Incentive Programs:
Design, Implementation, & Effectiveness
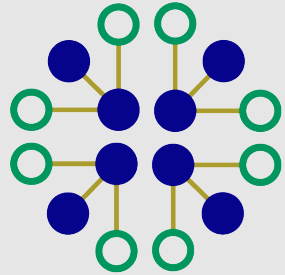
Problem Behaviors

- "Problem" behaviors can be developed by:

  - Modeling (behavior learned from others)

  - Regulatory (especially for those with sensory needs)

  - Maladaptive coping strategies

- Unsafe or challenging behaviors occur because the behavior is **meeting a need** or represents an **underdeveloped skill**

- Depending on what happens before and after a behavior occurs, the likelihood of that behavior occurring again can be increased or decreased.

Incentive Programs = Teaching and Training

- The role of caregivers is to teach and reinforce new skills

- New skills are developed through instruction, practice, feedback, and **encouragement**

- "For [a consumer] to **learn something new**, it needs to be repeated on average **8** times. For [a consumer] to **unlearn** an old behavior and replace it with a new behavior, the new behavior must be repeated on average **28** times." – Harry Wong

- Positive reinforcement leads to **quicker and longer-lasting** behavior change compared to punishment.

Find the Function

- A behavior's function is the reason a behavior continues. It is the reinforcer for the individual.

- The primary functions of behavior are:

  - Escape
  - Attention
  - Access
  - Sensory

- When a behavior no longer works to serve the function, when a behavior is no longer reinforced, **or an alternate behavior leads to a more desirable outcome**, that behavior will stop and a new behavior will take its place.

Teach the Skill(s)

- An incentive program is only effective if the individual has developed the necessary skill and can demonstrate the skill in the needed situation.

- Just like any skill, teach replacement behaviors (that meet the same function as the problem behavior) explicitly.

  - Break the skill into smaller parts

  - Show the consumer exactly what you want them to do and provide instruction using clear and explicit expectations and directions. Match your language to the consumer's level of communication.

  - Provide the consumer opportunities to practice the new skill. Role play completing the skill.

  - Give the consumer feedback including what was done correctly and what could be improved.

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Design the Incentive Program

- Identify a specific behavior to be encouraged

- Evaluate the current status of that behavior (i.e., baseline)

- Set a specific goal that is attainable, but not so easy that it will be met every time but also not impossible. The consumer must believe that the goal is attainable and the reward is stronger than the weight of the task.

- Identify motivating incentives for the consumer and a schedule regarding when/how the incentive will be provided contingent on reaching the goal.

- Teach the consumer and all caregivers the procedures of the incentive program
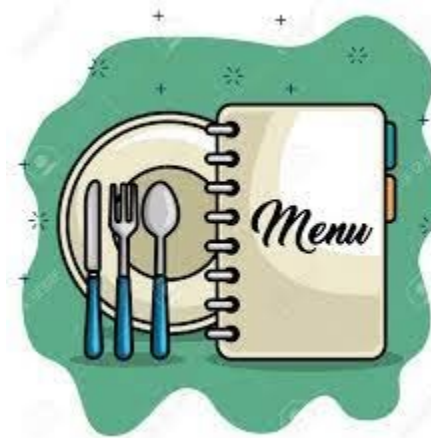
Tangibles

- Can be food or objects

- Should be paired with verbal praise

- Should be contextually appropriate

- Can be temporary or permanent
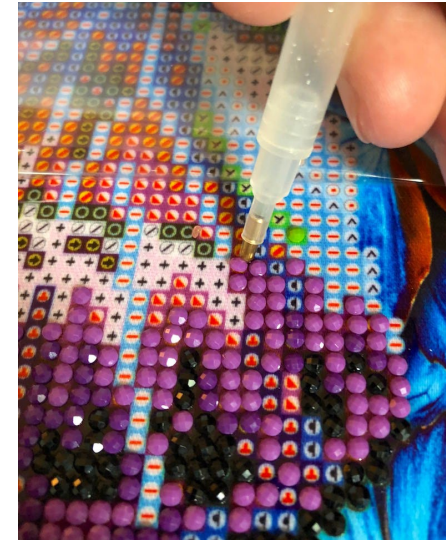
Special Activities

- Often most effective rewards

- Easy to connect to function

- Should be paired with verbal praise

- Should be contextually appropriate

- Need to have a clear plan for how/when activity will be completed

Tokens

- Represent the ability to exchange for other desirable rewards

- The other rewards can be tangibles, special activities, or a combination

- Should be paired with verbal praise

- Should be contextually appropriate

- Need to have a clear plan for how/when to exchange the token

YOU CAN DO THIS!

START

KEEP GOING

YOU DID IT!

ALMOST THERE!

YOUR PRIZE:

Considerations for Rewards:

- Consumers cannot be restricted from having access to items that they have a right to access even if the item is being used as a reward.

- Make the reward exciting!

- Rewards DO NOT need to have an associated cost.

- Rewards that do have a financial cost can be funded by the consumer/payee/guardian (with their permission) or the provider.

- Consumers have INDIVIDUALIZED Plans of Service. Therefore, housemates may have different goals and incentives.

Implement the Incentive Program

- Teach the incentive program to the consumer in developmentally appropriate ways. The program can be discussed privately or publicly.

- Train **all** caregivers on the incentive program

- The program must be implemented with **fidelity** (correct and consistent)

- The reward cannot be given if the goal was not met and must be given if the goal is met.

- Over time, move from:
  - Other-delivered to self-delivered
  - Highly frequent to less frequent
  - Predictable to unpredictable
  - Tangible to social

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Monitoring Effectiveness of Incentive Programs

- Collect data regarding
  - the target behavior,
  - the replacement behavior/skill
  - the fidelity of the incentive program
- Make adjustments to the goal as needed
- Change the reward as needed

If the behavior isn't changing, consider:

- Has the consumer developed the necessary skills?

- Is the function of the problem behavior being met in an alternate manner?

- Does the consumer perceive the goal is too easy or unattainable?

- Is the reward not motivating enough for the specific goal?

- Are all staff/caregivers implementing the program correctly and consistently?

- Has the incentive program been attempted for an extended period (i.e., at least a month)?

LET'S PRACTICE!

Buddy the Elf has been yelling and throwing things in Santa's workshop when Santa is helping other elves.

What is the function of the behavior?

What skill does Buddy need?

What is a specific example for a possible goal and reward?

What should happen if the incentive program isn't working?

Resources

FAST

Functional Analysis Screening Tool

Date: _____

ant: _____ Interviewer: _____

Interviewer: The FAST identifies factors that may influence problem behaviors. Use it only for screening as part nprehensive functional analysis of the behavior. Administer the FAST to several individuals who interact with the equently. Then use the results to guide direct observation in several different situations to verify suspected ral functions and to identify other factors that may influence the problem behavior.

Informant: Complete the sections below. Then read each question carefully and answer it by circling "Yes" or you are uncertain about an answer, circle "N/A."

ant-Client Relationship

Indicate your relationship to the person: ☐ Parent ☐ Instructor ☐ Therapist/Residential Staff
☐ Other: _____

How long have you known the person? _____ Years _____ Months
Do you interact with the person daily? ☐ Yes ☐ No
In what situations do you usually interact with the person?
☐ Meals ☐ Academic Training ☐ Leisure ☐ Work or Vocational Training
☐ Self-Care ☐ Other: _____

n Behavior Information

Problem Behavior (check and describe):
☐ Aggression _____
☐ Self-Injury _____
☐ Stereotypy _____
☐ Property _____
Destruction _____
☐ Other _____

Reinforcement Inventory

Instructions: The items in this questionnaire refer to things and experiences that may give a person joy, satisfaction, and/or pleasurable feelings. For each item, activity, and event, check one option in the columns below that indicates how much this individual "enjoys" the described item, activity, or event.

Individual: _____ Date: _____
Person Completing Form: _____

Description of Potentially Reinforcing Items, Activities, and/or Events	Not at All	A Little	A Fair Amount	Much	Very Much
A. Food Items					
1. Candy (What kind?)					
a.					
b.					
c.					
2. Raisins					
3. Cereals					
4. Nuts					
5. Chips					

Weekly Reward Chart

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Reward Earned?	YES	NO
Reward Chosen:		

Questions?