

Serving Students with Disabilities through Modified Schedule and/or Home Instruction

Background

On rare occasions, students with disabilities exhibit disruptive behavior to the extent that individual educational plan (IEP) teams consider instruction on a modified schedule (e.g., shortened school day or week; instruction at school outside of the traditional school day) or through home instruction. The limitations inherent in the implementation of a shortened school day or school week for a student with a disability (i.e., reduction in instructional contact hours and/or course content) threaten to jeopardize the provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to the student. Instruction provided outside of traditional school hours or in the home is considered the most restrictive of educational settings because it segregates the student from all other students, both with and without disabilities. As a result, these service delivery models are to be implemented only for those students with the most difficult of behaviors, for very limited time periods, and under close supervision.

Concerns regarding the use of modified schedule and/or home instruction to address the challenging behaviors of some students with disabilities have been identified through technical assistance requests from school districts, findings from monitoring activities conducted by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), and communication with families of students with disabilities. Districts report that students are placed on a modified schedule or home instruction when they:

- Become so disruptive that they damage the integrity of the classroom, precluding instruction in the classroom for themselves and others
- Exhibit disruptive behaviors with such frequency and intensity that they are unable to benefit from traditional school-day instruction
- Require a temporary alternative placement during which evaluative data is collected or alternatives to expulsion are considered

The purpose of this technical assistance paper (TAP) is to provide guidance to IEP teams that are considering the use of this very restrictive setting.

Prior to Consideration

The majority of students who exhibit challenging behaviors do not exhibit a sudden and/or significant escalation of the behaviors. Instead, it is more likely that the student has a history of exhibiting behaviors that have had little or no response to interventions implemented thus far. For

REFER QUESTIONS TO:

Lee Clark
ESE Program Development & Services
325 W. Gaines St., Room 601
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
Lee.Clark@fldoe.org
850/245-0478



John L. Winn, Commissioner

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPERS (TAPs) are produced periodically by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services to present discussion of current topics. The TAPs may be used for inservice sessions, technical assistance visits, parent organization meetings, or interdisciplinary discussion groups. Topics are identified by state steering committees, district personnel, and individuals, or from program compliance monitoring.

BUREAU OF EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES

these students, a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) related to the target behavior should be conducted, and a behavior intervention plan (BIP) should be developed and implemented prior to changing the student's placement to a modified schedule and/or home instruction. In instances where a student has no history of dangerous or severe disruptive behavior but exhibits a sudden or significant escalation of severe behavior(s), a student may need to be placed on a modified schedule or home instruction for "diagnostic" purposes. In this instance, an FBA and BIP may be developed concurrent with the placement. Families should be encouraged to participate and be included in the process of developing the BIP. This process should:

- Target the behavior(s) that warrant the consideration of a change in placement and FAPE.
- Include strategies to teach replacement behaviors.
- Include proactive strategies that staff will enact to make the student's targeted behaviors unnecessary.
- Include strategies for managing consequences to ensure the student receives reinforcers for positive—and not problem—behaviors.
- Generate criteria for returning to a less restrictive placement. This is important. Criteria should include measurable changes in targeted behaviors for specified periods of time.
- Identify staff designated to implement the plan and include criteria for reentry, timetable for reentry, and interim progress checks.

Once the BIP is developed, it should be implemented with integrity, and its effectiveness should be monitored with periodic revisions to the plan as needed. In addition to a BIP, the IEP team should determine whether an existing full-day service delivery model currently available is appropriate to meet the immediate needs of the student and consider what additional supports and resources are required to maintain the student in the traditional school environment. Even if a more restrictive setting in a separate class or a separate school is required, these placements are less restrictive than modified schedule or home instruction. It is important to generate criteria for returning to a less restrictive placement. Criteria should include measurable changes in targeted behaviors for specified periods of time.

Individual Educational Plan

If after a review of progress thus far the IEP team determines that the student's needs can only be met through the use of a modified schedule or home instruction, the team should ensure that the student's IEP or behavioral intervention plan:

- Addresses all areas of need resulting from the disability (e.g., academic; social/emotional)
- Includes a plan for reentry to school, with clear benchmarks, timelines, and supports
- Includes a plan for fading of the modified week or home instruction
- Should be reviewed frequently (e.g., at least bi-monthly)
- Identifies the designated support personnel who will facilitate reentry, including their roles and functions
- Includes frequent communication between district or school staff and the family regarding the student's performance

Supervision

Determining the appropriate personnel to supervise students on modified schedule or home instruction is not clearly defined. It has been the Bureau's position that both are short-term academic/behavioral interventions that should be managed by personnel qualified to deliver the

services as indicated on the IEP. For home instruction, it is recommended that in most instances it be a teacher not only qualified to implement the IEP but one who is familiar with the student and familiar with a home instruction service delivery model.

Program Content

Program content should address not only academic requirements but the targeted behavior(s) for which the student was placed on home/instruction or modified schedule. This should be reflected in a behavioral intervention plan with clearly defined objectives and targeted strategies that are applicable in a modified schedule of home instruction delivery service system.

Duration of Placement

As a result of BEESS monitoring visits and on-site technical assistance visits, it has been found that some students are spending between one month and a year on modified schedule or home instruction. This extended length of time in an alternative placement would constitute a change of placement. Consequently, it is recommended that modified schedule or home instruction be implemented for a period of time not to exceed one semester except in extreme circumstances. Even then, the IEP team should review the progress of the student periodically to determine if the student's progress warrants this intervention.

Consequently, to maintain the integrity of modified schedule and home instruction and to keep its original intent as a short-term behavioral intervention, the Bureau suggests the following procedures when a student with a disability is placed on modified day or home instruction.

- The IEP team should convene and conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and develop or revise the student's behavioral intervention plan (BIP).
- Prior written notice of change of placement would have to be completed because services would be different from current placement. Providing instruction in the parent's home or mutually agreed upon location would require parental permission as the parent or guardian would have to make accommodations. Such permission may be documented through the Individual Education Plan (IEP) conference notes or some other means at the district's discretion.
 - Δ A manifestation determination review under these circumstances is not necessary if the student's IEP was being fully implemented by a qualified teacher.
 - Δ The FBA/BIP process is an acknowledgement that the student's current behavior plan is not successful and new strategies need to be considered.
- The IEP team should develop a plan to monitor the student's progress frequently and develop a structured plan for reentry.
- The IEP/BIP should have a component that specifically targets the reason for being placed on modified schedule or home instruction, which:
 - Δ Targets the behavior
 - Δ Teaches replacement behaviors
 - Δ Targets replacement behaviors

Conclusion

Modified schedule and home instruction must be monitored, used judiciously, staffed, and supervised by qualified personnel. School districts must consider the legal implications and educationally appropriate use of modified schedules and home instruction.