

NYC Health and Hospitals Summary of Motivational Incentive Programs

Motivational incentives for clients in New York City Health and Hospitals Corp.

Key elements:

- Offer individualized incentives.
- The behavior for which incentives are given changes over time; once clients reach a treatment goal, they are offered an incentive for something else.
- Offer incentives that will help clients return to work and develop life skills, such as gift certificates to stores where they can buy clothes they need for job interviews.

Overview:

- 17 different programs in NY have implemented some sort of incentive system over the past 5 years.
- Some consist of individualized incentive programs. Others are more formal contingency management programs. Some offer both.
- 70% of clients are involved in some incentive program.

Rationale:

- Provide a clear understanding of the desired behavior that is part of the treatment plan and offer an incentive to help motivate the client. Reward the behavior as close to the time it occurs as possible to reinforce it. Make it immediate.

Individualized incentive programs:

- The goal varies for each client and is agreed upon between counselor and client.
- Other clients do not necessarily know about the incentives for other clients.
- Example: At an agency with 50% Russian speaking population, there was a client who was afraid to go to group. Her counselor used incentives to help motivate her to participate.
 - Week 1: The client got a metro card for standing outside of the room one time during the week even though the group met 3 times a week.
 - Week 2: She got a gift certificate to McDonald's for sitting in the back of room during group.
 - Week 3: She got another gift certificate to McDonald's for introducing herself to the group
 - Week 4: She told her counselor that she felt comfortable in group and actually spoke up
 - She received movie tickets for participating in the group for 2 more weeks
 - Results: She became a vocal participant and successfully completed treatment

Contingency Management programs:

- Goals:
 - To help clients become more self-sufficient
 - To help clients get appropriate clothing and skills to look for employment
 - To help clients make good choices when shopping
- Incentives:
 - Once they reach a certain point value, they're eligible to get a gift certificate from Macy's, Target, Old Navy, Bath and Body, Metro cards, grocery stores. These are places where they can pick **items that will help them return to work and develop life skills in the process.**
 - Other incentives include toiletry articles, slippers, mugs, slippers, soap, pens, t-shirts, bandanas, other gift cards such as to McDonald's. The Dollar Store is popular place to get items.
- Point system rewards desired behaviors:
 - Clients start building up points when they come in for assessment appointment
 - 5-100 points are offered for different accomplishments. 5 points for keeping an appointment, 10 points for a Sat. appointment; 100 points for obtaining employment or participating in vocational program
 - Movie passes require 50 points; \$25 Gift cards required 100 points

- Clients get flyer about point system as part of their orientation; point system is also posted on the wall
- Clients are able to track their own points over time to make sure that the computer tracking system is accurate
- They do not lose points if they don't do what they're supposed to do
- Behaviors for which incentives are given:
 - The behavior for which incentives are given changes over time; **once clients reach a treatment goal, they are offered an incentive for something else**; point values increase as they achieve more challenging behaviors, e.g. recovery plan gets more points than just showing up. There are platinum, platinum plus, and gold levels as they move through treatment, maintain, resume, etc.
 - **Transition from detox to next level of treatment**; incentive is given if they show for first appointment at next level of care.
- Staff resistance
 - Initially, staff questioned why clients should get gifts and money for something they're supposed to do.
 - The results helped convince staff that the incentives are beneficial.
- Results:
 - At Lincoln, 3 month retention rates increased more than 20% because of motivational incentives.
 - Other results for 3 month period:
 - Retention increased from 55% to 66%
 - Treatment completion increased from 29% to 36%
 - # of clients who maintained employment increased from 15 clients to 24 clients
 - The increase in revenue resulting from increased client retention justified the hiring of an additional person during a hiring freeze.
 - The incentive program helped build a sense of community also
- Clients' use of incentives
 - Some clients pooled their gift cards to have a party, buying food with gift cards for grocery stores
 - The clients often pass them along to other people.
 - Some clients bought gifts for their children with gift cards
 - Clients learn to shop for sale items to make \$ go further
- Administration
 - Kings County has an account at a discount store so they don't have to store the items; they put money on the account and go back and replenish as needed.
- Budgeting
 - Consider budget when you decide what incentives to buy - \$10,000-20,000 was given to NY programs by the City Council to cover 200 clients
 - Due to budget cuts, they are now planning on writing grants to fund incentives
 - ATTC and Scott Kellogg recommended planning how to fund incentives so they could be offered for at least 2 years
 - Haynes recommends using a fishbowl approach so that you know how many pulls you'll be able to offer and how many grand prizes and other prizes you can offer. You can always offer "good job" messages or certificates instead of \$100 prizes. Do the drawing in a family/community way, so clients feel appreciated.