

Functional Assessment Interview

When assessing the behaviour, we need to look for the relationship between the behaviour and the environment in which it occurs.

- assess the function of the behaviour (with at least two observers)
- select an AAC (alternative means of communication for the student)
- indicate the message or behaviour of choice to replace the undesired behaviour
- teach the new method of communicating through repeated trials which occur prior to the escalating behaviour occurring (see preliminary behaviours to escalated behaviour)

The interview should include descriptions of:

- the behaviour(s)
- where/when they occur (situations, activities, people, sensory experiences, and other factors which increase & decrease the occurrence of the behaviour)
- the preliminary aspects to the behaviour (any preliminary communicative behaviours)
- current consequences for the behaviour
- how effective the behaviour is for the person in getting what s/he wants
- some alternatives for the behavior
- how the person presently communicates
- motivators or reinforcers for the person
- history of the behaviour and attempted solutions

When we see predictable behaviour in regular contexts, this is a good indicator that the individual understands cause and effect. Our goal should be to teach the child new skills that will help meet their needs or functions. Functional communication training (FCT) (Durance, 1990, pg. 23), involves both the assessment and function/purpose of the behaviour as well as the teaching of an alternative method to communicate that need.