

Adaptive behavior rating scales are designed to address the following areas:

- ✓ **communication** – interacting with others, talking, writing, using the phone
- ✓ **self-care** – eating, dressing, hygiene, toileting, grooming
- ✓ **home-living** – caring for clothes, housekeeping, property maintenance, food preparation, cooking, budgeting
- ✓ **social** – getting along with others, being aware of other people’s feelings, forming relationships
- ✓ **community use** – travel within community, shopping, obtaining services in the community (doctor, dentist, and setting up utilities), using public transportation
- ✓ **self-direction** – making choices about how to use one’s time, following a schedule, seeking assistance, deciding what to do in new situations
- ✓ **health and safety** – making choices about what to eat, illness identification and treatment, avoiding danger, relationships and sexuality
- ✓ **functional academics** – reading, writing, math skills, telling time
- ✓ **leisure** – using available time when not working or in school, choosing age-appropriate activities
- ✓ **work** – work-related attitudes and social behaviors, completion of tasks, persistent effort/stamina.

Who should I talk to if I want more information on adaptive behavior?

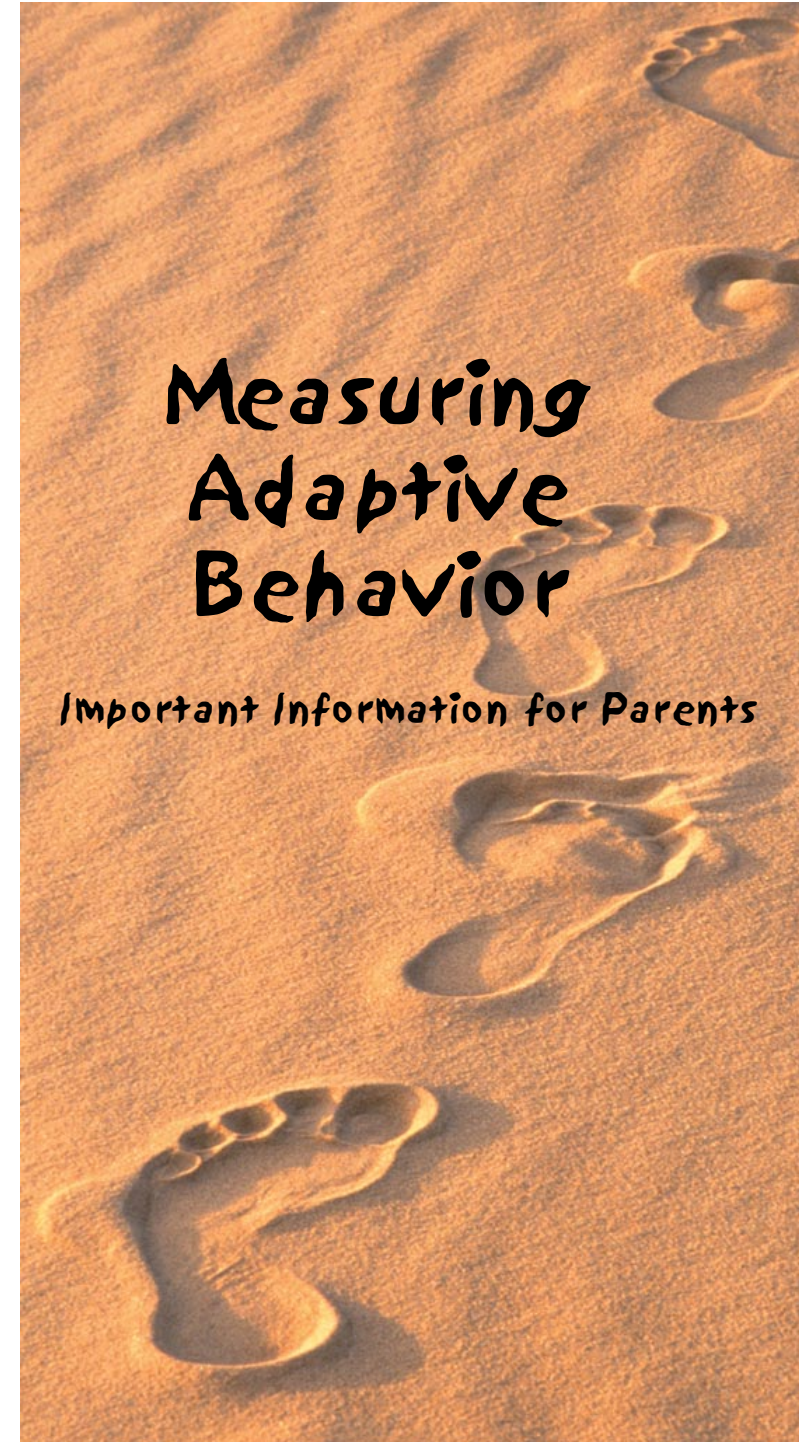
Your questions about adaptive behavior are important. You can get more information about adaptive behavior from your school social worker, school psychologist, school guidance counselor, special education teacher, or district ESE director. In addition, you may contact the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, at (850) 245-0478.



John L. Winn, Commissioner
ESE 312531

Measuring Adaptive Behavior

Important Information for Parents



Background

An adaptive behavior measure is a specific overall assessment of independent living skills. It is an important tool in considering eligibility for students with mental handicaps and for developing effective educational interventions. Parent input is an essential part of the adaptive behavior assessment process since there are many daily living skills that are observed for the most part at home and are not seen in the educational setting.

What is adaptive behavior?

Adaptive behavior refers to the skills that people need to function independently at home, at school, and in the community. Adaptive behavior skills include

- ✓ **communication and social skills** (interacting and communicating with other people)
- ✓ **independent living skills** (shopping, budgeting, and cleaning)
- ✓ **personal care skills** (eating, dressing, and grooming)
- ✓ **employment/work skills** (following directions, completing tasks, and getting to work on time)
- ✓ **functional academics** (reading, working out math problems, and telling time).

Teaching adaptive behavior skills is often part of exceptional student education (ESE) program for students with disabilities.

Why do we measure adaptive behavior?

If it is suspected that your child has a mental handicap, an adaptive behavior assessment must be completed. The information gathered through an adaptive behavior assessment is used along with other

assessment information so that the eligibility staffing committee can determine if your child is eligible for special education services. As part of this process, you will be asked questions about your child's adaptive behavior skills. You are an important person in the evaluation process. The information collected is used to compare your child to other children of the same age and cultural background.

The adaptive behavior assessment also helps identify specific skills that need to be taught to your child. Gaining adaptive behavior skills can impact a person's daily life and affect his or her ability to respond to particular situations or to the environment. Adaptive behavior skills are as important to a student's success as are academic skills. A closer look at your child's adaptive behavior skills will determine if a plan should be developed that will help to strengthen those skills. If necessary, measurable goals (including benchmarks and objectives) may also be developed as part of your child's individual educational plan (IEP).

Finally, because adaptive behaviors are important in many different settings, parents can use information about adaptive behavior skills as they work with their child at home or in the community. An adaptive behavior assessment may reveal that your child needs to be taught the skills it takes in order to get dressed for school without your help, or it may show that your older child needs to learn how to manage the money earned from his or her part-time job.

How is adaptive behavior data gathered?

The measurement of adaptive behavior should include surveys of the child's behavior and skills in a variety of settings including his or her classroom, school,

home, and neighborhood or community. Since it is not possible for one person to observe a child in all of the key environments, measurement of adaptive behavior depends on the feedback from a number of people.

Because parents have many chances to observe their child in a variety of settings, they are usually the best sources of information about adaptive behavior. The most common method for gathering information about a child's adaptive behavior skills in the home environment is to have a school social worker, school psychologist, or guidance counselor interview you using a formal adaptive behavior assessment rating scale. These individuals may interview you at home, or hold a meeting at the school to talk with you about your child's behavior. Adaptive behavior information is also obtained from school personnel who work with your child, in order to understand how the child functions in the school environment.

Do expectations about adaptive behavior change as students get older?

Age is a very important factor in the measurement of adaptive behavior. What we expect of children and young adults changes as they get older. We expect older children to have more knowledge and skills than younger children. Behavior that is acceptable for younger children may not be acceptable for older children. For example, temper tantrums, although not desirable, are not unusual for a two-year-old. However, this same behavior is not acceptable for a fourteen-year-old. We would not expect a child in kindergarten to manage money in the same way we would expect a student in high school to manage money.