



**Standard 17:**  
**Applying Incentives and Sanctions**  
 See section 10 of binder





**Learning Objectives:**

As a result of this session, you should be able to:

- Appreciate basic principles of behavior modification.
- Apply those principles to develop specific incentives and sanctions to modify behavior

**Principles of Behavior Modification**

“Drug Courts improve outcomes for drug-abusing offenders by combining evidence-based substance abuse treatment with strict behavioral accountability. Participants are carefully monitored for substance use and related behaviors and receive escalating incentives for accomplishments and sanctions for infractions. The nearly unanimous perception of both participants and staff members is that the positive effects of Drug Courts are largely attributable to the application of these behavioral contingencies.”

Douglas Marlowe, JD, PhD  
 “Behavior Modification 101 for Drug Courts: Making the Most of Incentives and Sanctions”  
 NDCI: [Drug Court Practitioner Fact Sheet](#), September, 2012

# Incentives

1. Reward, and therefore  
increase, desirable behaviors

2. Giving reward (positive  
reinforcement)

3. Taking something negative  
away

# Sanctions

Reduce undesirable behavior

Giving Punishment

Taking something  
positive away

Incentives and  
Sanctions

# Therapeutic adjustments

## Principles of Behavior Modification

Three key principles of behavior modification:

1. Certainty
2. Celerity
3. Fairness

### **Certainty**

A. Consistency in reward and punishment enhances program effectiveness

### **Certainty**

B. Policies and procedures must be specified clearly

## Certainty

C. Certainty is most important. Therefore, monitoring is key.

## Celerity

- Effects of sanctions and rewards begin to decline within hours or days after the target behavior.
- Treatment courts have better outcomes where participants return to court at least every two weeks for the first several months.
- Bring participants to court as soon as possible after an infraction.

Fairness

Shaping Behavior:  
Proximal v. Distal  
Goals

## Proximal

- Behavior necessary for long-term objectives to be achieved
- Participant is already capable of performing

## Distal

- Behavior that is ultimately desired
- Will take time to achieve

	Proximal	Distal
Sanction	High(er)	Low(er)
Reward	Low(er)	High(er)

## Alcohol/Drug Use Example

- Dealing with alcohol/drug use and proximal and distal goals
- Dependent – abstinence is a distal goal
- If control has been demonstrated, abstinence is proximal

### **Use and Honesty**

- Avoiding the mixed message: the use/honesty problem
- Always punish use if abstinence is a proximal goal.
- Use accompanied by dishonesty = greater punishment
- Praise honesty

# Incentives and Phase Advancement

### **Strike a Balance**

- Low-moderate rewards are effective
- Intermediate sanctions tend to be most effective

### **List of incentives and sanctions**

**Q: Chelsea has been in your program for three weeks. Yesterday morning she failed to show up for her UA test. What sanction do you impose?**

- A. No sanction
- B. Daily testing for the next week
- C. Jail overnight
- D. 4 hours of community service
- E. Additional treatment

**Q: Tony is in phase 3 of the program and has maintained sobriety for six months. He tests positive for meth and admits his use. What sanction do you impose?**

- A. Daily testing for the next week
- B. A weekend in jail
- C. 20 hours of community service
- D. Additional groups and meetings each week
- E. Added treatment

Please turn off your clicker when done!

## References

D.B. Marlowe, Behavior Modification 101 for Drug Courts; Making the Most of Incentives and Sanctions (NDCI Fact Sheet, September 2012)

NDCA Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards, Volume I, Standards IV (2013)

NDCI Incentives and Sanctions (Materials from September 17-18, 2009 program)

## Breakout 7

- Review your incentives and sanctions and consider modification and response grids
- Discussing tracking incentives and sanctions (connects to performance measures)
- Review policies and process on drug testing and ensure they are random and other goals are being met