

BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT TIPS

Five Enhancements to Address Complex Needs

For students with autism, Down syndrome, intellectual disability and other complex support needs, traditional functional behavior assessment methods are too often insufficient and/or ineffective. Following are five ways to enhance behavior assessments and questions to ask.

1. Match assessment elements to the situation.

- What is already known about the concerning behaviors (e.g., type, pattern)?
- Who needs to be involved and what degree of collaboration is required?
- Which indirect and direct data sources will provide a comprehensive picture of the student, the environment and contexts, and contributing factors?
- What general design of assessment matches the situation (i.e., brief, comprehensive, comprehensive-complex, or wraparound)?

2. Ensure team collaboration is thoughtful and infused throughout the assessment.

- Who informs the intake and framing of the assessment elements and process?
- How are team members heard through the data collection and reporting?
- How can team members aid in clarifying findings and designing supports?
- What level of understanding and agreement is necessary to implement, monitor, and adjust the behavior support plan?

3. Understand the person and relevant factors.

- Is there an accurate and sufficiently comprehensive understanding of the person and the relevant factors?
- Which elements of the assessment will capture that?
- Is there exploration of factors not traditionally considered in a behavior assessment?
- How may the assessment be adjusted based on emerging findings?

4. Formulate data-based descriptions and hypotheses. Test the hypotheses with trial supports.

- Have questions related to the who, what, where, when, how much/how long, and why of the person's use of concerning behavior been answered?
- Have questions gone beyond function, asking, for example, "Why is the individual using concerning behavior to escape/obtain?"
- Have possible supports been matched to the hypothesis?
- Have those supports been tried to see if they are effective?

5. Center the individual and their family.

- How is the individual and the family recognized as the center of the assessment?
- Is their "voice" reflected in the final report and support plan?
- Is the individual's home life and their circles of relationships sufficiently described?
- Has the individual's identity/ies been affirmed throughout the assessment?

