

PRINCIPLES OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT

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ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT ARE KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Offenders who misuse alcohol are a significant percentage of the criminal justice population.
- Incarceration alone is unlikely to change the subsequent criminal behavior of offenders who chronically misuse alcohol.
- Addressing alcohol use disorders is an essential component in the rehabilitation of offenders who misuse alcohol.
- The most effective way to address offenders' alcohol misuse is through a comprehensive program of sanctions, treatment and accountability.
- “Contingency management (CM), the systematic reinforcement of desired behaviors and the withholding of reinforcement or punishment of undesired behaviors, is an effective strategy in the treatment of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use disorders.” (Higgins and Petry)

INCENTIVES AND SANCTIONS ARE BOTH IMPORTANT

- Incentives can help teach “what to do.”
 - They can take the form of positive reinforcement such as complimenting a good job, or providing token gifts such as tickets to a sports event.
 - They can also take the form of negative reinforcement by taking away a sanction or otherwise relieving an unpleasant circumstance.
- Sanctions for misconduct can help teach “what not to do.”
 - They can take the form of direct punishment such as jail detention.
 - They can also take the form of a response cost, which involves taking away something of value, such as money or a person’s driver’s license.
- Punishment is often most effective when combined with positive reinforcement.

WHAT AND WHEN ARE BOTH IMPORTANT

- Proximal and distal behaviors
 - Offenders in treatment can't do everything at once, and will likely fail if they try.
 - An effective program will be clear about what behaviors it is targeting and why.
- The severity of alcohol use disorders is important.
- Co-occurring mental disorders and physical illnesses are important.
- Life circumstances and “recovery capital” are important.

SOME PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONDING TO TARGET BEHAVIORS

- Responses to behavior should be certain.
- Responses should be immediate.
- Responses should be proportionate to the behavior, and of sufficient intensity to result in change.
- Responses should be consistent and fair.
- Responses should be appropriate to the diagnosis and the stage of recovery.

A FEW CAUTIONS

- Offenders perceive responses through their own lenses.
- Responses can have unintentional consequences.
 - Excessive consequences may result in learned helplessness, fear, anxiety, escape and avoidance.
 - Inappropriate rewards may result in complacency or a sense of entitlement.
- How the response is delivered may be as important as the response itself.

THE TAKE HOME MESSAGE

- Accountability and contingency management are keys to success
- Incentives and sanctions are both important

“Failing to punish misconduct inevitably makes behavior worse, and failing to reward accomplishments makes those accomplishments less likely to recur.” (Marlowe)