FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS AND
BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLANS

The School Social Work Association of America believes that all students should have equal access to educational opportunities. SSWAA understands that students who present the most difficult behavioral challenges in our nation’s schools require a level of intervention that in many instances currently is not being met. These students are often ill equipped to meet the social, behavioral, and academic expectations of the traditional general education classroom. In recent years, court rulings, the inclusion model, and federal legislation (IDEA ’97) have returned many students from segregated programs to general education classes. Many teachers find themselves overwhelmed and unprepared to address the increased number of behavioral problems in their classrooms. Students whose behavior impedes their own ability to learn often interfere with the learning opportunities of others and with teachers’ abilities to communicate increasingly demanding curricula. As a result, the learning environment for all students may be negatively impacted.

In order to decrease the reliance on punitive exclusion of students who present behavioral challenges, IDEA ’97 requires and SSWAA supports the development of a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and a positive behavioral support plan (PBSP—formerly Behavioral Intervention Plans—BIP). School social workers have specific training and expertise critical to developing workable and effective FBAs and BIPs. However, these plans are only as effective as the commitment of every member of the team and of staff involved in their implementation. A positive change in the behavioral and learning environments of all classrooms will only be achieved through the consistent development, implementation, and evaluation of these plans.

Therefore, SSWAA believes that the U.S. Department of Education and State departments of education must commit additional resources to develop model functional behavioral assessments and positive behavioral support plans, and to provide training for all staff responsible for meeting these critical expectations.


Approved by the SSWAA Board of Directors on May 1, 2001.
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