

# USING A THREE PATHWAY SUMMARY CHART

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## ***What does the Three Pathway Summary Chart summarize?***

All functional behavioral assessments examine the predictors for current problem behavior (immediate and immediate past antecedents to the behavior) to determine what is supporting the problem behavior as well as the maintaining consequence (function) of the behavior. This chart summarizes those findings graphically and illustrates the relationship of interventions to the FBA analysis.

## **What are the Three Pathways?**

- **Upper Pathway: *Intervene and alter conditions to support this path***  
General positive behavior expected of all students under similar conditions that we hope to attain through adopting the behavior plan.
- **Middle Pathway: *Redirect to either upper or lower pathway***  
This is the problem sequence A-B-C that identifies the context of the undesirable behavior we wish to eliminate.
- **Lower Pathway: *Teach to redirect from middle pathway***  
This is the tolerable functionally equivalent replacement behavior we wish to teach and support as an alternate to the middle pathway. When the supports put in place to gain the general positive behaviors on the upper pathway are not yet sufficient, we allow the student to achieve the same outcome as the problem behavior, only with a different form of behavior we can tolerate.

## ***Why should I use a pathway chart?***

Typically teams meet to address behavior problems and start discussing interventions prior to a full analysis of why the problem is occurring in the first place. This can result in behavior plans lacking clarity and breadth of analysis. When the eight steps below are followed, this chart provides a sequential problem solving format for the team, is time efficient and summarizes the FBA. The chart clearly communicates what is an analysis (the boxes) versus what is an intervention (the dotted arrows) and provides clarity in understanding why the behavior is occurring. It highlights the three paths that will be addressed in the behavior plan and allows the consultant to steer the team to the conceptual basis of a function based plan. Using this approach, more consensus can be reached and interventions designed by the team can more directly address the problem.

### ***Where do we get the data for the Pathway Summary Chart?***

Complete the functional behavioral assessment data collection that included the necessary three elements of all assessments:

- Direct Observation
- Review of Records
- Interviews

This data will demonstrate the purpose the behavior serves for the student, and the predictors, setting events and maintaining consequences (function achieved by the behavior) that are “triggers” for the problem.

### ***How does the team meeting use the Three Pathway Summary Chart and why?***

If the lead behavior consultant collaboratively structures the team in graphing the pathways in the following order, the team will gain an understanding of the foundation of the subsequent behavior plan and opposition minimized. The necessary interventions to support success can then be addressed in the behavior plan with buy in from all members already procured.

- **Step One:** Begin by agreeing on the problem behavior definition
  - **Rationale:** *The team must agree on one problem behavior to graph and address in the plan. This is the logical beginning*
- **Step Two:** Agree on general positive behavior expected (what all students are expected to do) Typically the teacher will be able to easily provide this statement
  - **Rationale:** *The teacher must readily grasp that the intent of the plan is to remove behavioral barriers to educational success. This step gains that buy in.*
- **Step Three:** Agree on the outcome of the general positive behavior. Why would it be desirable for the student to use this behavior? Typically the teacher will readily provide this rationale.
  - **Rationale:** *The team has now completed the pathway that will be supported by one third of the behavior plan through supportive interventions and environmental changes. These first three steps reassure implementers that the plan will be addressing desired outcomes as a priority.*
- **Step Four:** Discuss the predictors, the triggering antecedents that are the context of the problem behavior. Your environmental analysis will have pointed out variables that support problem behavior rather than the desired positive behaviors, e.g., lengthy wait times, task complexity and skill mismatches, etc. See [www.pent.ca.gov](http://www.pent.ca.gov) for environmental assessment tools in the BIP Desk Reference.
  - **Rationale:** *The team is now ready to look at the core problem that will need to be altered in the behavior plan.*

- **Step Five:** Identify what your data analysis has yielded and your hypothesis on what is supporting the problem. What is the student getting or rejecting (avoiding, removing, protesting) by the behavior? This is the “communicative intent” of the behavior which is the reason an FBA has been conducted.
  - **Rationale:** *The team has now identified the maintaining consequence of the behavior. The lower pathway discussed in the step seven will allow the student to meet this need through an acceptable alternative (functionally equivalent replacement behavior). We must have a consensus understanding of the purpose of the behavior before developing the functionally equivalent behavior.*
  
- **Step Six:** Sometimes, but not always, immediate past antecedents or setting events strengthen the likelihood that on this day, at this time, in this situation, the student is especially likely to use problem behavior when confronted by the triggering antecedents. The teacher and family may have data to contribute in this section. The behavior plan will address altering the environment, task or instruction when the setting event occurs in order to reduce the likelihood of problem behavior.
  - **Rationale:** *The team will wish to pre plan how to prevent escalation if setting events, periodic variables, strengthen the possibility that environmental variables will trigger problem behavior. If the team brings up constantly occurring variables, such as parent neglect, presence of a disability, etc., the consultant can demonstrate that this is “off the chart” and dealt with through other interventions such as counseling, agency referrals, etc.*
  
- **Step Seven:** This is the most difficult element of function-based behavior analysis for most teams. The consultant will need to point out that for some students, this is only a temporary step until such changes to support the upper pathway are systematically addressed. For other more complex cases, this lower pathway will be needed continuously. For example, if the student runs out of the room because he wished to escape difficult work, our primary upper pathway interventions will be designed to increase task compliance through altering work or providing supports to aid completion.
  - **Rationale:** *There will likely be times when the student begins the tried and true middle pathway, e.g., terminate a task through running away. Rather, we want this function to be achieved with a different behavior form, such as putting work in a “break now” folder. The task is terminated through the lower pathway method and the middle path is eliminated. Once we have charted this final lower pathway, and the team has reached consensus, the behavior plan can be more rapidly and skillfully completed.*

Note: This revised pathway chart is based on an original Three Pathway Summary Chart developed by O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Newton, S., & Storey, K. (1997). *Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior: A practical handbook (2nd ed.)*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brookes/Cole. It has been revised and expanded by Diana Browning Wright.