Overview of Step 2: Conducting the Functional Assessment

The functional assessment-based intervention model employs a systematic approach to designing, implementing, and evaluating functional assessment based procedures developed by Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, and Lane (2007). This video introduces you to **Step 2: Conducting the Functional Assessment.** This step begins at the conclusion of **Step 1: Identifying students who need a FABI**.

One benefit of the function-based approach is that it avoids punishment procedures and uses an instructional approach by teaching a replacement behavior. This process is respectful to students because it recognizes the legitimacy of their behavior by identifying what they are using the behavior to access or to avoid, which is then used to teach a more socially appropriate replacement behavior to meet the student's needs.

For example, some students will act out and be aggressive to get out of something that they are struggling with, such as algebra, which is then reinforced by being dismissed to go sit in the hallway. Whereas another student who is also displays acting out during his or her reading group may act out to receive extra attention from the teacher or to receive reactions from his or her peer.

There are many ways to conduct a functional assessment, including descriptive methods and experimental methods. In this video, we focus on **descriptive methods** including: educational record reviews; interviews with teachers, parents, and the student receiving the FABI; and direct observations using antecedent-behavior and consequence (also referred to as ABC) recording.

In Step 2, school-based teams conduct the functional behavior assessment (or FBA) to discover the reasons why challenging behaviors occur (function) by identifying what the behavior is, when it occurs, and what the consequences are that are maintain maintaining behavior. By discovering the purpose, you can identify the reasons *why* the behavior is occuring. All behaviors are maintained by one of two functions, which are to access (get) something, which we call **positive reinforcement**, or to avoid (get out of something), which we call **negative reinforcement**. For example, people may access or avoid (a) attention, (b) activities or tangibles, and/or (c) sensory experiences..

In this process, teams focus on one (or in some cases two), **target behavior**(s) to determine the maintaining function in a systematic process.

This systematic approach begins with a **review of school records** and informal observations in the classroom.

Next, teams identify and operationally define the target behavior during **the teacher interview**; this definition is carried forward through the duration of the functional assessment. Glen Dunlap and colleagues (1993) have an interview tool called the *Preliminary Functional Assessment Surve*y. In our work, we use this tool for both the teacher and **parent interview**. Then, parent and **student interviews** are administered focusing on the same target behavior identified in the teacher interview. Lee Kern and colleagues (1993) have an interview tool for student's called the *Student Assessment*. Through these interviews the team obtains information about the student's strengths and needs as well as information on potential function(s).

Interviews are followed by three hours of direct observation (**A-B-C recordings**) over the course of at least three sessions.

To supplement the interviews and observational data, **rating scales** are used to assess possible acquisition (can't do) or performance (won't do) deficits from the teacher and parent's perspectives. One example of a rating scale to accomplish this task is the **Social Skills Improvement System (SSiS) Rating Scale** developed by Frank Gresham and Steve Elliottt.

To assist in analyzing all of these data gathered across the function assessment we, organized these data using a graphic organizer tool we call the ***Function Matrix***.

This allows us to visually identify the function or functions of the target behavior. As noted earlier, there are two possible functions, which are: (a) positive reinforcement, which refers to consequences related to getting access to something and (b) negative reinforcement, which refers to consequences related to getting out of or avoiding something. These run across the top of the function matrix. Running down the side are the things or stimuli the behavior is accessing or avoiding, such as (a) attention, (b) activities/tangibles, and (c) sensory.

A hypothesis statement of the function of the target behavior is written based on the information gleaned from the *Function Matrix.*

Finally, teams select and operationalize the **replacement behavior** - a behavior that socially acceptable and will result in the student's need being met (the function) and help that student have a more successful school experience.

Next steps will include, **Step 3: Collecting Baseline Data**, where we identify the behavior to be measured, the dimension of interest and learn how to select and measure the behavior using an appropriate behavior measurement system, **Step 4: Designing the Intervention** using the Function-based Intervention Decision Model which includes two questions to guide intervention design, to be certain interventions are directly linked to results of the functional behavior assessment (FBA). And **finally Step 5: Testing the Intervention**, which

will focus on answering three questions to draw accurate conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the FABI.

To learn more about these processes and some of these Functional assessment tools, you may explore our videos on: *Operationally Defining Behavior: Target and Replacement Behaviors,* the *Function Matrix*, and *FABI Planning Form*. You may also review **Applied Behavior Analysis** (2nd edition) by Cooper, Heron and Heward (2007) and **Functional Behavior Assessment and Function-Based Intervention: An Effective, Practical Approach** by Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, and Lane (2007).