

## Behavior Plans in Your Child's Individualized Education Plan

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There are a couple of things about me you just can't change. I will live in Texas as long as I'm breathin', and I love working with children who have special needs. I have been an EBD teacher for a number of years. What's that you ask? Well, if you've been to meetings with professionals who work with children who have special needs, you know we like to throw around letters of the alphabet. EBD means Emotional and Behavioral Disorder.

Let's get this started with some sayings for you to remember. First, the barking dog gets the bone. That means if the "pros" (as I will call school personnel), say anything you don't understand or you disagree with, it's time to say, "hold your horses."

Two things have been proven: 1) Every child can learn; we are simply talking about the time it will take, and 2) if the pros are seeing a behavior, then there's a reason for it. The reason why a behavior is happening is sometimes the hardest thing to figure out. Often the parent's input gives the pros insight to why the behavior is occurring. Are the pros saying "this child IS a problem" or "this child HAS a problem." There's a big difference between the two statements.

A Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP) is a serious process to add to a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). It says that the student has a behavior problem that is interfering with his/her educational progress. You are stating that the child's behavior plan is part of their educational needs for success in school. This will be reviewed and updated each year and follow him or her from teacher to teacher and school to school. A BIP must be followed across all educational settings with every "pro" who works with your child. This is not to say the child is bad, but that they have special needs and there is a protocol to follow, if needed.

Before a BIP is implemented, a Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) must be performed by a qualified person (school psychologist). And before a FBA is performed, hopefully you have worked extensively with the teacher and tried some interventions. Interventions are ways of redirecting an undesired behavior. To change a behavior you must have the patience to teach and reteach the desired behavior, at home and school.

This is hard to implement at home with one child, so you can imagine a



teacher having the time and patience to work with a student with a BIP. Be supportive of the teacher. The teacher and parent must form a partnership to come up with meaningful incentives and consequences for the desired behavior. By saying meaningful, I mean meaningful for the child not the teacher or parent. Interventions should be tried (with a little modification) for six weeks before it can be judged as successful or not. The following is a list of information to document during this process:

Are there antecedents to the behavior? (what happens before the behavior begins?) If so, is it predictable or is there a consistent pattern?

What's the environment of the behavior? (where does it occur and not occur, e.g., with certain people, places, level of noise?)

What does the child hope to get from exhibiting this behavior? (attention, timeout, etc.) What behavior can be replaced to gain the desired results?

If the interventions fall short, then a new FBA must be preformed. This also takes weeks and a lot of paperwork. You will be contacted by several school officials asking to meet with you and asking for permission for several things, such as contacting your doctor, observing your child, and testing your child.

Upon completion of the FBA, your child's IEP team will decide what action will be best for your child. For a BIP to become legally part of a student's IEP it must:

be stated in a positive manner and describe the behavior you want to see; be measurable (a certain percent of the time or how many minutes); and

define the environment where the said behavior should be seen (in the classroom, the gym, etc.).

The BIP along with the FBA can be very useful tools, when used correctly with the parent's partnership with the teacher. Gathering useful information during the process can mean the difference between correcting an unwanted behavior or not.

*In addition to being an EBD teacher in Texas, Roger is the father of Michael, 24, who has CdLS.*

