

# FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

Workbook



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# Introduction

You passed the exam and secured your dream job. Then the doubt sets in. You don't know how to actually do anything you learned in school. If this sounds like you, you're not alone.

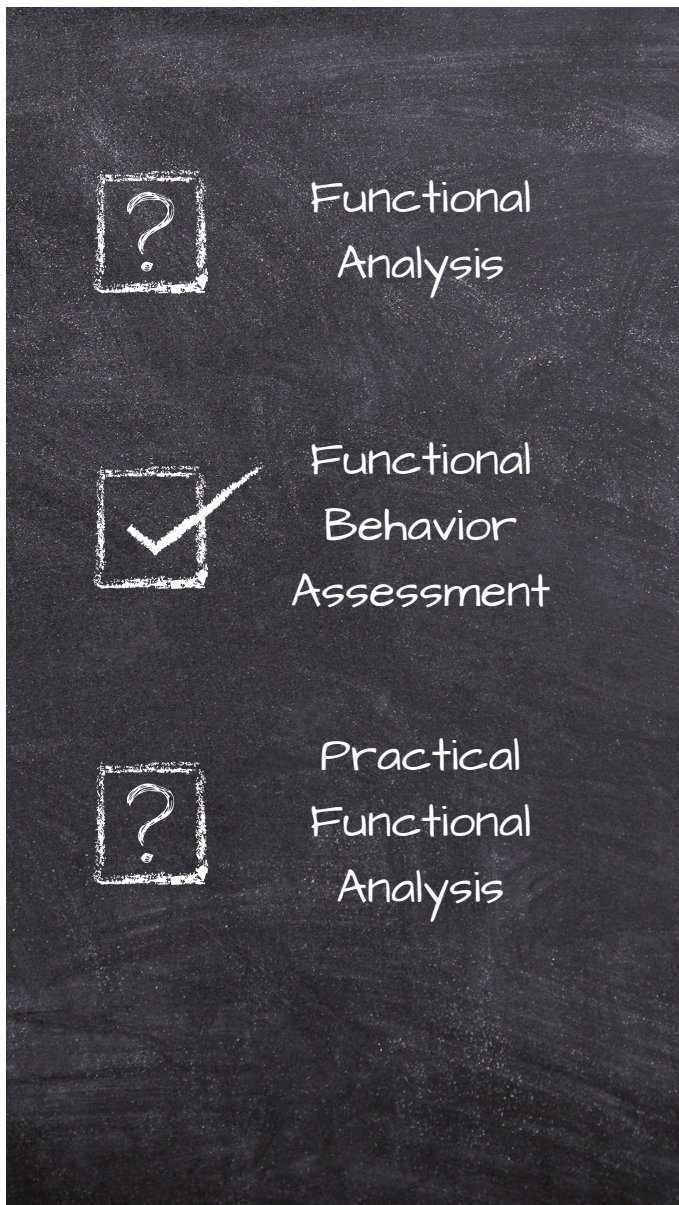
Despite fieldwork experience, many new BCBA's feel unprepared to perform the duties of a BCBA. Some agencies offer mentorship for new BCBA's but the reality of clinical work, especially for insurance-funded services, is there just isn't enough time or resources to offer the support they actually need.

Behavioral assessments are a key part of the work of any BCBA. It's the first step in developing an effective behavior or treatment plan to help the learner reach his or her goals.

There are 6 steps to completing the FBA process. This workbook takes you through each one and allows space to make notes and even collect some of the data you need.

# Step 1

## Choose an assessment method



ABA offers several options for directly assessing the occurrence of behavior. A descriptive assessment (FBA) observes and measures the occurrence of target behaviors but does not manipulate environmental conditions. An analysis (FA) changes environmental variables and then measures the resulting behavior change.

There are 3 primary methods for assessing the function of challenging behavior:

- Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
- Functional Analysis (FA)
- Practical Functional Analysis (PFA)



## CHOOSE AN ASSESSMENT METHOD

Behavioral assessment methods vary in their intrusiveness and the reliability of the outcome. The less intrusive methods rely on correlation rather than causation. More intrusive methods test how environmental factors impact the occurrence of behavior.



According to a survey conducted by Oliver, Pratt, and Normand (2015), 90% of BCBAs surveyed use FBA procedures and fewer than half use FA procedures. Use the chart below to help you decide which method is right for your learner.

Assessment Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Functional Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Provides greater accuracy, predictive control</li> <li>~"Gold standard" for identifying function</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Requires extensive training to implement</li> <li>~Risk of reinforcing undesired behavior</li> <li>~Need to place learner in potentially stressful situations</li> </ul>
Functional Behavior Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Easier to implement</li> <li>~Information is gathered from various sources</li> <li>~More efficient in some circumstances</li> <li>~Avoids reinforcing potentially dangerous behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Less accurate for identifying function</li> <li>~Form a hypothesis of function</li> </ul>
Practical Functional Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Demonstrates "control" of the behavior by testing your hypothesis</li> <li>~Uses an interview to narrow down potential maintaining variables</li> <li>~Minimizes the risk of placing learner in potentially stressful situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Need to attempt to evoke then reinforce challenging behavior</li> <li>~Training not provided in most graduate programs</li> </ul>

## CHOOSE AN ASSESSMENT METHOD

Rate the following statements to narrow your decision using the following scale:

1 strongly disagree  5 strongly agree

1. I have the training needed to conduct an FA.



2. I have the resources needed to conduct an FA.



3. Reinforcing the target behavior(s) will not create a problem for the learner or others.



## CHOOSE AN ASSESSMENT METHOD

4. I have the time and space to commit to conducting an FA.

1 2 3 4 5

5. have only 1 or 2 opportunities to collect data before writing a plan to address target behaviors.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Evoking the target behavior(s) would not put the learner in a stressful situation.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Evoking the target behavior(s) would not put the learner or others at risk of injury.

1 2 3 4 5

## CHOOSE AN ASSESSMENT METHOD

Now add up your responses. What is the total score for all 7 questions?

A higher score indicates you should choose an FA rather than an FBA. A lower score indicates that an FBA might be more appropriate. What does your score indicate?

Can you think of other factors that impact your decision for this learner?

The Practical Functional Analysis provides an alternative that mitigates some of the risks and capitalizes on some of the benefits of both the FA and the FBA. Do you have the training and support to conduct a PFA?

Based on your responses, what behavioral assessment method is most appropriate for this learner?



# Step 2

## Define target behavior(s)



Before you begin collecting any data, you must define the target behaviors. You may adjust or clarify your definitions over the course of your assessment, but you must know what you're looking for before you collect data.

The information for this definition initially comes from your review of records and any conversations you have with stakeholders (parents, teachers, other caregivers, etc.).

The operational definition should include a specific description of the behavior along with at least 2 examples and non-examples.

## DEFINE THE TARGET BEHAVIOR(S)

Here's an example:

**Flopping:** Any instance in which the Julian's body goes limp resulting in his body in a kneeling or lying flat on the floor position.

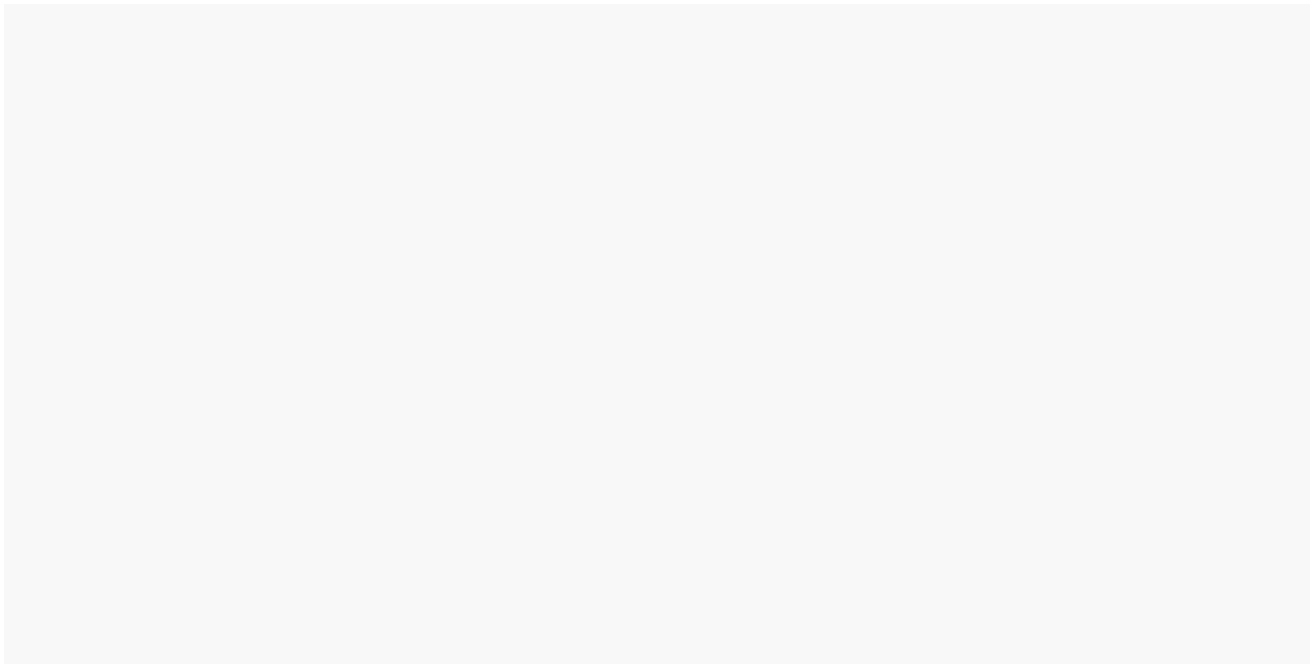
Examples Include:

- Falling to his knees while walking in the hallway.
- Moving from standing to lying flat on the floor when given a directive by an adult.

Non-Examples Include:

- Lying on the floor in the motor room as part of a game he is playing.
- Kneeling on his mat at circle time.

Do you have a learner who engages in a similar behavior? How would you change the above definition to describe your learner?



## DEFINE THE TARGET BEHAVIOR(S)

To craft your definition answer the following questions:

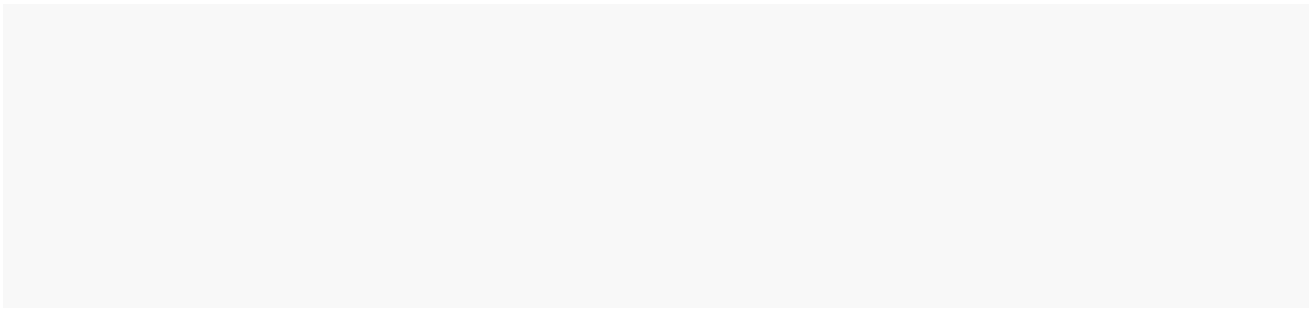
1. What does the behavior look like?

2. What qualifiers include or exclude a behavior as the target behavior (i.e. force, duration, speed, etc.)?

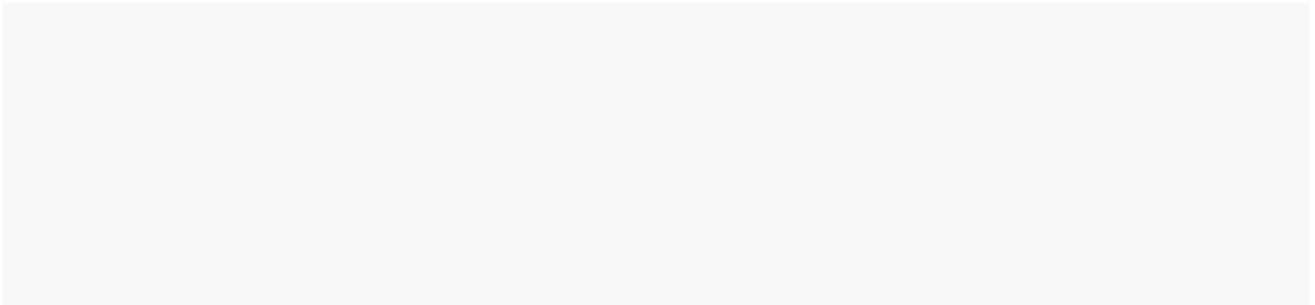
3. What is an example of the learner engaging in target behavior?  
(one that clarifies a situation that might otherwise be confusing)

## DEFINE THE TARGET BEHAVIOR(S)

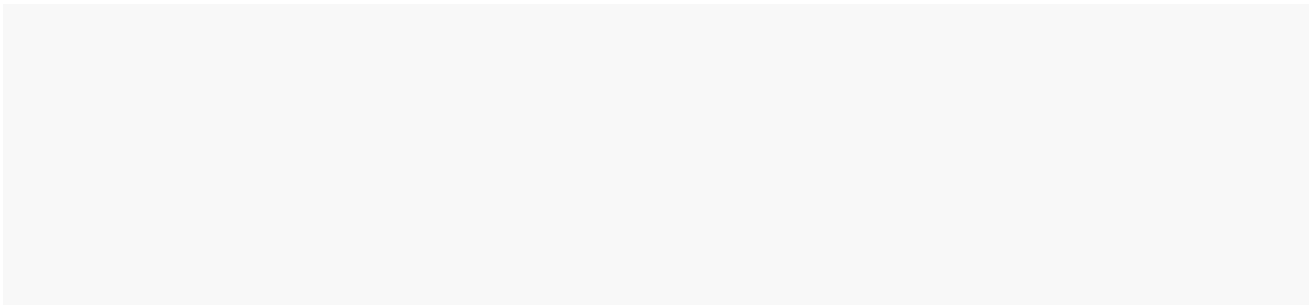
4. What is a second example of the learner engaging in target behavior? (one that clarifies a situation that might otherwise be confusing)



5. What is a non-example of the behavior? (a situation that some might think is the target behavior but actually isn't)



6. What is a non-example of the behavior? (a situation that some might think is the target behavior but actually isn't)

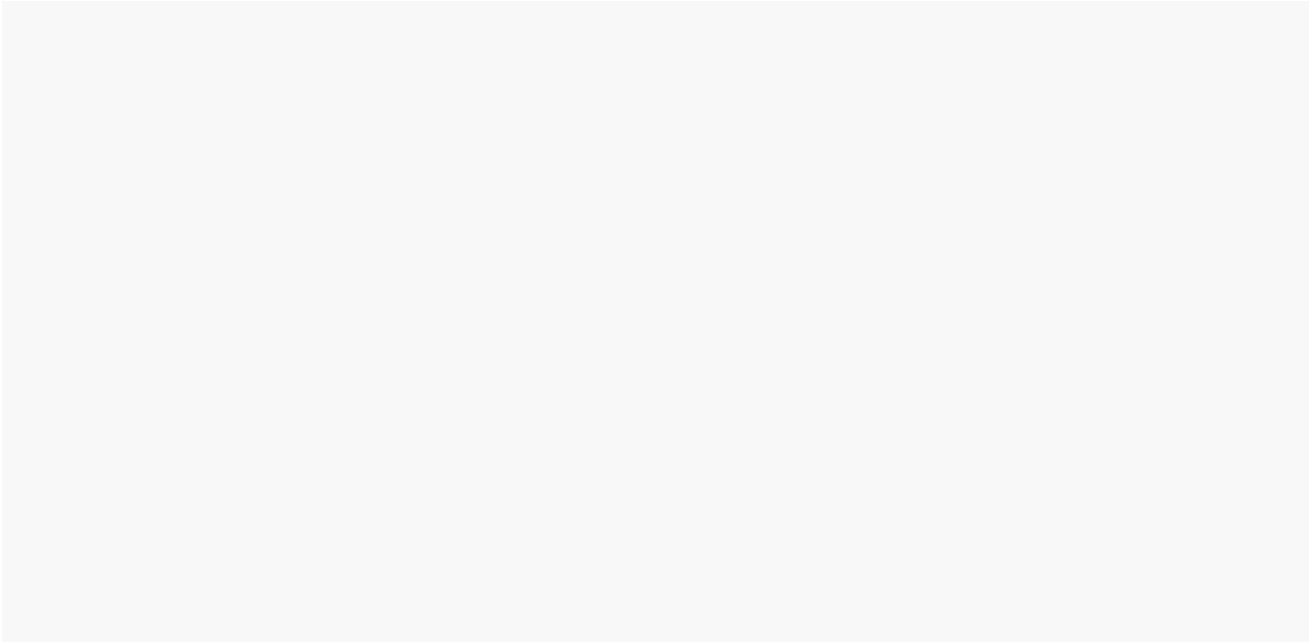




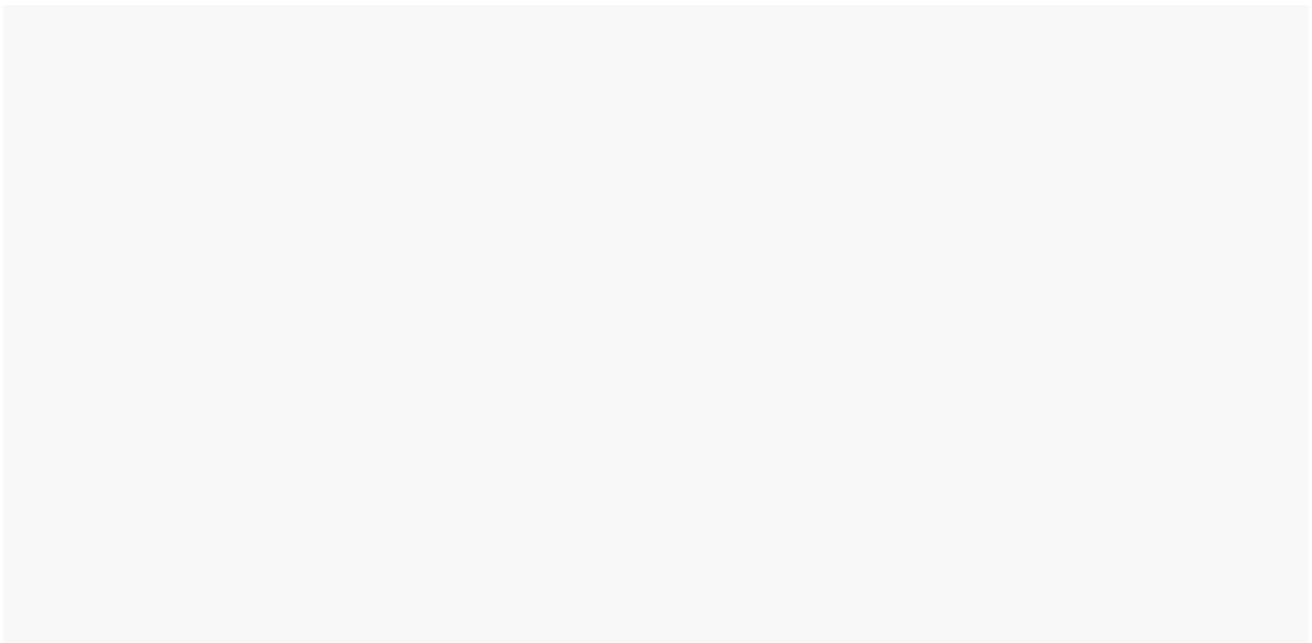
## DEFINE THE TARGET BEHAVIOR(S)

Write the target behavior(s) in the spaces below.

Behavior 1:



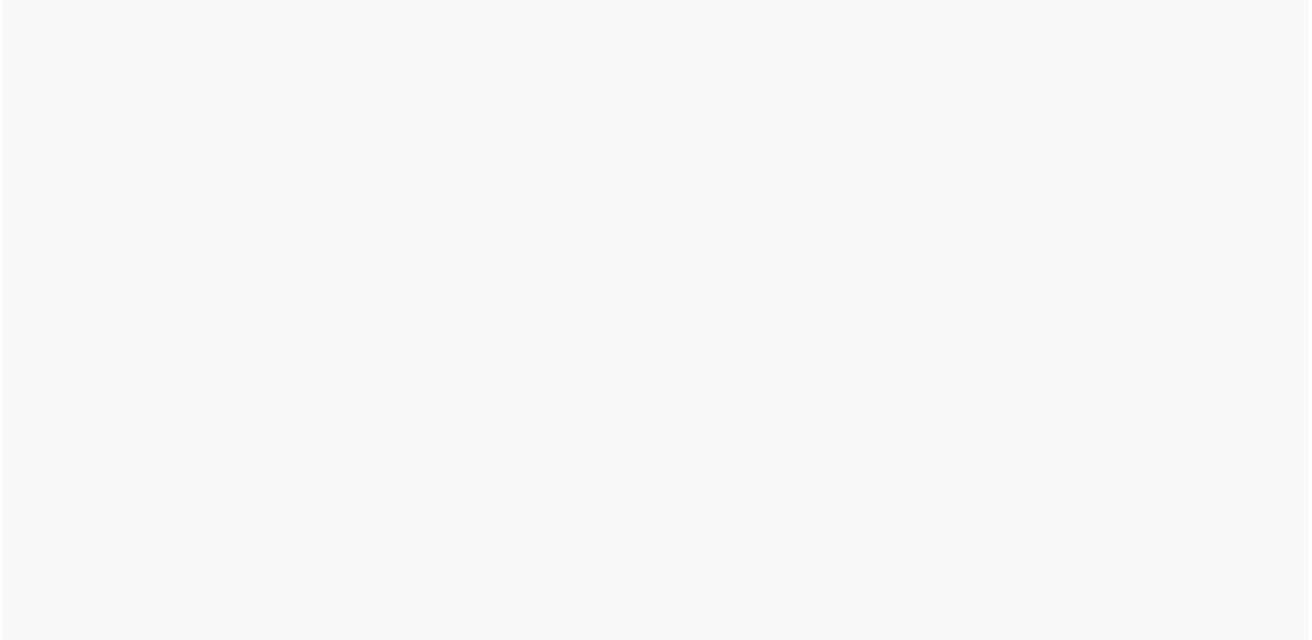
Behavior 2:



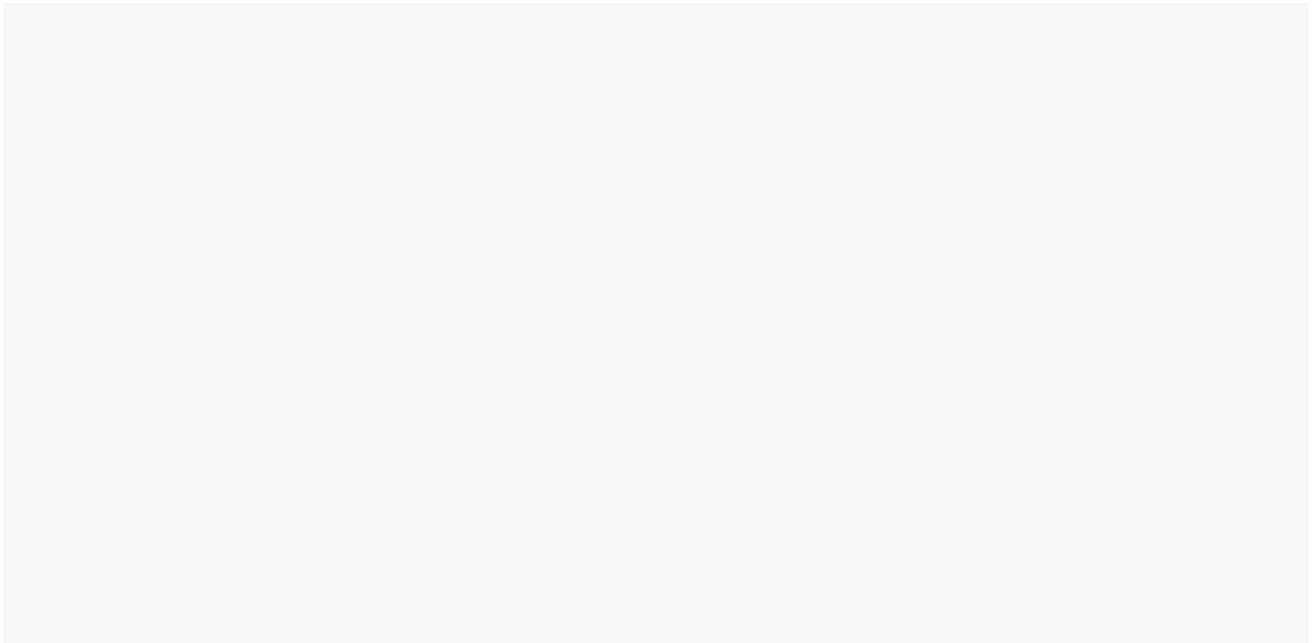
## **DEFINE THE TARGET BEHAVIOR(S)**

Write the target behavior(s) in the spaces below.

Behavior 3:

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for writing the target behavior(s) for Behavior 3.

Behavior 4:

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for writing the target behavior(s) for Behavior 4.

# Step 3

## Conduct indirect assessments



Indirect assessments refer to a method of gathering information without directly interacting with or observing the learner.

They provide an easy and less time-consuming way to collect information about the learner's behavior. Indirect assessment methods are most valuable when used to narrow the focus of your direct assessment.

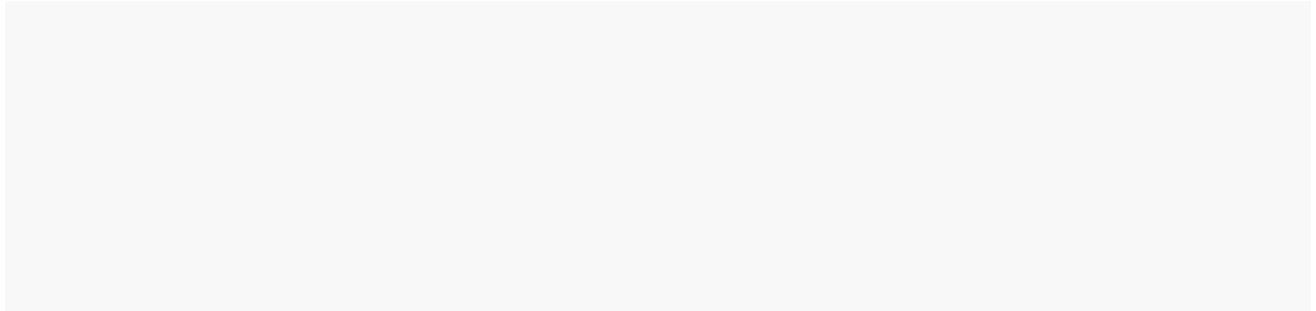
Indirect assessments include:

- Parent, caregiver, or stakeholder interviews
- Questionnaires such as the QABF, FAST, or MAS
- Rating scales like the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales-3

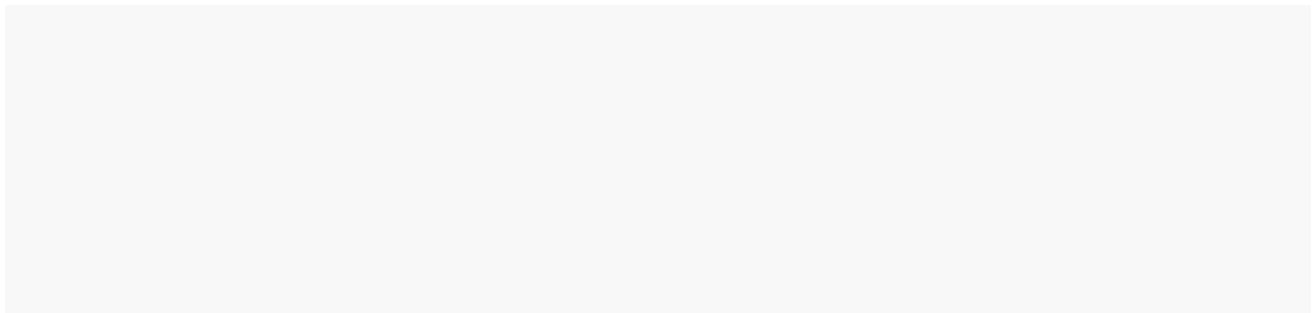
## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

Begin your indirect assessment by asking parents or caregivers for some basic background information. Have them answer the following questions.

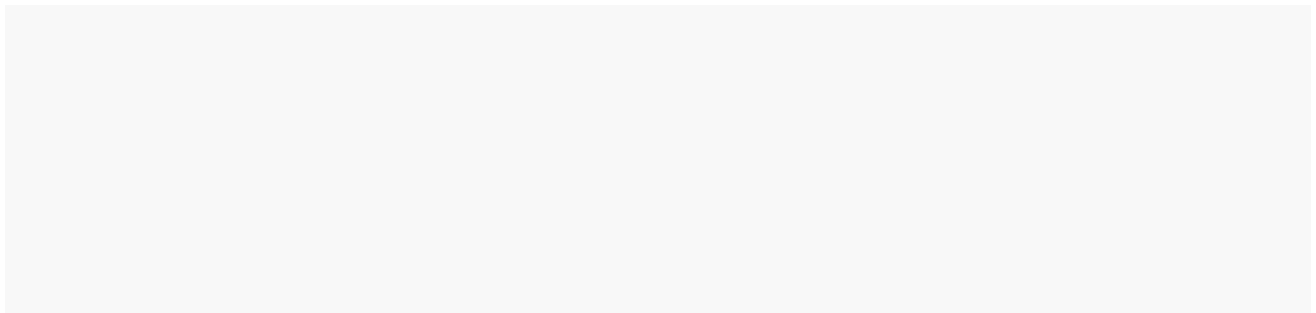
1. What is the reason for the FBA?



2. What are the learner's strengths?



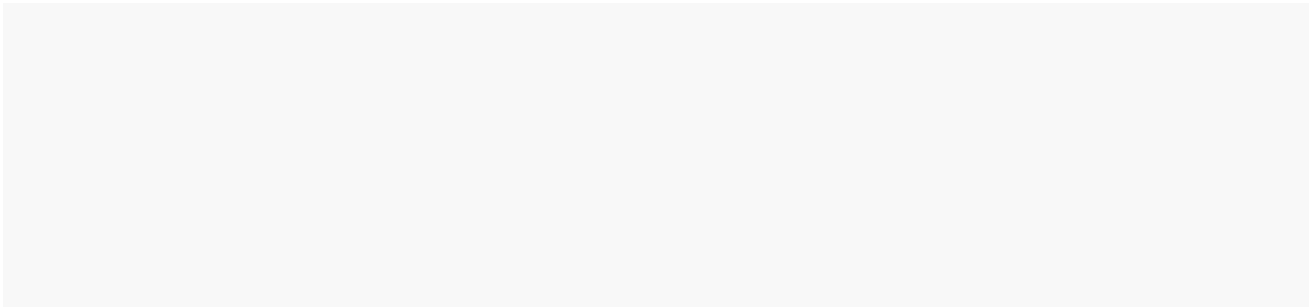
3. What are the learner's language abilities?



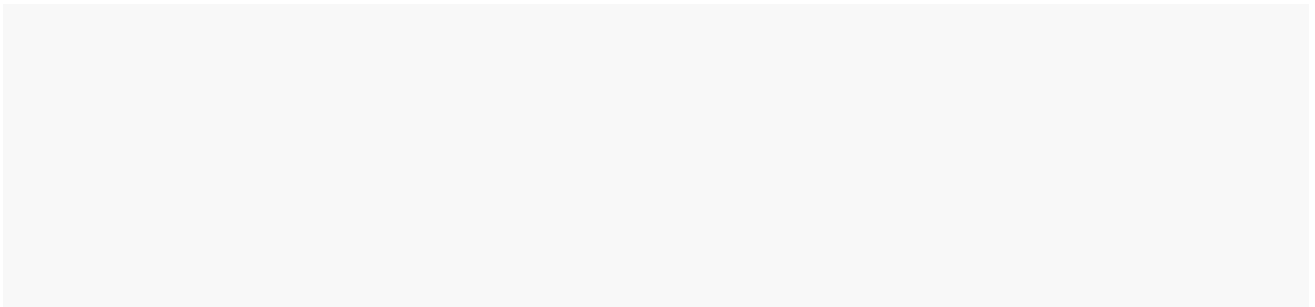


## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

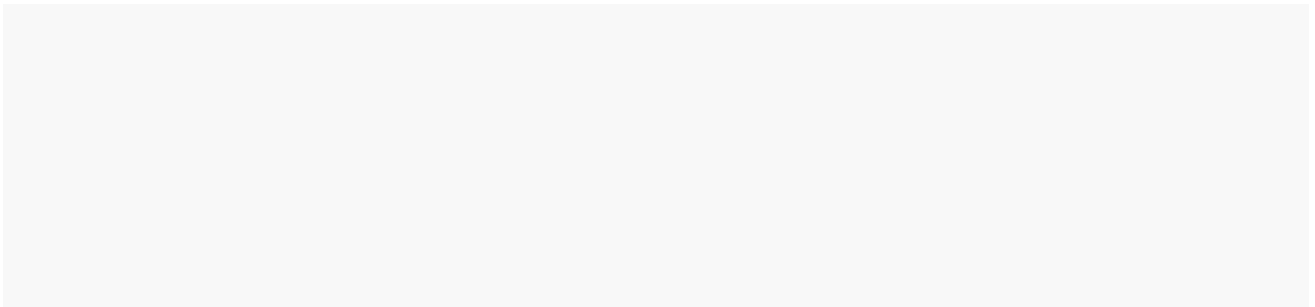
4. How does the learner occupy his/her time?



5. What are the learner's favorite things?

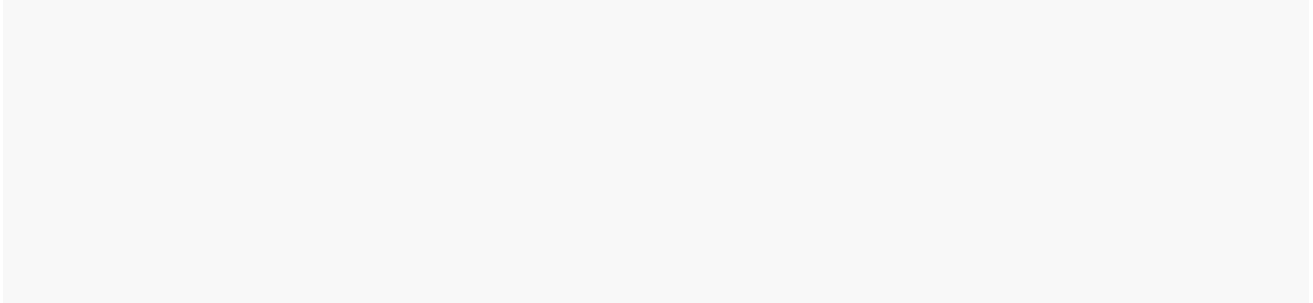


5. What are the learner's most concerning behaviors?

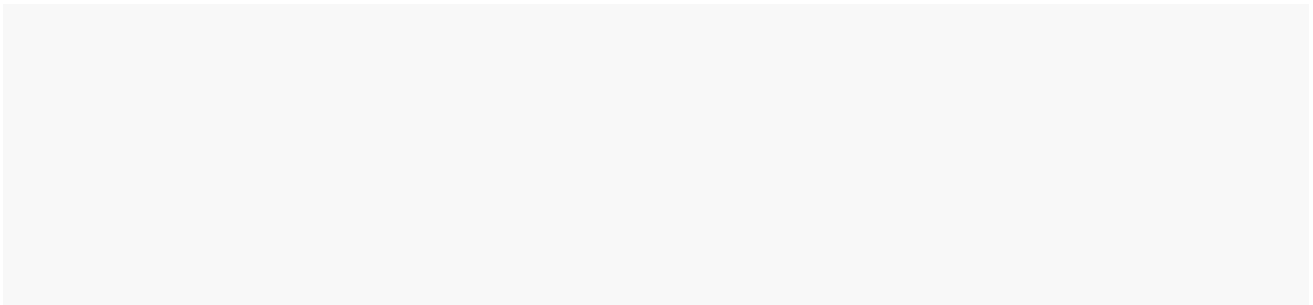


## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

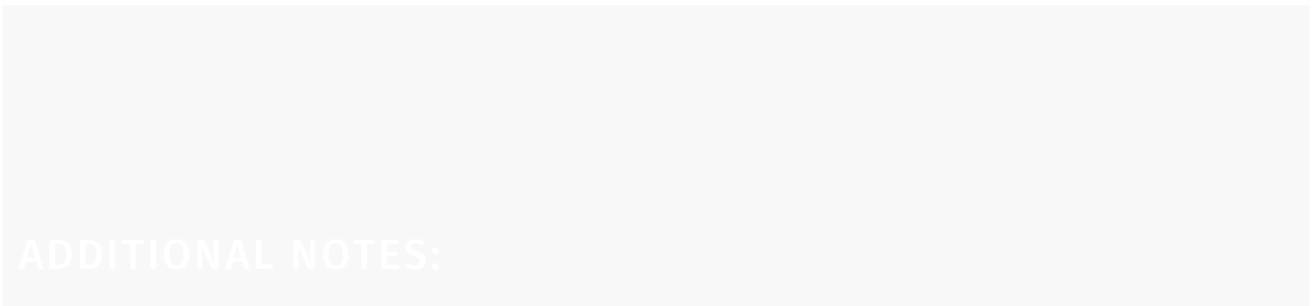
6. What do these behaviors look like?



7. Are any of these behaviors potentially dangerous? If yes, please explain



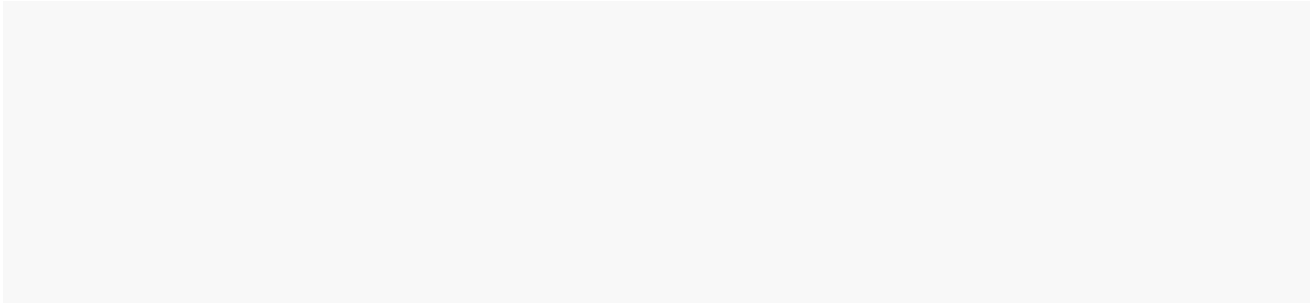
8. Does the learner have any medical or psychological conditions that might contribute to the occurrence of the behavior? If yes, please explain



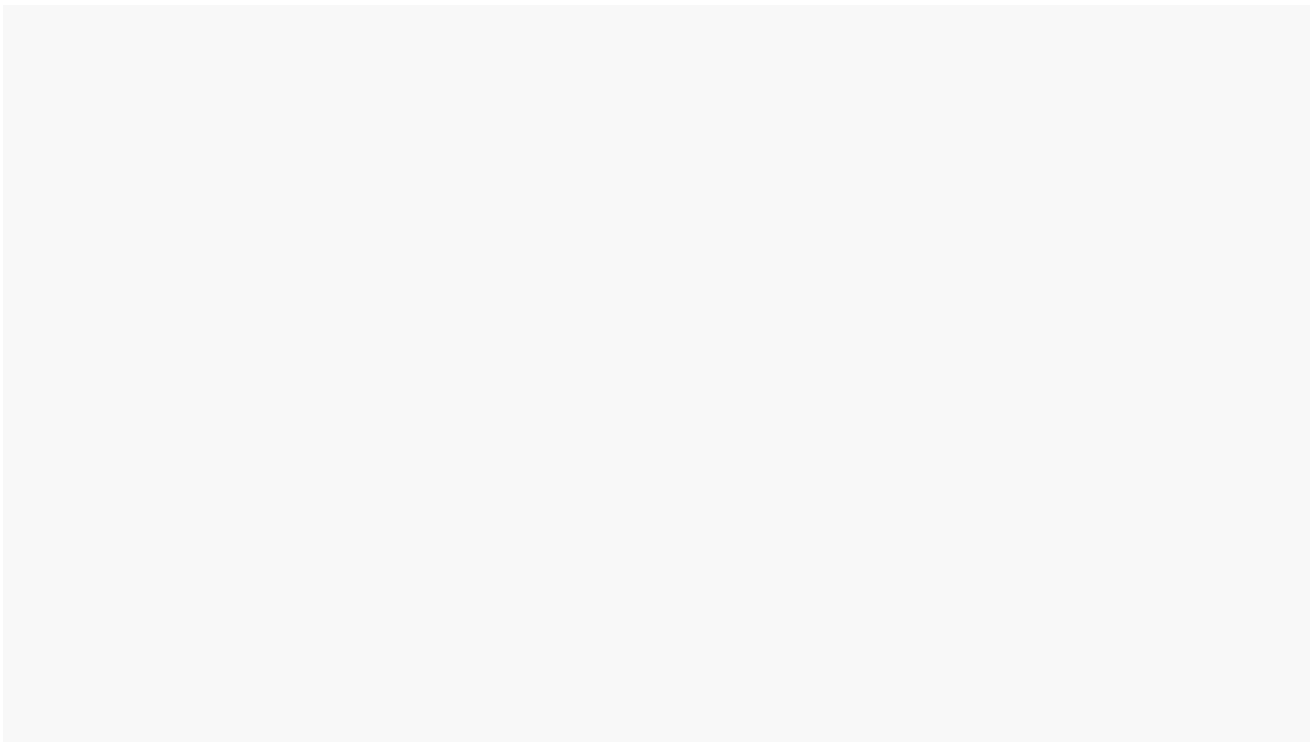
ADDITIONAL NOTES:

## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

9. Does the learner take medication that might have side effects that contribute to the occurrence of the behavior? If yes, please explain



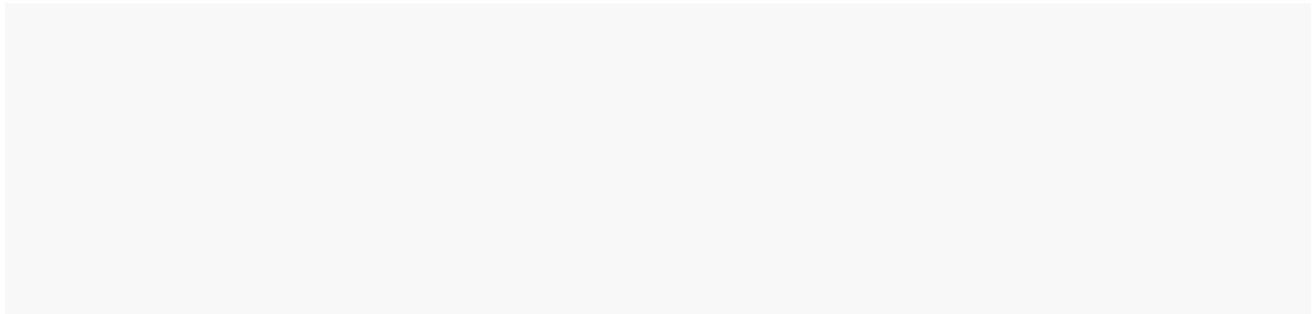
10. Is there anything else I should know about the learner's background that would help me understand the concerning behavior?



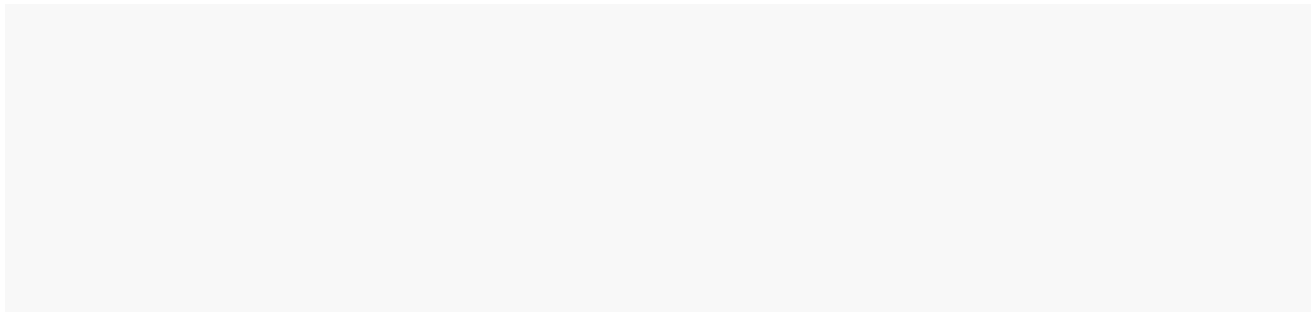
## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

Next, ask some questions to help you understand the context within which the behavior commonly occurs. Have them answer the following questions.

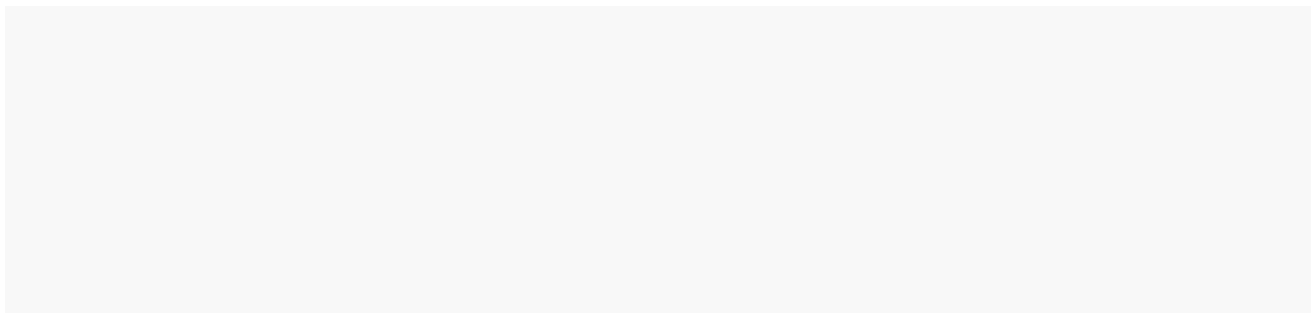
1. Are there circumstances in which the behavior(s) always occur? If yes, please explain



2. Are there circumstances in which the behavior(s) never occur? If yes, please explain



3. Does the behavior occur only (or more often) during specific activities? If yes, please explain



## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

4. Does the behavior occur only (or more often) at specific times of the day? If yes, please explain

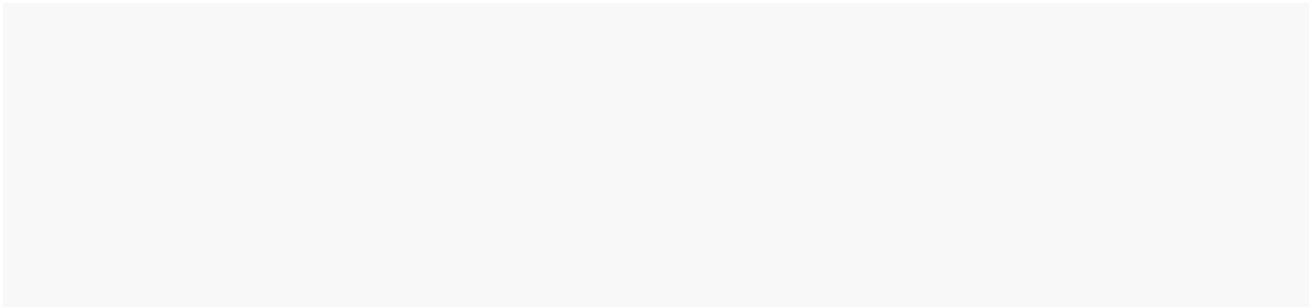
5. Does the behavior occur only (or more often) in specific locations? If yes, please explain

5. Does the behavior occur only (or more often) in the presence of specific people? If yes, please explain

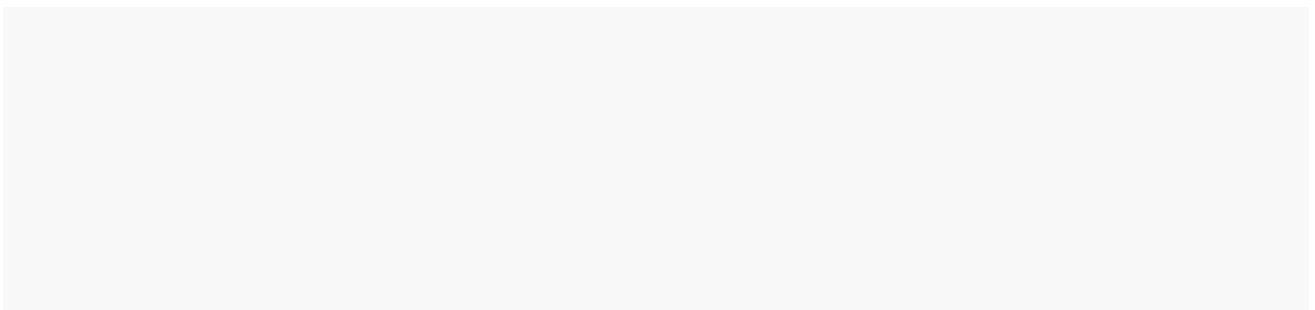
ADDITIONAL NOTES:

## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

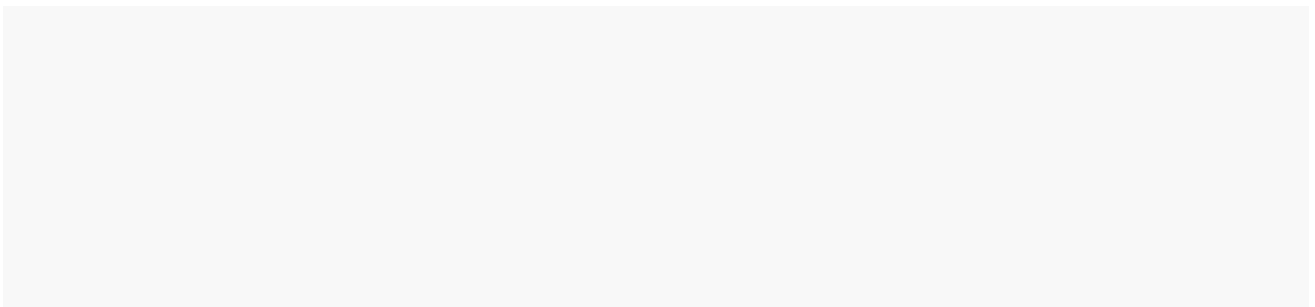
6. If you needed to make the behavior occur, what would you do?



7. If you needed to make the behavior stop, what would you do?

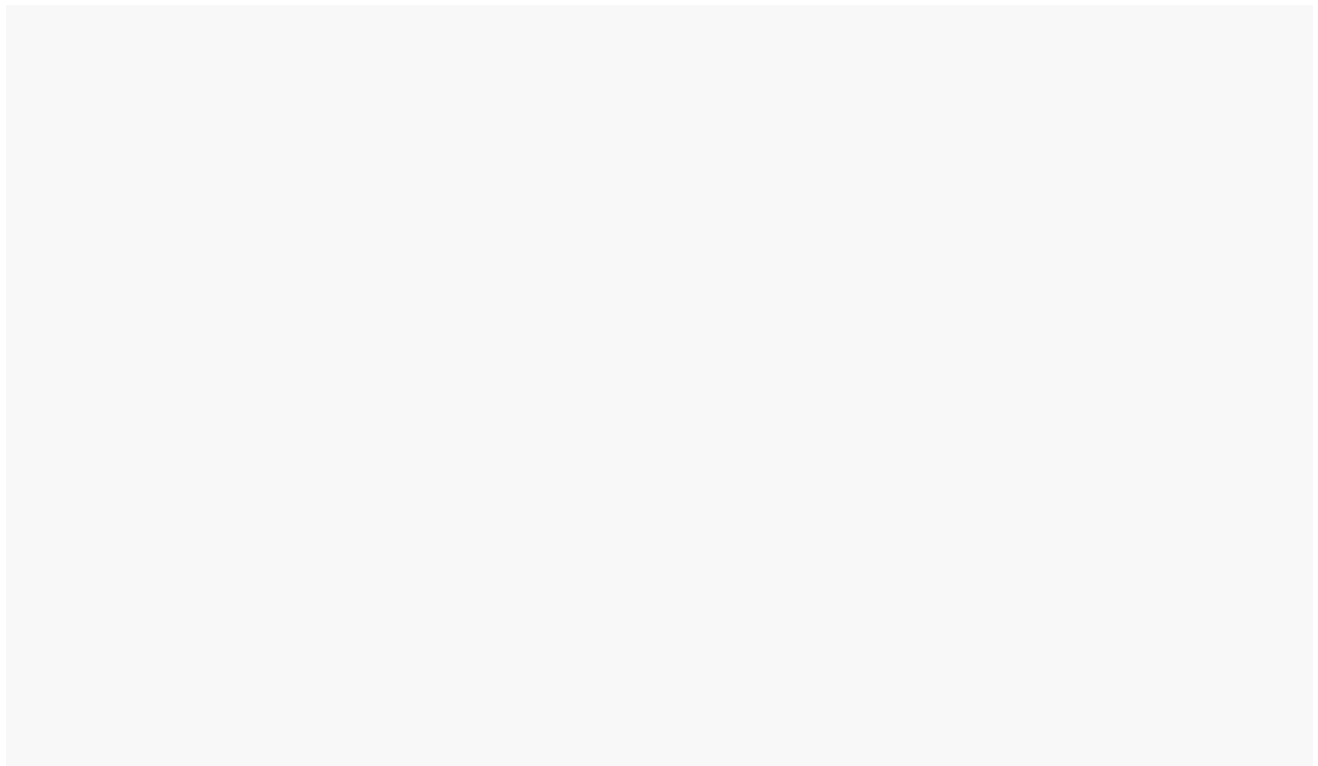


8. What has been done in the past to help change the behavior?



## CONDUCT INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS

9. What other information might be helpful in understanding the behavior?



Use this information to guide your direct assessments. Are there activities or times of day that provide the best opportunities to observe the behavior occur naturally? What safety concerns might arise during the assessment that you should prepare for?

Follow up the interview with any other indirect assessment methods you want to use including:

- Questionnaires such as the QABF, FAST, or MAS
- Rating scales like the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales-3



# Step 4

## Conduct direct (descriptive) assessments



Observing a behavior occur is an important step to determining function. Relying on the reports of others often leads to inaccurate outcomes. When behavior does not occur during your assessment, consider asking families to record the behavior occurring at home.

Since the FBA is the most commonly used assessment, the rest of the workbook will primarily refer to this assessment method. If you feel an FA would be a better choice for your learner and you need support with it, seek supervision from an experienced BCBA.

## CONDUCT DIRECT (DESCRIPTIVE) ASSESSMENTS

ABC data help you understand the context within which the target behaviors occur. Use the space below to collect ABC data.

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence

# Step 5

## Analyze the data



Once you have collected your data, it's time to analyze it. Data for an FBA comes from at least 3 sources. This ensures an adequate sample of the behavior to build confidence in your diagnosis of the function of the behavior.

Most commonly, your data will come from a review of existing records (i.e. incident reports from school), indirect assessments, and finally your direct observation. The data you collect during the observation (the descriptive assessment) connects with the indirect assessment data to help you form a hypothesis.

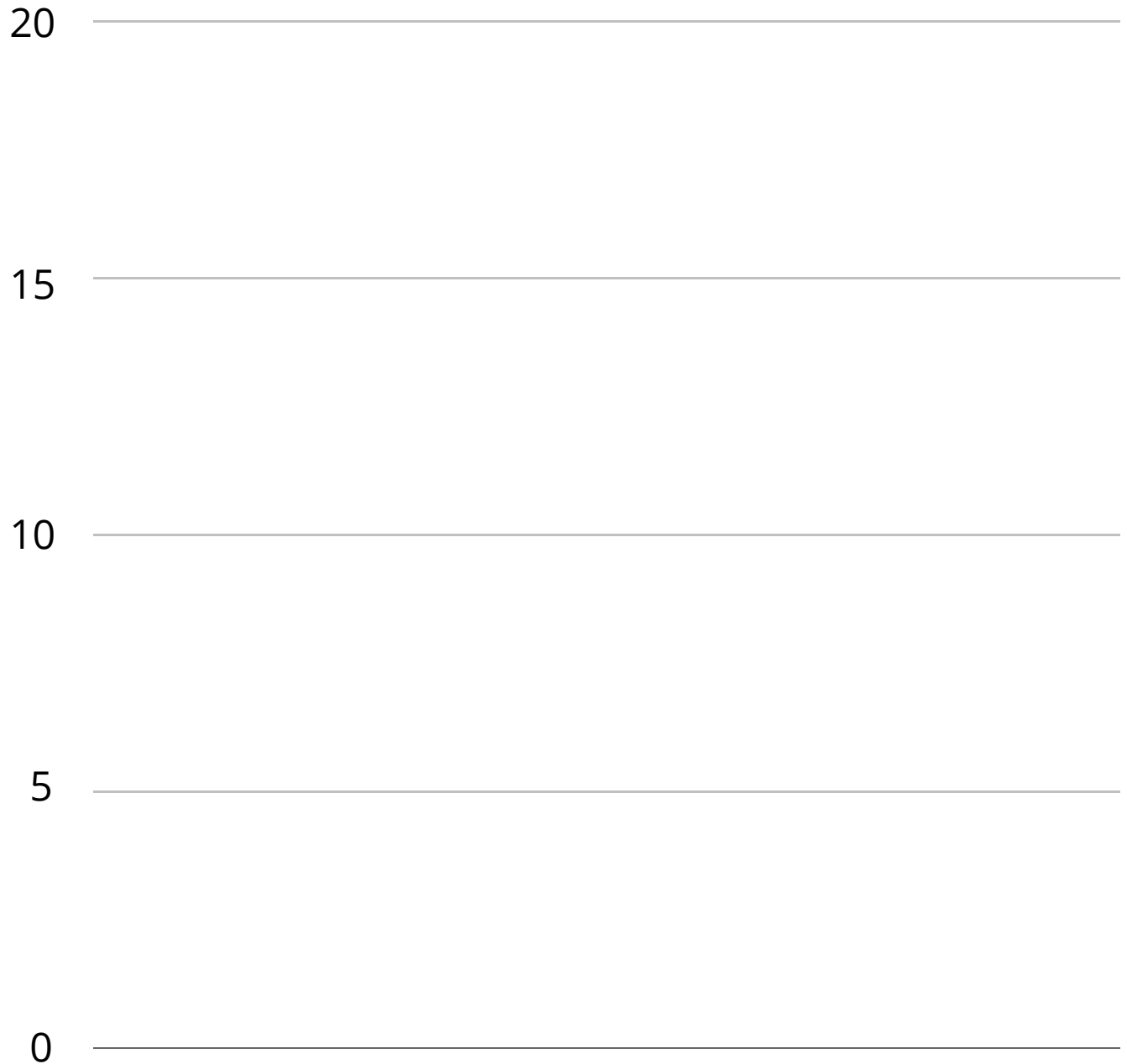
## **ANALYZE THE DATA**

To analyze ABC data, you must first categorize and tally each antecedent, behavior and consequence you recorded. Use the space below to tally the ABC data you collected.

<b>Common Setting Events</b>	<b>Common Antecedents</b>	<b>Common Consequences</b>
<b>Hungry</b>	<b>Demand</b>	<b>Escaped demand</b>
<b>Tired</b>	<b>Item restricted</b>	<b>Reprimand</b>
<b>Specific person present</b>	<b>Attention restricted</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>Specific person absent</b>	<b>Unstructured time</b>	<b>Item removed</b>
<b>Change in medication</b>	<b>Transition</b>	<b>Ignored the behavior/restricted attention</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Other</b>

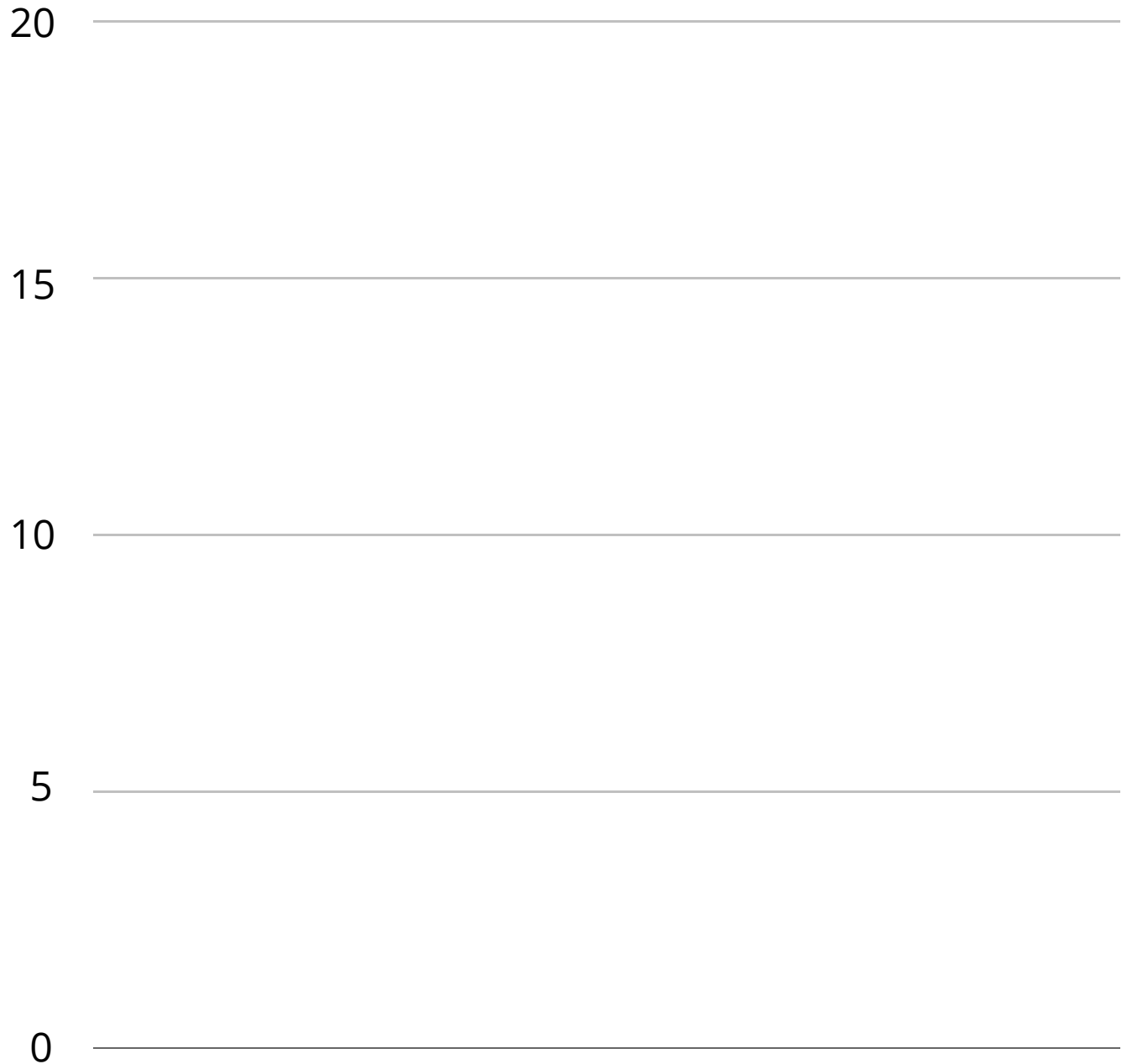
## ANALYZE THE DATA

Enter the data tallied for Setting Events in the graph below or use an Excel spreadsheet.



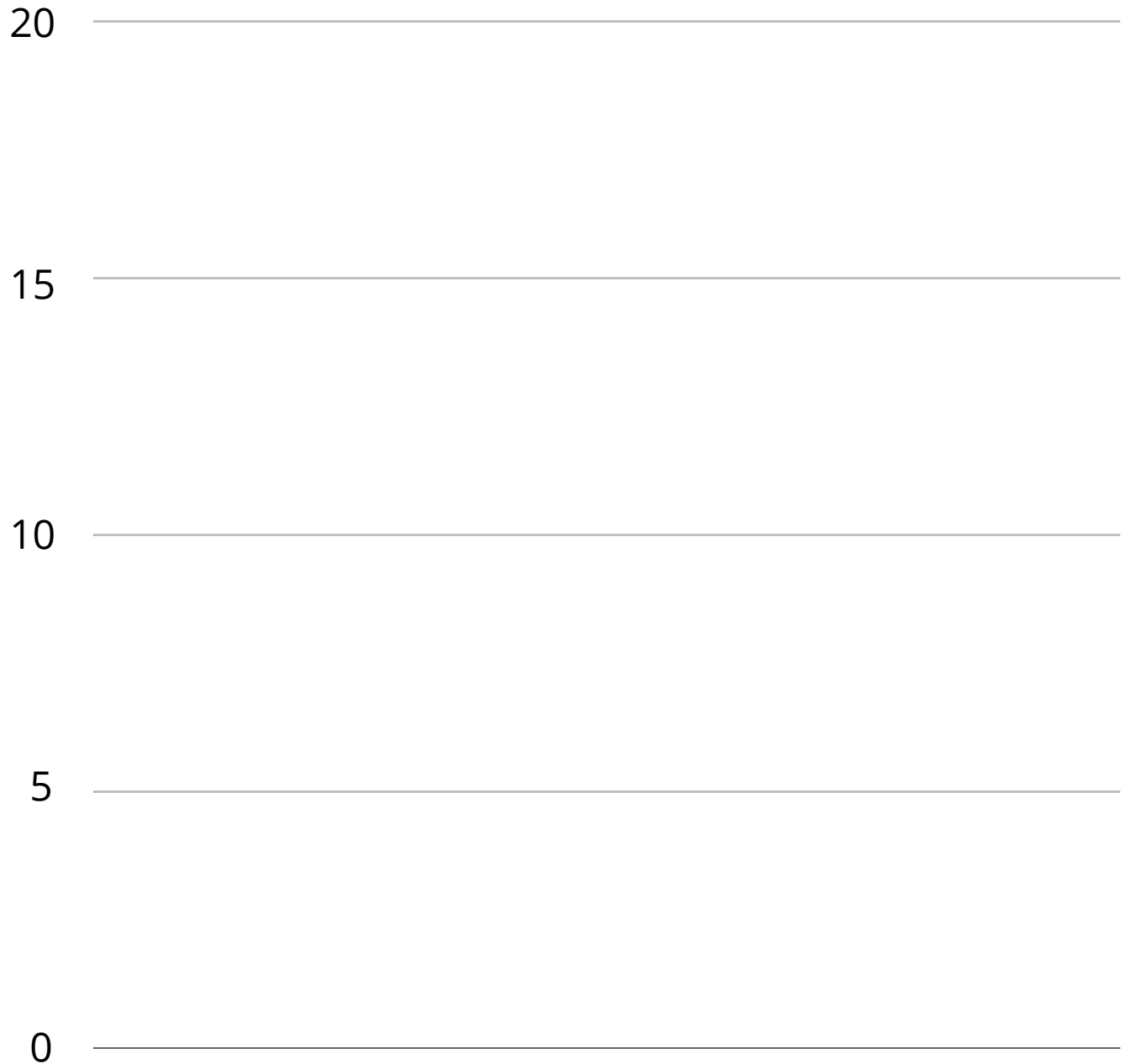
## ANALYZE THE DATA

Enter the data tallied for Antecedents in the graph below or use an Excel spreadsheet.



## ANALYZE THE DATA

Enter the data tallied for Consequences in the graph below or use an Excel spreadsheet.





## **ANALYZE THE DATA**

Enter the data from the questionnaire, if completed.

20

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15

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10

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5

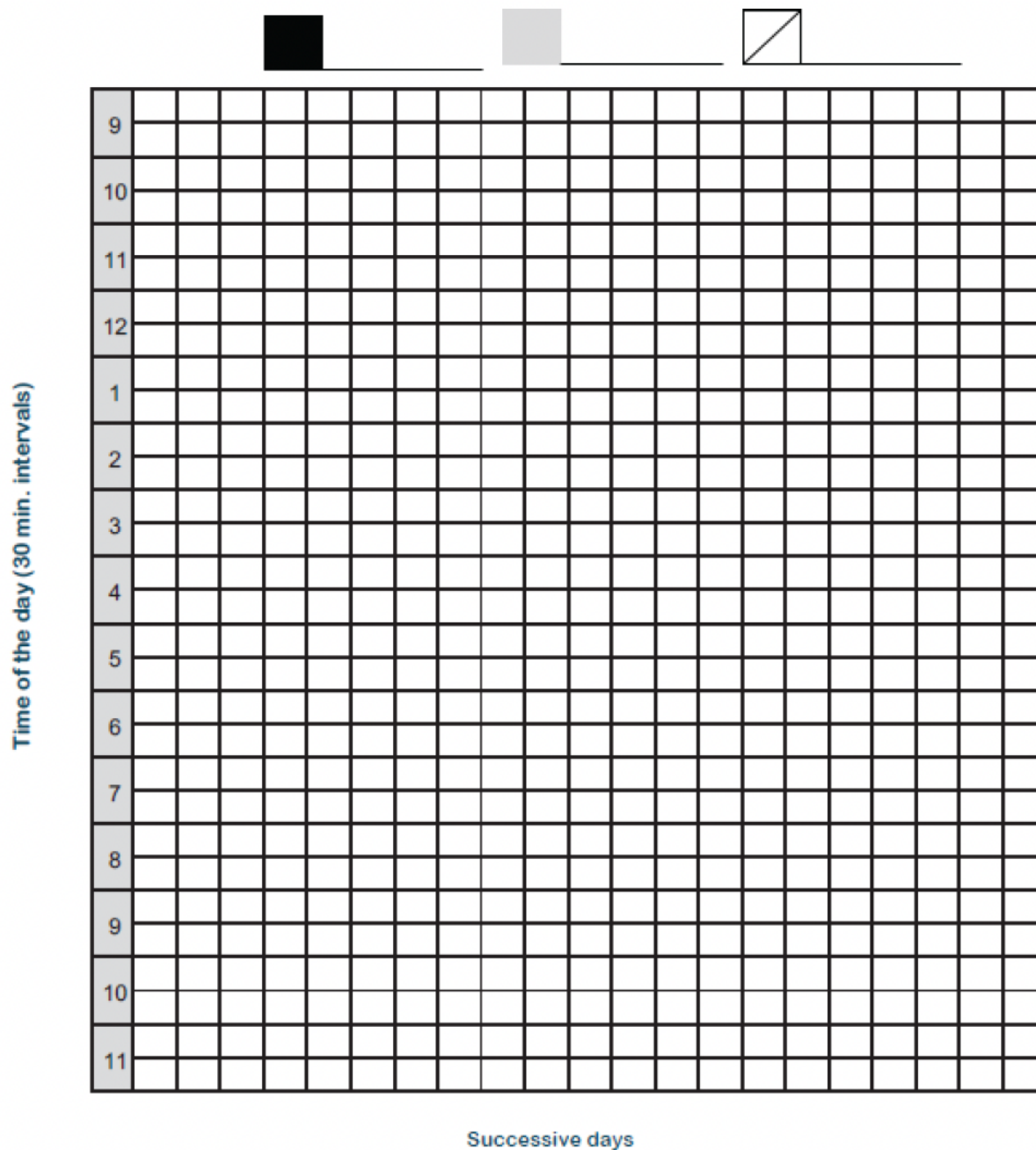
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## ANALYZE THE DATA

Complete the Scatterplot below if you collected time of day/day of the week behavior occurred.



## ANALYZE THE DATA

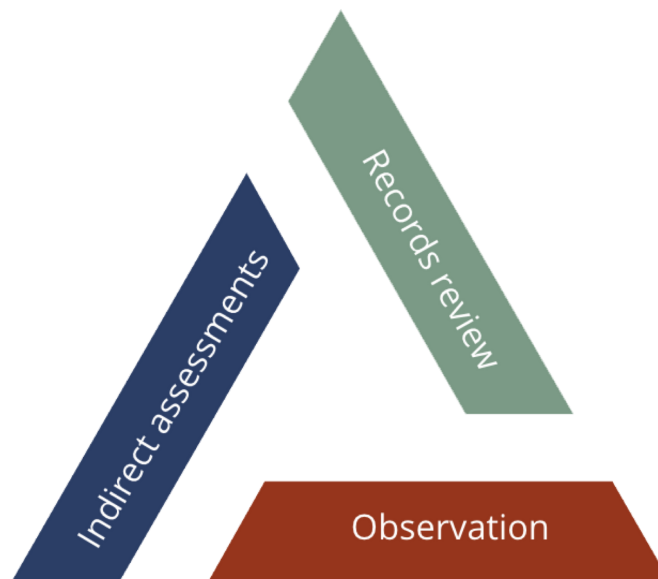
Use the data triangulation chart below to record the information gathered from at least 3 sources. Your goal here is to identify the most common antecedents and consequences from each source.

**Data Triangulation Chart**

Behavior:

Date:

Source One	Source Two	Source Three
Common Antecedents	Common Antecedents	Common Antecedents
Common Consequences	Common Consequences	Common Consequences
<b>Notes:</b>		



## ANALYZE THE DATA

Complete the Problem Behavior Pathway below. Complete one for each context you plan to address.

<b>Setting Events</b>	<b>Triggering Antecedents</b>	<b>Problem Behavior</b>	<b>Maintaining Contingencies</b>

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<b>Setting Events</b>	<b>Triggering Antecedents</b>	<b>Problem Behavior</b>	<b>Maintaining Contingencies</b>

## ANALYZE THE DATA

Complete the Competing Behavior Pathway below. Complete one for each context you plan to address.

<b>Setting Event</b>	<b>Antecedent</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
		<b>Replacement Behavior</b>	
<b>Setting Event Accommodations</b>	<b>Antecedent Interventions</b>	<b>Desired Behavior</b>	<b>Consequence Interventions</b>

## ANALYZE THE DATA

Complete the Competing Behavior Pathway below. Complete one for each context you plan to address.

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## ANALYZE THE DATA

Complete the Competing Behavior Pathway below. Complete one for each context you plan to address.

<b>Setting Event</b>	<b>Antecedent</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
		<b>Replacement Behavior</b>	
<b>Setting Event Accommodations</b>	<b>Antecedent Interventions</b>	<b>Desired Behavior</b>	<b>Consequence Interventions</b>

## ANALYZE THE DATA

Complete the Competing Behavior Pathway below. Complete one for each context you plan to address.

<b>Setting Event</b>	<b>Antecedent</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
		<b>Replacement Behavior</b>	
<b>Setting Event Accommodations</b>	<b>Antecedent Interventions</b>	<b>Desired Behavior</b>	<b>Consequence Interventions</b>

# Step 6

## Complete documentation



Documenting the FBA might feel like a daunting task. You collected a lot of information, compiled it in meaningful ways and analyzed it to identify the maintaining variables of the target behavior(s).

The good news is that you now have all the information you need and you will now just be plugging that information into a template. If you work for an agency, they likely have a template with their letterhead/branding that they want you to use. Most templates include the same or similar information.

## COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

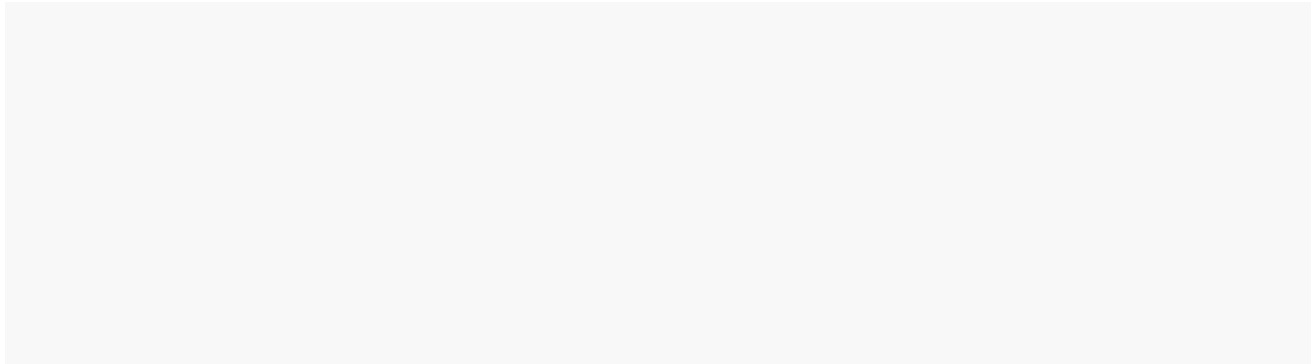
Your documentation should be thorough yet concise. You want to include all relevant details without adding extraneous information. Avoid including any of the above details if they don't appear to impact behavior.

<b>Include</b>	<b>Exclude</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of the environment</li><li>• Number of people present and their relationship to the learner</li><li>• Overall activity and noise level in the environment (if it's relevant)</li><li>• Presence of any previously identified potential triggers (objects or people that might trigger behavior)</li><li>• Absence of any desired objects or people that might relate to behavior</li><li>• Interactions between the learner and the environment or people</li><li>• Interactions between the other people in the environment that might be relevant</li><li>• Activities other people are engaging in that might be relevant</li><li>• Any relevant sensory stimulation in the environment</li><li>• The absence of preferred sensory stimulation if relevant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of the environment</li><li>• Number of people present and their relationship to the learner</li><li>• Overall activity and noise level in the environment (if it's relevant)</li><li>• Presence of any previously identified potential triggers (objects or people that might trigger behavior)</li><li>• Absence of any desired objects or people that might relate to behavior</li><li>• Interactions between the learner and the environment or people</li><li>• Interactions between the other people in the environment that might be relevant</li><li>• Activities other people are engaging in that might be relevant</li><li>• Any relevant sensory stimulation in the environment</li><li>• The absence of preferred sensory stimulation if relevant</li></ul>

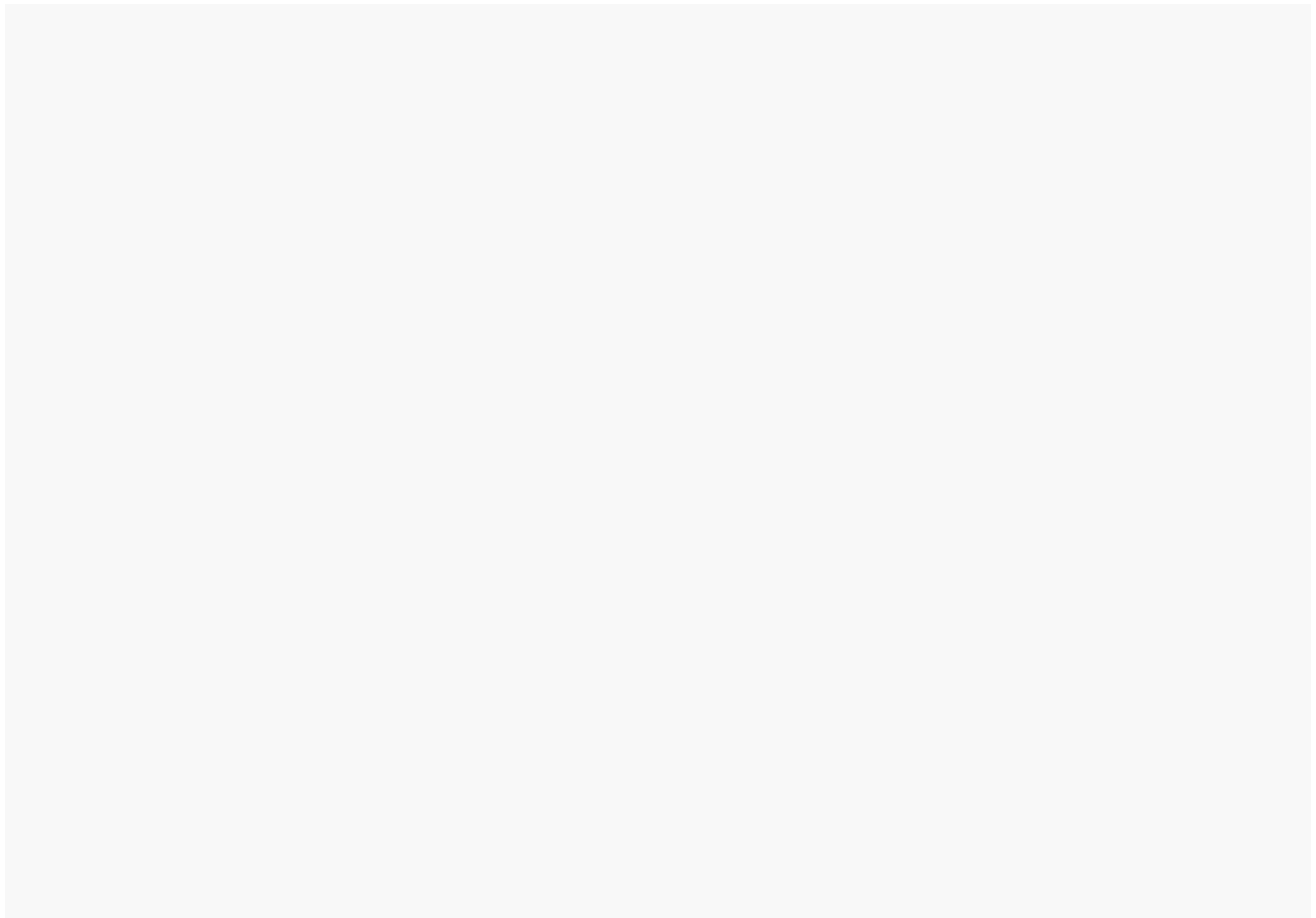
## COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

Fill in the following information. You can then copy and paste this information directly into your company's template.

### 1. Demographic information



### 2. Reason for referral



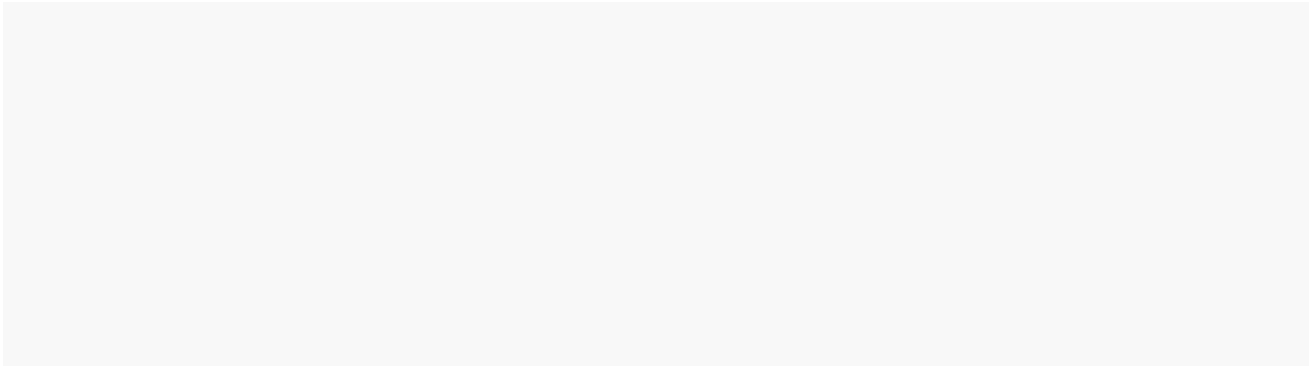
# COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

## 3. Background information

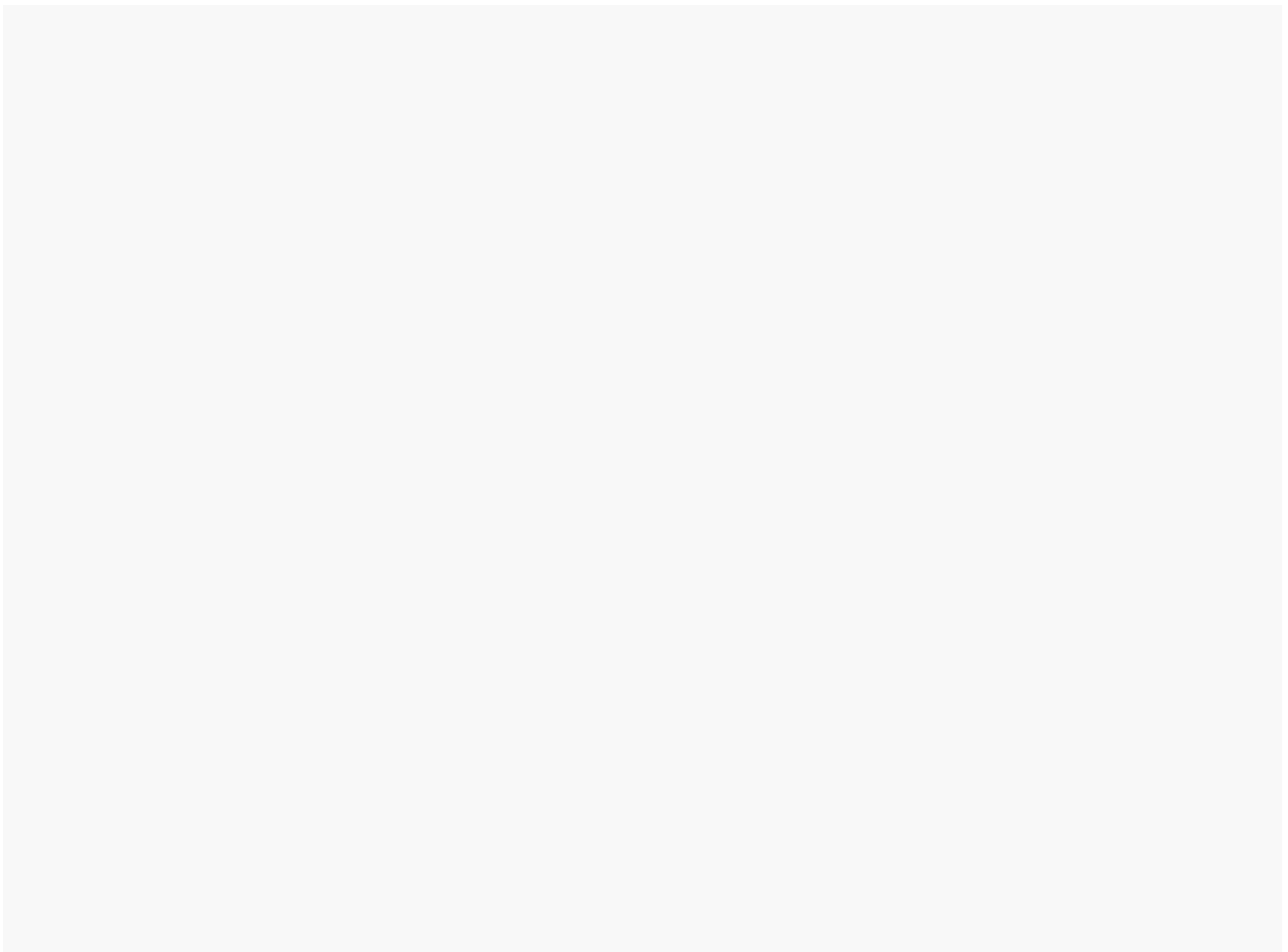
A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for background information.

# COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

## 4. Information sources



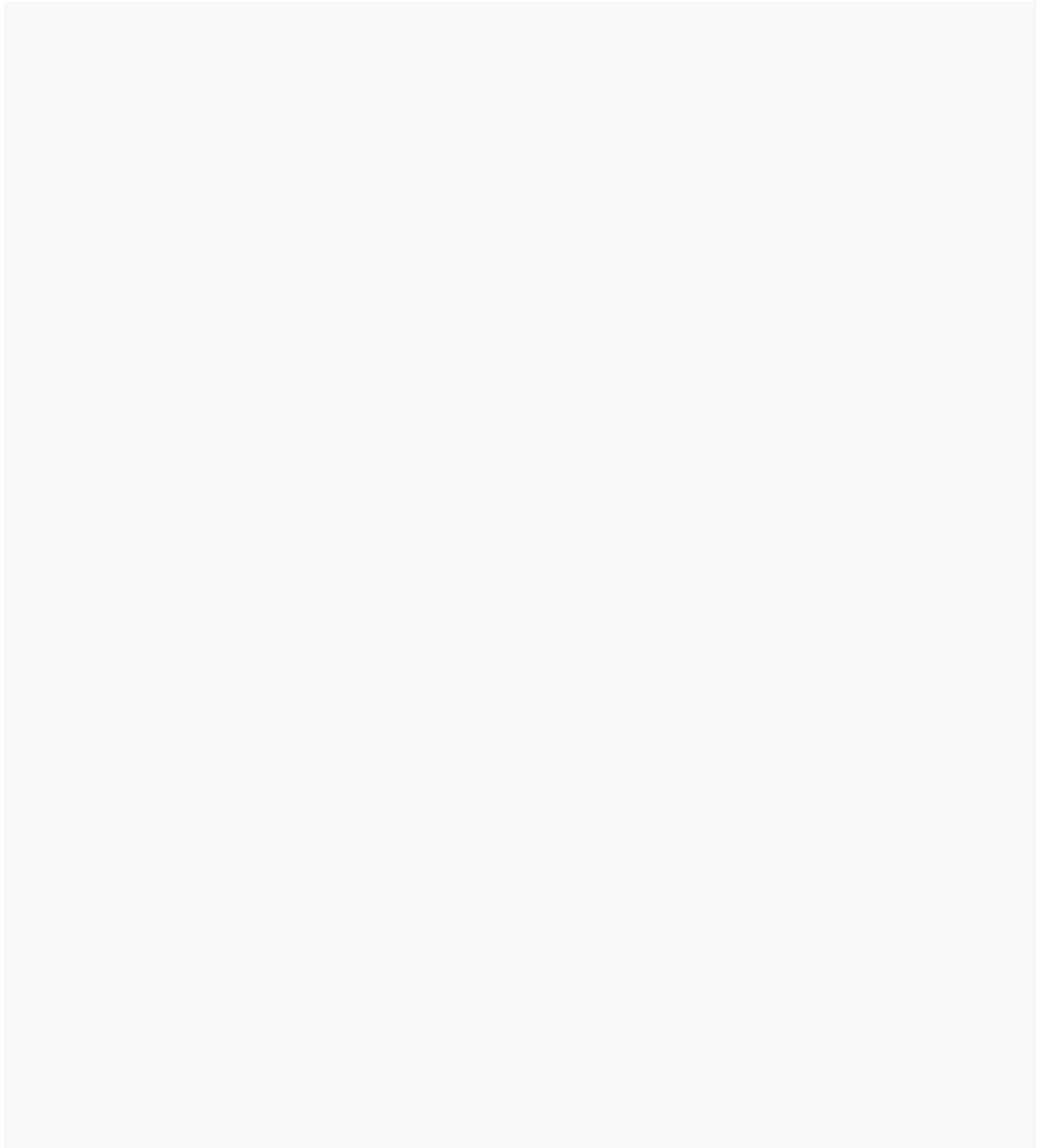
## 5. Indirect assessment details





# COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

## 6. Direct assessment details



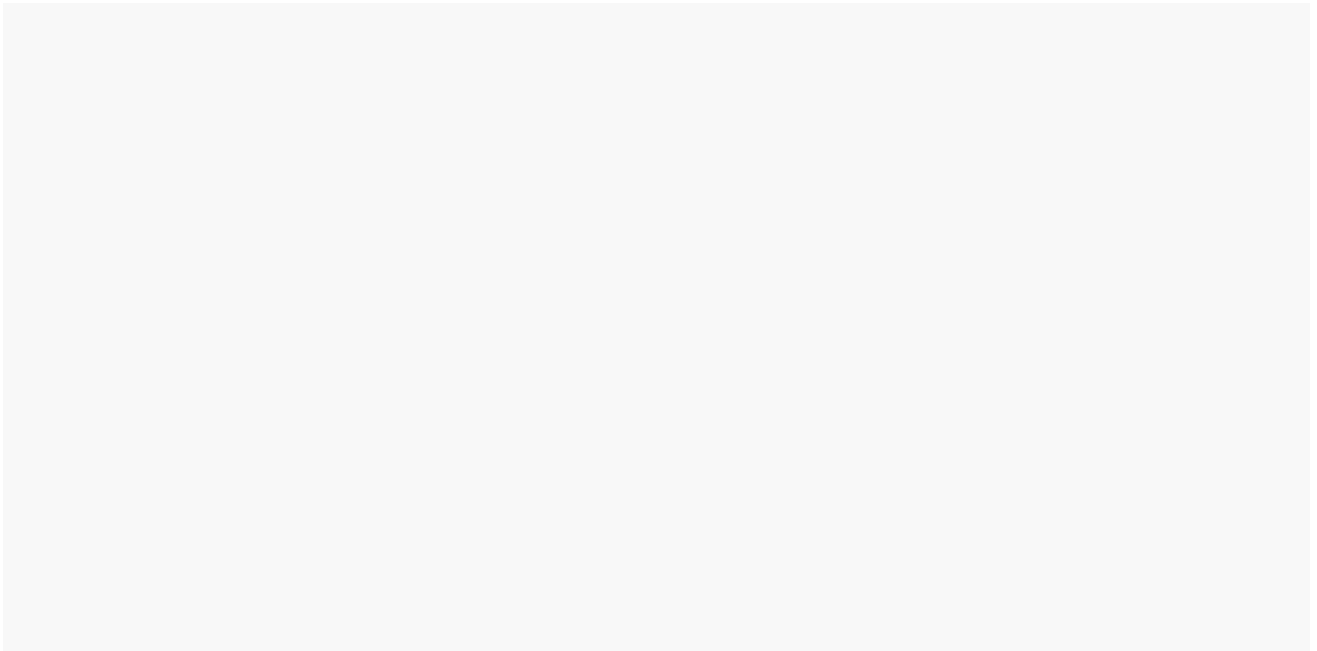
## COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

### 7. Definition of target behaviors

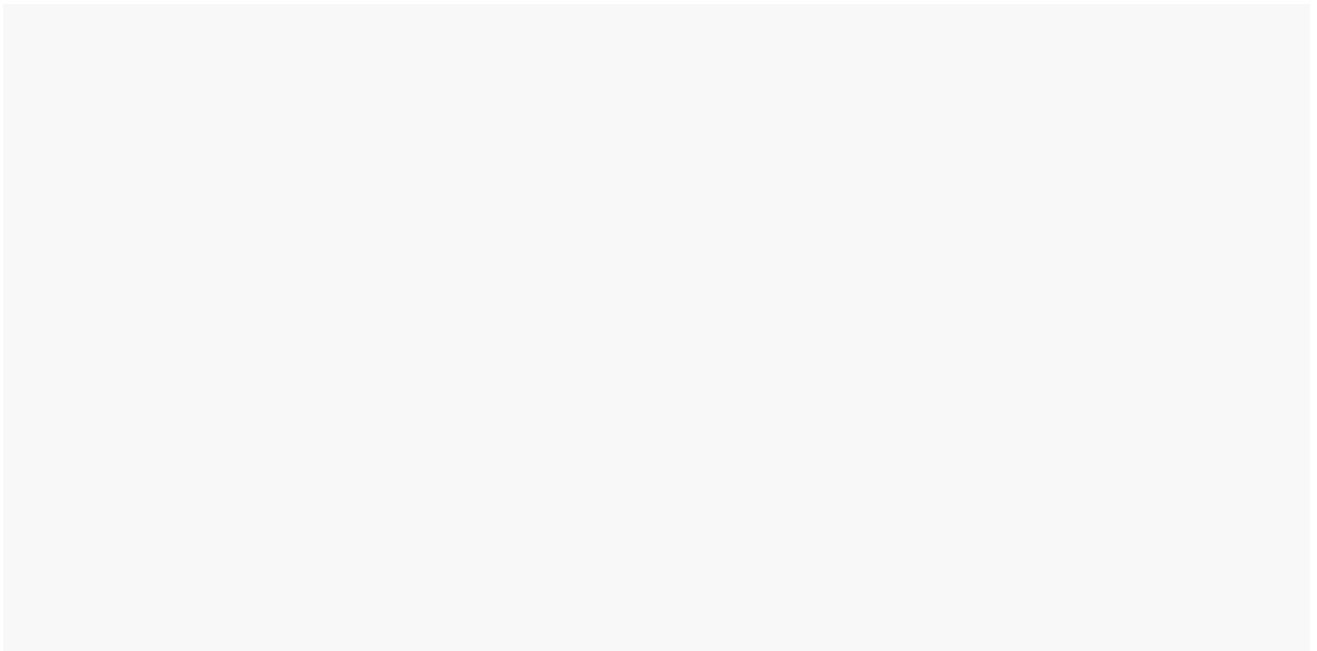
A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for documentation. This area is designed for the user to provide a detailed definition of target behaviors as part of a functional behavior assessment.

## COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION

### 8. Learner strengths

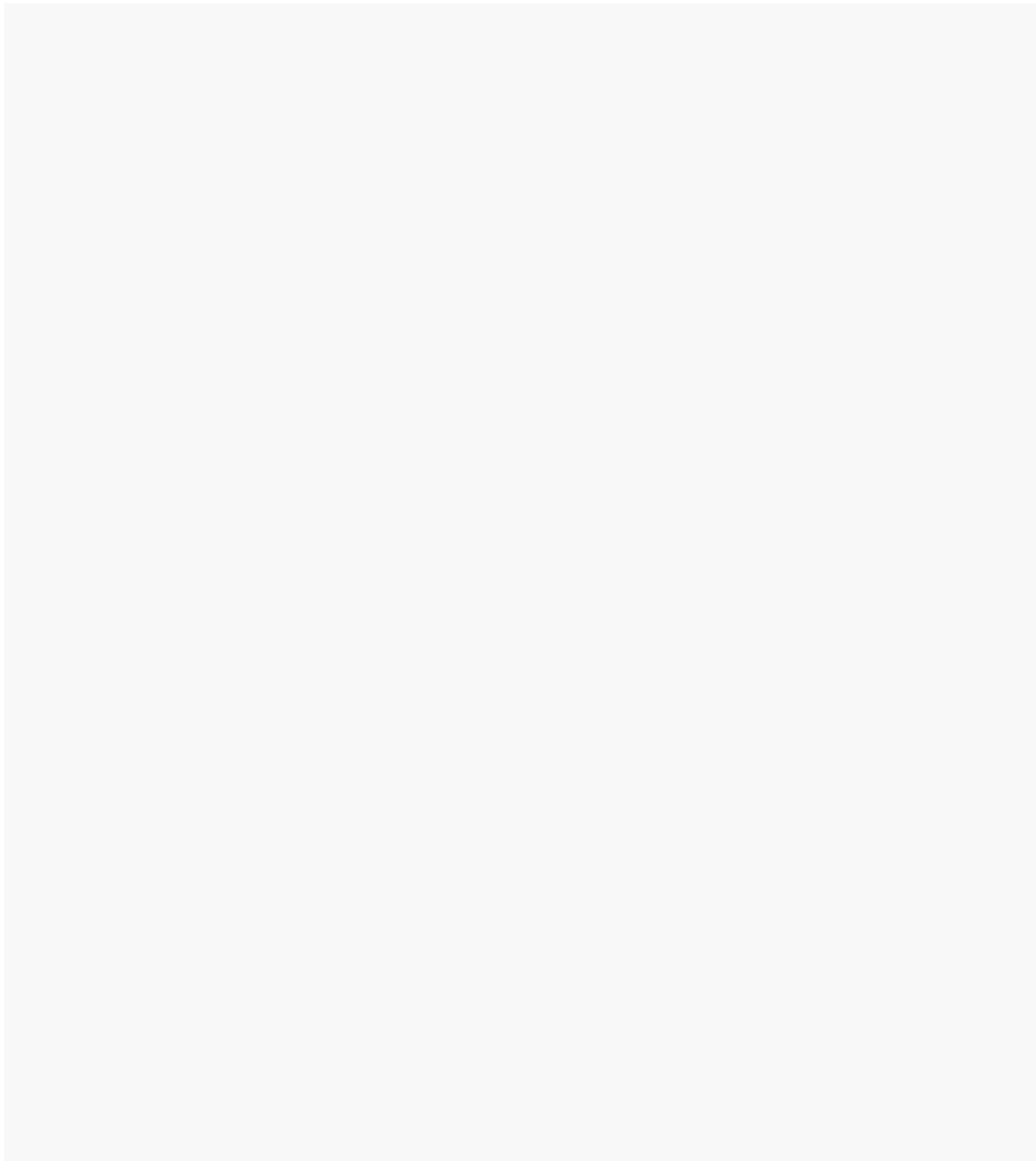


### 9. Summary with hypothesis statement



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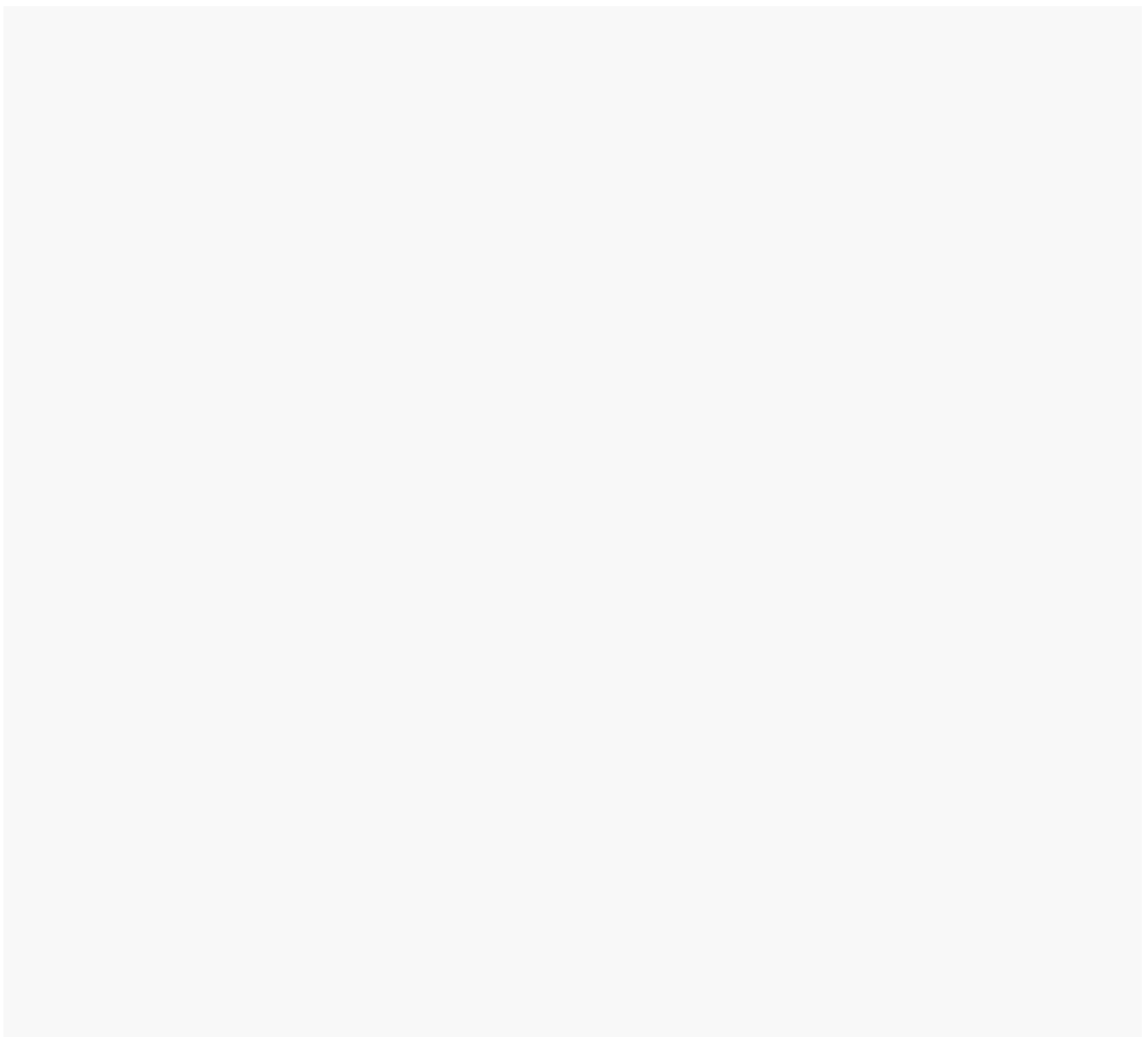
## 10. Recommendations



## **COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION**

The completed documentation is the end of the FBA process, but usually just the beginning of treatment. Often the FBA leads to the development of a behavior intervention plan (BIP) to address the concerns evaluated during the FBA.

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES AND NEXT STEPS:**



# T R E A T M E N T   S U C C E S S

Successful treatment depends on accurately identifying the function of target behaviors. You now have the tools you need to conduct and document a functional behavior assessment (FBA).

**GET IT DONE!**