Research Highlights

Topic: Positive Behavior Support


**BOTTOM LINE**
 Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBS) is IDEA’s preferred strategy for dealing with challenging behaviors of students with disabilities. IDEA requires PBS to be considered in all cases of students whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others, reflecting IDEA’s preference for the use of state-of-the-art technology in special education. This article explains the legal ramifications of these requirements for responsible agencies, including schools, school boards, other local educational agencies, and state educational agencies.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Positive Behavior Support has four components:
  - Systems change activities,
  - Environmental alterations,
  - Skill instruction activities, and
  - Behavioral consequence activities

- IDEA requires the IEP team to consider PBS in two circumstances:
  - During the IEP process, when appropriate, as a special factor, when the child’s behavior impedes the child’s learning or that of others.
  - When amending an IEP to address behavioral problems.

- IDEA specifically requires the IEP team to conduct a functional behavior assessment and to implement a behavioral plan for a child whose behavior has resulted in disciplinary action. Since these requirements point to an amendment of the IEP to address behavior, the requirements “to consider” the use of PBS are also triggered.
- Functional Behavior Assessment is inseparable from the research and practice literature on PBS.

- We believe that IDEA creates a rebuttable presumption in favor of PBS and against the use of aversive interventions.

- PBS is an integral component of an appropriate education for individuals with behavioral challenges.

- “To consider” the use of PBS requires:
  - Sufficient understanding of PBS and how it works
  - The ability to implement PBS
  - Discussion about whether to employ PBS
  - Detailing the reasoning behind any decision to employ or not employ PBS

- To ensure that the requirement to consider PBS is adequately met, states need to have personnel training and systems change to support the capacity to implement PBS when it is appropriate.

**METHOD**

- This article resulted from the analysis of the literature on PBS and the legal requirements set out in IDEA.

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