

"Ideas for Treatment Improvement"

ADDICTION *Messenger*

SEPTEMBER 2007 • VOLUME 10, ISSUE 9

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SERIES 27

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Motivational Incentives - Part 3 Frequently Asked Questions

"Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly."

~ Stephen R. Covey (1932- present) ~

As substance abuse treatment agencies become more familiar with Motivational Incentives they often have questions surrounding key issues with regard to its use. The following information answers some of the most frequently asked questions. This information is part of the Promoting Awareness of Motivational Incentives (PAMI, 2007) package of materials developed by the NIDA-SAMHSA Blending Initiative.

Does participating in motivational incentives lead clients to gambling addiction?

Positive reinforcements work to influence and motivate substance abuse clients to remain in treatment and abstain from drug use. Research has constantly proven that reinforcing a behavior can increase its frequency. In studies conducted by Stitzer and Petry (2005) (those with gambling problems were excluded) clients did not develop a gambling addiction as a result of motivational incentives.

Isn't this just what clients should be doing anyway?

The use of motivational incentives in clinical practice should not be confused with motivational business practices used in other fields. Once treatment agencies experience the impact of motivational incentive programs on their clients, objections and misgivings about rewards diminish. Motivational incentive rewards are used as a clinical tool for clients where rewards are often few and far between. The rewards are used for recognition - not bribery.

What about the cost of using motivational incentives for an agency?

Using a motivational incentives program such as the Fishbowl Method has been popular because it involves the use of low-cost incentives using an intermittent reinforcement schedule which helps reduce costs dramatically. The importance of incentives is not the value or frequency of them but rather in the principle of reinforcement itself. Motivational incentives increase the number of clients showing up for appointments which leads to better treatment outcomes and increased financial revenue for the agency.

How else can costs be reduced?

Using the Fishbowl Method does keep costs low. Targeting behaviors other than drug use can also be considered to reduce costs. Focusing on and rewarding behaviors such as group attendance, working on treatment plans or following up on commitments can have a powerful impact on a client's program. Other flexible approaches can include targeting

a specific substance or a particularly vulnerable population such as pregnant women or clients with co-occurring disorders.

How are incentives selected?

Each treatment agency's situation is unique and they can decide what is important for their clients in terms of incentives. Be mindful of choosing incentives that would be important to the clients, items that can be obtained through donations, and that are of sufficient "value". Clients can also be involved in the selection of motivational incentives. Other ideas, such as use of privileges that already exist within an agency (such as take home methadone) have proven to be powerful reinforcers.

How are Motivational Incentives different from Motivational Interviewing?

They both view that some clients often exist in a state of ambivalence about their drug and alcohol use. The goals of both are to work with the ambivalence to help clients make decisions to pursue a path toward recovery. The use of motivational incentives seeks to reach that goal by reducing the relative value of the rewards associated with drug use by increasing the incentives that support recovery. As recovery grows in attractiveness, drug-using behavior can diminish in desirability.

What impact will this have on a substance abuse counselor's job?

While all kinds of models have been tried in addiction treatment and recovery settings, positive reinforcement is increasingly becoming the norm. These types of programs are effective because they are enjoyable for both clients and staff and they enhance engagement and reduce client dropout.

What about relapse?

There are a number of considerations worth exploring including when to terminate the intervention. Rather than terminating at a given point in time, regardless of the progress of the client, an agency could gradually increase the requirements necessary to receive an incentive while lowering the level of magnitude of the incentive given. Eventually the whole intervention can be faded out.

How does the use of motivational incentives help clinically?

The use of incentives is more than just the distribution of points, vouchers and prizes. It's also a clinical intervention that helps to develop a therapeutic culture which is centered on affirmation, recognition and celebration.

What do clients say?

Clients' stories highlight the benefits of positive reinforcements. "I felt that I was going down the drain with drug

use; that I was going to die soon. This got me connected, got me involved in groups and back into things. Now I'm clean and sober". (*Hear and see more stories on the PAMI CD-Rom*)

Can Motivational Incentives be used with adolescents, or patients with co-occurring disorders?

Yes. Motivational incentives represent an added value to more traditional therapies for any population.

Is it for everyone?

Programs that seem to benefit from this intervention are those with low retention rates. However, the MIEDAR (Motivational Incentives to Enhance Drug Abuse Recovery) (Petry, 2005) study showed benefits across all sites which suggests that motivational incentives should be considered even when retention rates are relatively high.

Why would an agency want to consider using motivational incentives?

As more emphasis is placed on evidence-based practices, funding this type of intervention allows a process for tracking outcomes and impact on clients. In an increasingly outcome oriented environment these are very important matters. The systematic use of positive reinforcement has frequently been associated with efforts to change or reinforce problematic individual or social conditions. The purposeful use of consequences to help shape and change behavior has been used throughout history. Examples include military honors, athletic competitions, progressive educational reforms and prison reform.

What do Administrators say?

"The staff has heard clients say that they had come to realize that there are rewards just in being with each other in group. There are so many traumatized and sexually abused clients who are only told negative things. So, when they heard something good – that helps to build their self-esteem and ego." (*Hear and see more stories on the PAMI CD-Rom*)

If some of the motivational incentives strategies that have been discussed in this series aren't working initially, try re-examining your schedule of monitoring and rewards to see if other options might work. What about fidelity? Are the procedures being implemented consistently? Learn from any concerns you encounter. Keep track of what works and what doesn't. Is your agency open-minded to novel applications of motivational incentives approaches? Your agency's creativity may lead to discovering new low-cost ideas for rewards through sharing your collective ideas.

Example:

Page 3 provides an example of one way to use motivational incentives. You may want to copy this page to use with your clients.

RECOVERY ACTIVITY

*Provide a reward for **any 3** connecting boxes down, across, or diagonally that a client earns.*

Complete Bio-Psycho-Social Assesment with your primary counselor	Complete Vocational Assessment with your vocational counselor	Be on time for one scheduled appointment
Provide one Drug-Free Urine Sample for opiates or _____	FREE SPACE	Attend a 1:1 Session with your primary counselor
Pay your Clinic Bill or Provide Insurance Card	Meet with Vocational Counselor for Appointment	Complete 4 Group meetings this month

Boxes to be initialed by staff

This card is valid until: _____ Card redeemed on: _____

Client's Name: _____

Counselor's Name: _____

You may want to copy this Recovery Activity sheet to use in your agency

Next Issue:

“Recovery Oriented Systems of Care”

Source:

Promoting Awareness of Motivational Incentives (PAMI) Package (2007) NIDA/SAMHSA Blending Initiative product. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on July 12, 2007: <http://www.nida.nih.gov/blending/PAMI.html>

Petry, N.M., et al. **Effect of prize-based incentives on outcomes in stimulant abusers in outpatient psychosocial treatment programs: A National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network Study.** *Archives of General Psychiatry* 62(10):1148-1156, 2005.



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TEST Series 27

1. The benefits of implementing a motivational incentives program in an agency include:

- a. clients stay engaged in treatment for a longer period of time.
- b. less group meetings are required
- c. minimal financial investment from agency
- d. a and c.

2. The use of motivational incentives in addiction treatment is based on the principle that - if a behavior is reinforced/rewarded it's more likely to occur in the future.

True or False

3. The reinforcement or reward for a desired behavior needs to follow that behavior

- a. at the next group meeting
- b. as soon as possible after the behavior has been validated
- c. as soon as possible
- d. All of the above

4. Name 5 ways an agency can obtain low cost incentives.:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

5. The PAMI package can be downloaded at:

www. _____

6. When you select a (fill in the blank) _____ behavior choose something that is problematic and in need of improvement.

7. Participating in a motivational incentives program often contributes to gambling addiction in older adults.

True or False

8. Explain what the *Fishbowl Method* is:

9. What are the Seven Principles of motivational Incentives?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____

10. The choice of reinforcement/reward should be perceived as valuable/desirable to the client.

True or False

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