so disrupts class when asked to read aloud) or is unrelated to the disability.

Once the cause of the behaviors is identified, the IEP team can develop a plan to address the child’s unmet needs and teach the child more positive behaviors.

A Behavioral Assessment is requested by formal letter addressed to the special education coordinator at the child’s school. It is best to send the letter by registered mail:

The letter should include:

- The name and current placement of the child
- The advocate's name and relationship to the child
- The advocate's request for a functional behavioral assessment
- A detailed description of the child's behaviors
- How the advocate believe those behaviors interfere with the child's ability to receive a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)
- Contact information and if appropriate, a statement indicating a desire to participate in the behavioral assessment plan development.

(See sample letter in appendix)

Conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment

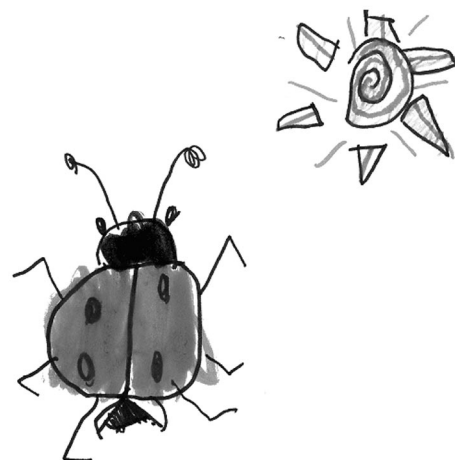
The IDEA laws do not define assessment protocol. The Behavioral Assessment plan should address all developmental areas including physical, social, cognitive and emotional.

For a Behavioral Assessment the IEP team will:

- Identify specific behaviors that need to be addressed (disruptive, counterproductive behaviors)
- Determine when behaviors are most likely to occur
- Identify potential causes of the problem behaviors—how the behavior serves the child, addresses or indicates an unmet need
- Identify services to address unmet needs
- Identify alternative behaviors the child can learn to replace problem behaviors and meet his or her needs
- Establish instruction and positive behavioral interventions to help child modify his or her behavior
- Include needed services and interventions in the child's IEP or Behavior Intervention Plan
- Establish procedures to evaluate the success of the services and interventions

NOTE: If the behavior does or could place the child or others in danger, a crisis intervention plan should be developed.

Information on Crisis Intervention Plans is beyond the scope of this publication.



The information gathered from the assessments will be used to form a Positive Behavior Support/Intervention Plan. (See special section on "Behavior Plans")

Existing Plan:

If the child already has a Behavioral Intervention Plan, and continues to experience problems, the IEP team needs to meet to review the plan. The team must determine if the child has additional unmet needs and develop other strategies that will address the problem behavior.

For more information:

Humboldt County Department of Mental Health

1711 Third Street

Eureka, CA 95501

707-268-5728