

# HOW TO IMPLEMENT FUN, EFFECTIVE EVIDENCE-BASED INCENTIVES ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

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In my experience as a longtime treatment court judge, I learned that we do not need a big budget (or any budget at all) for incentives. In the following pages, I would like to share with you how to create and effectively deliver some incentives that our treatment court participants loved, and some that I have seen other teams use successfully. Delivered with praise and enthusiasm, the following incentives will motivate your participants to engage in treatment, build confidence and nurture long-term recovery.

## 1. **Social Approval: From the Judge, the Team and Participants**

### a. **Praise from the Judge and Team.**

Never underestimate the power of praise from the judge and the team. Research has shown that the positive, supportive relationship between the judge and the participant is the magic that makes treatment court work. Warm, sincere praise from the judge (and team) is free, limitless in supply, can be applied immediately and is effective.

For maximum effect, use this method when delivering incentives:

### **DELIVERING INCENTIVES: EFFECTIVE REINFORCEMENT**

- “I really liked how you (describe specifically WHAT the compliant behavior was)
  - Because (describe specifically WHY the behavior was good for the participant).”
  - Add verbal affirmation, acknowledging participant’s efforts:  
“You should be proud of yourself; I know you have worked hard to change.”
- “Right now, HOW do you think this behavior has, or will, help you?”
- “Can you see where it might have any long-term benefits for you?”
- Optional: “I’m going to give you a (INSERT ADDITIONAL REWARD) for this behavior.
- I’m really proud of you. Keep up the great work!”

Use this same method for delivering a sanction:

### **DELIVERING SANCTIONS: EFFECTIVE DISAPPROVAL**

- “I’m really disappointed that you (describe specifically WHAT the noncompliant behavior was)
  - Because (describe specifically WHY the behavior was harmful for the participant) .”
- “Right now, HOW do you think this behavior has or could hurt you?”
- “Can you see how continuing the behavior might cause any problems for you down the road?”
- “Let’s discuss what you could have done instead, and how that would have looked.”(Guide him to express his thoughts and ideas about his behavior.)
- Optional: “You have to (INSERT ADDITIONAL SANCTION) for this behavior.”
- “I am confident that you are able to turn this around (OPTIONAL: “with the help of \_\_\_\_\_”) and when you come back next time, I want to hear how about how well you are doing.”
- Now, let’s talk about the good things that you are doing. (Use above method for delivering incentives.)

Why this method works: Participants understand there are intrinsic reasons for compliance, beyond staying out of trouble, such as achieving goals, feeling better, repairing relationships and more.

#### **b. Positive Peer Board or “A” Team**

A public courtroom display of the names of participants who have performed well since the last meeting is a powerful incentive. This validating no-cost incentive conveys approval from the judge and the team and, in holding the participant up as a positive example, invites the approval of the fellow participants in the audience, as well. If hearings are conducted virtually, the judge may read the names of the “A” Team, share a document with the names listed, or create an “A” Team PowerPoint.

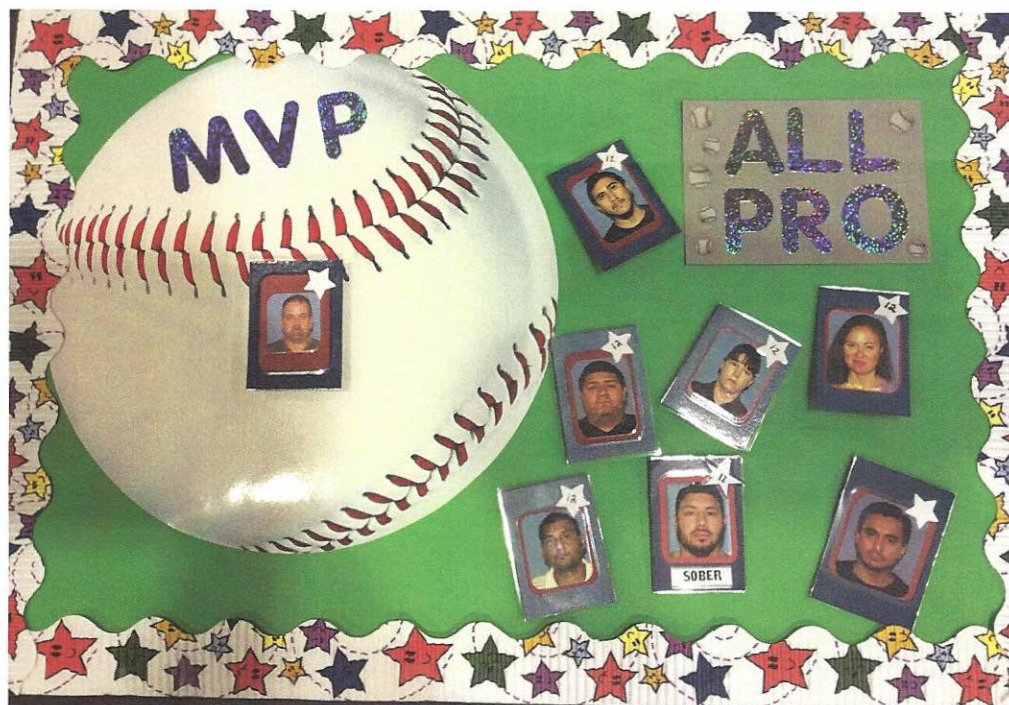


**b. Positive Peer Board or "A" Team, cont'd.**

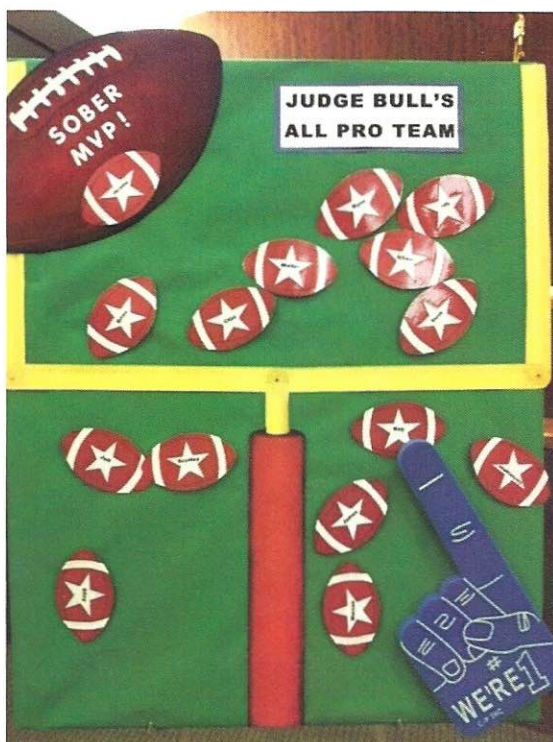
Most courts do a simple display on a white board.



If anyone on the team has some artistic ability, I have found it to be unifying for participants to collaborate and vote on a theme for the display. Note that all the displays have a space for participants who have truly excelled as "MVP's".



**b. Positive Peer Board or "A" Team, cont'd.**



Other creative ways to use this effective incentive include celebrating phase progression:





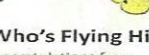
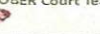
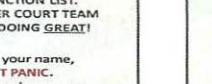
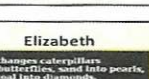
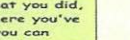
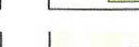
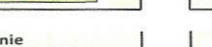
**b. Positive Peer Board or “A” Team, cont’d.**

**Celebrate the participants' families' commitment to recovery, such as a board depicting participants' children or babies born while in recovery:**



If hearings are conducted virtually, the judge may read the names of the “A” Team, share a document with the names listed, or create an “A” Team PowerPoint:

## POSITIVE PEER POWER POINT

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p><b>Look Who's Flying High!</b></p> <p>Congratulations from<br/>Judge Bull and the<br/>SOBER Court Team!</p>  | <p>IF YOU SEE YOUR NAME ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SLIDES, YOU ARE <u>NOT</u> ON THE SANCTION LIST. IT MEANS THE SOBER COURT TEAM AGREES YOU ARE DOING <u>GREAT</u>!</p> <p>If you don't see your name, please <b>DON'T PANIC</b>. It may just mean we have some questions or issues to discuss.</p> | <p><b>Monica</b></p>                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Elizabeth</b></p>  <p>God changes caterpillars into butterflies, sand into pearls, and cold into summer.<br/>Using time and pressure.<br/>Hes working on you too.</p>                         | <p><b>Amy</b></p> <p>"No matter who you are, no matter what you did, no matter where you've come from, you can always change, become a better version of yourself."</p> <p>Madonna</p>                         | <p><b>Kathryn</b></p> <p>"At any given moment you have the power to say: this is not how the story is going to end."</p> <p>Christian Maud Miller</p>  |
| <p><b>Vivian</b></p>  <p>It's gonna get harder before it gets easier.<br/>But if I will get better, we just might make it through the hard stuff first.</p>                                         | <p><b>Melanie</b></p> <p>Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it turned into a...</p>                                                                                                         | <p><b>Lasondra</b></p> <p>Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try</p>                                                                    |

To maximize the effect of the “A” Team incentive:

- Take the “A” Team first with in each phase. We are modeling prosocial behavior. Going first is an additional incentive.
- Ask the person if they know why they are on the “A” team today. New participants don’t always recognize progress and prosocial behavior.
- As always, specifically tell the person WHAT behavior we liked, WHY we liked it and discuss HOW continuing that behavior will help the person.

### **PRACTICE TIP: TURNING OUR COURTROOMS INTO CLASSROOMS:**

Studies have shown participants benefit not only from their time with the judge, but watching others interact with the judge, as well. A powerful way that we can maximize the effect of incentives is to use our courtrooms as classrooms:

- Make sure all voices can be heard by all in the courtroom. The judge, team and participant should all be miked.
- Take late phase (soon to graduate) clients first. They successfully convey the message, “I was just like you. I struggled, but now I’m about to graduate. That means you can do it, too.”
  - In a five-phase program, Phase 5 would go first, followed by 4, 3, 2 and 1. Phases 4 and 5, if compliant, have earned the right to talk to the judge and leave. The rest should stay and learn.

### **c. Certificates**

Certificates, signed by the judge and case manager, celebrate abstinence, treatment and program progress, and prosocial achievements. They publicly convey praise from the judge and the team. They hold the participant up to his or her peers as a positive example. They cost pennies to create.

Certificates are used to celebrate phase promotions, sobriety milestones and prosocial achievements such as:

- Establishing a pattern of attendance at treatment
- Establishing a pattern of negative drug/ alcohol screens
- Exemplary progress in treatment
- Seeking recovery support and establishing a recovery network
- Helping a fellow participant with emotional support or transportation
- Volunteering in the community (especially the recovery community)
- Adopting a new healthy habit (yoga, meditation, nutrition, exercise)
- Displaying extraordinary strength and resilience during a difficult time



# HARRIS COUNTY SOBER DWI COURT CERTIFICATE OF PROMOTION

This is hereby granted to

**Bryce G. Hamilton**

for successful completion of all treatment, testing and supervision requirements of Phase 2 of the SOBER DWI Court program and achieving at least 30 days of abstinence. Your commendable actions demonstrate a commitment to recovery.

RUFUS STEWART  
Judge Presiding

ROGER LEYTON  
Case Manager

## SOBRIETY MILESTONE SUPERSTAR

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

**Amelia Jacobsen**

is recognized for achieving at least  
60 consecutive days of sobriety!  
Your commitment to recovery  
shines brightly!

Rufus Stewart  
DWI Court Coordinator

Delilah Salcedo  
Presiding Judge





# All-Star Attendance

AWARDED TO

**JEREMY  
DAVIS**

in acknowledgement of 30 days of perfect attendance at all Brazos County Veteran's Court scheduled appointments, office visits and court appearances. Your consistent attendance displays your commitment to success in this program and in your long-term recovery.

---

Rufus Stewart  
PRESIDING JUDGE

---

Abraham Joaquin  
CASE MANAGER



Presented to

**JANE PHARR**

for supporting the recovery of your fellow participants by providing encouragement and transportation to treatment, meetings and court. Together, we succeed.

---

HON. DIANE BULL  
Presiding Judge

---

KATHRYN SEGARRA  
Case Manager





# COMMUNITY TRAILBLAZER

This is awarded to

## CLINT VELASQUEZ

for participating in the 7th Annual HOUSTON RUN FOR RECOVERY.

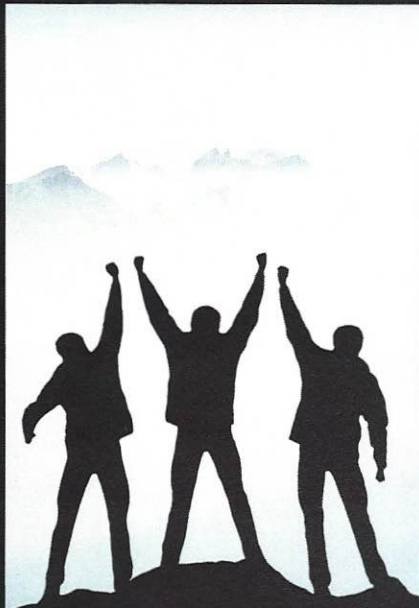
Your support for the Houston recovery community and commitment to a healthy substance-free lifestyle will assure your success in this program and in your long-term recovery.

ISABEL MERCADO

JUDGE PRESIDING

PAM GREEN

COURT COORDINATOR



# RECOVERY WARRIOR

IN RECOGNITION OF

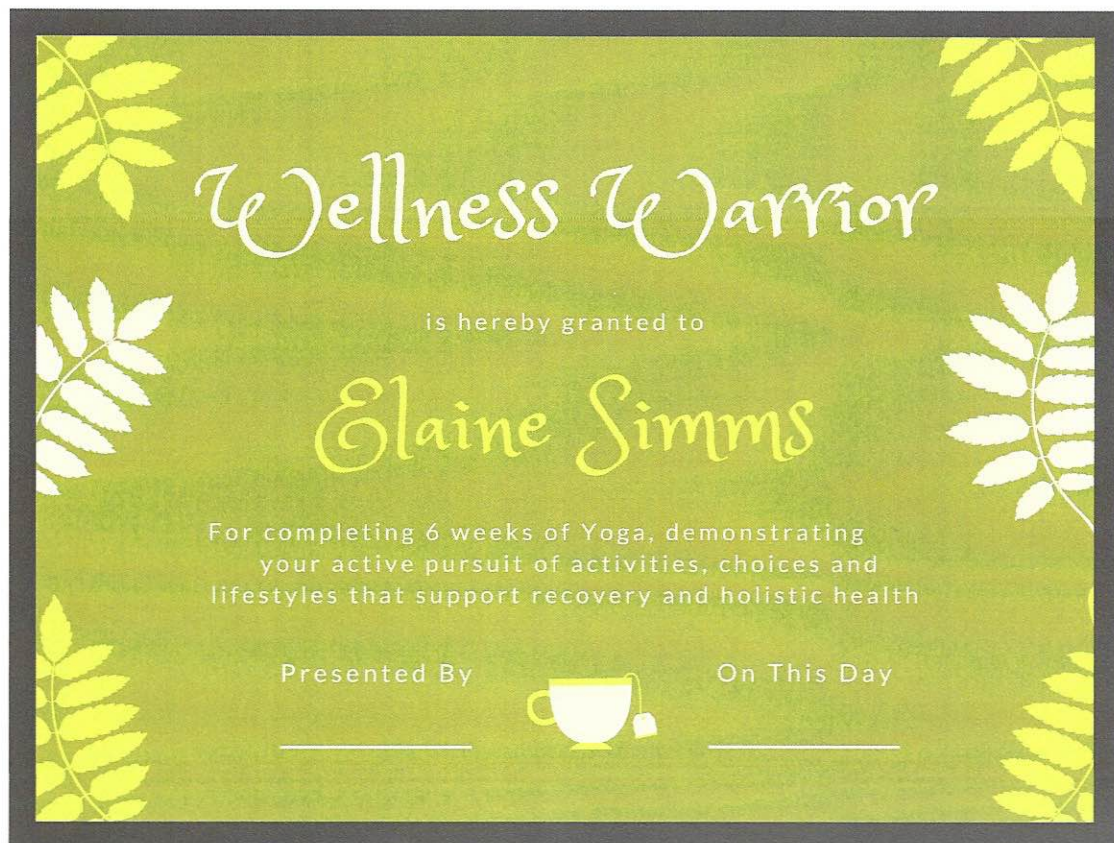
## ROBERT MOSBY

Your active pursuit of establishing and maintaining a recovery support network ensures your success in the Harris County Drug Court program and in your long-term recovery. Congratulations!

DIANE BULL  
Presiding Judge

PHOEBE MELROSE  
Case Manager







# SUNSHINE AWARD

Honoring

## TAYLOR MIZE

Your positive attitude, completion of all homework assignments and participation in group is an inspiration to all. Your willingness to learn and share is a ray of sunshine in the Cass County Family Court program.

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**BENJAMIN SHAH**  
PRESIDING JUDGE

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**GUNTHER HOLST**  
CASE MANAGER



# TRUE GRIT AWARD

This is hereby given to

## SHIRLEY PETERSON

For showing courage, grace and determination in the face of adversity. You stayed in the saddle, maintained your sobriety and put your recovery first. Ride on, Shirley! We are so proud of you.

**RICHARD SANCHEZ**  
JUDGE PRESIDING

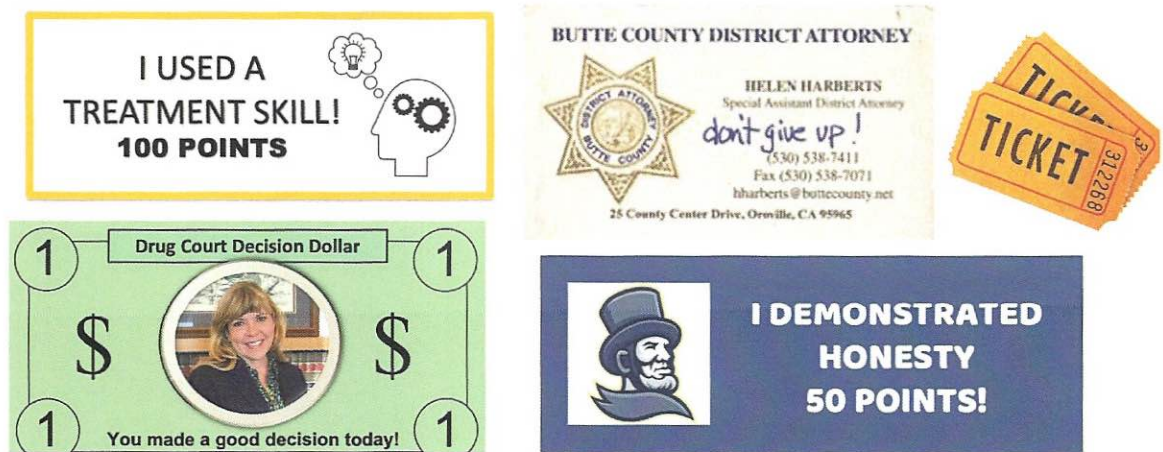
**ANDY CHAPMAN**  
CASE MANAGER

To maximize the effect of certificates in court:

- Create an attractive certificate. There are several websites with free certificate templates such as [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com). Include language that specifies WHAT behavior is being honored, WHY it is desirable behavior.
- Print a copy of the certificate for the judge's and case manager's signature.
- If you can deliver it in person, consider putting it in an inexpensive frame. Dollar stores have attractive document frames.
- If you cannot present it in person, display it at the virtual hearing on a shared screen, read it aloud and thereafter:
  - Email the participant a scanned copy, or even better:
    - Send a flat copy in a large envelope via the mail, or
    - Have the case manager or law enforcement deliver a copy to the doorstep.

Everyone likes receiving a surprise in the mail. The team can sign the back of the certificate or include a separate note. This will feel like a second incentive and the extra effort will be appreciated.

## 2. Tokens



Token reinforcers are points, tickets, coupons or similar items that are awarded for compliant behavior. They can include decision dollars, character coupons, small cards with a special slogan ("You made a good decision"), raffle tickets and points. These are excellent reinforcers as they are typically applied immediately following a compliant behavior. Because they are most valuable when accrued in bulk, they encourage participants to repeat compliant behavior.



There are several ways to use tokens:

- They can be drawn in a weekly raffle or exchanged for something of value.
  - Reach out to community partners to create a treatment court “store.” Participants enjoy spending the “dollars” they’ve earned on useful items such as laundry soap, cleaning products, school supplies, etc.
  - Tokens may also be submitted for drawings in gift basket raffles– the more tokens one has, the more chances to win.
- **Decision Dollars** are fun and highly motivating. Because they are most valuable when accrued in bulk, they encourage participants to repeat compliant behavior. You can print them out on green paper using the template on the following page.
- **Points Systems**

Point systems allow treatment courts to offer large tangible rewards at a reasonable expense. Rather than earning rewards for each accomplishment, participants earn points or vouchers for achieving compliant, target behaviors such as demonstrating honesty and using treatment skills. The points can be used immediately to exchange for small prizes or banked long-term to trade in the points for a substantial prize. Some programs also offer bonus points for extraordinary accomplishments, such as receiving a job promotion or earning a GED.

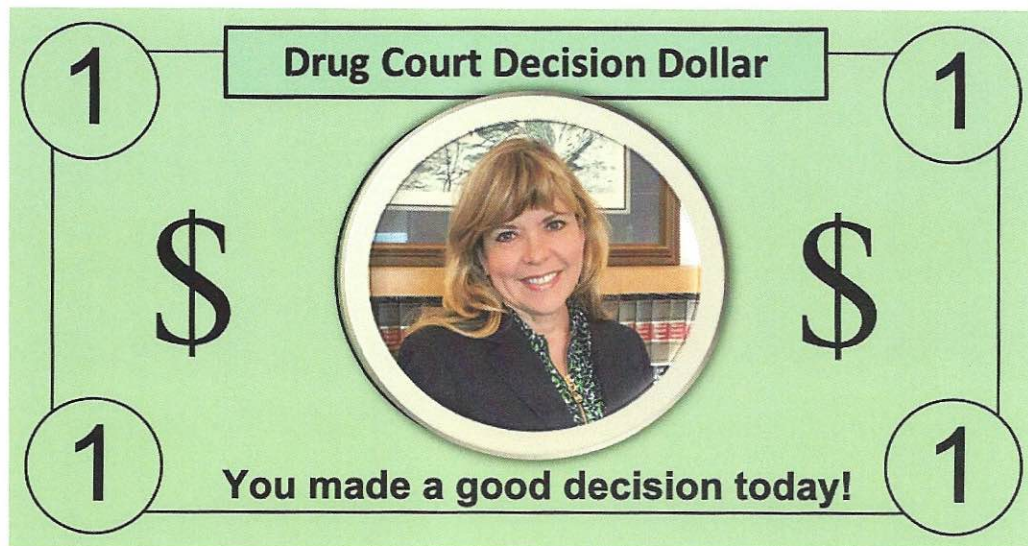
Careful recordkeeping is required when using tokens. Create a system to immediately report and record when tokens are given that can be easily accessed.

Tokens need not be fancy. Team members can use their business cards to praise and award points with a notation and initials on the back. Always take time to explain WHAT behavior is being rewarded, WHY we liked it and HOW continuing will help the participant now and in the future.

**To maximize the effect of tokens, empower everyone on the team to distribute them for a variety of compliant behaviors. For example:**

- Probation: For good reports at office visits, field visits and testing
- Law enforcement: Exemplary field visits and curfew checks
- Public defenders: When clients decide to be honest with the judge and team about noncompliance
- Prosecutor: In court, when clients bring in necessary paperwork, regain driving privileges
- Treatment: For group participation, support of fellow participants
- Judge: When participants share good news, and make good choices

### a. **Decision Dollars**



There are several ways to use Decision Dollars:

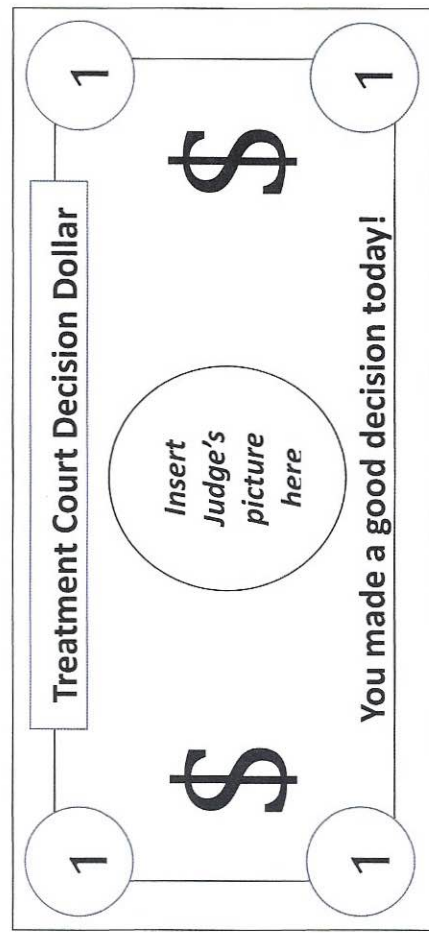
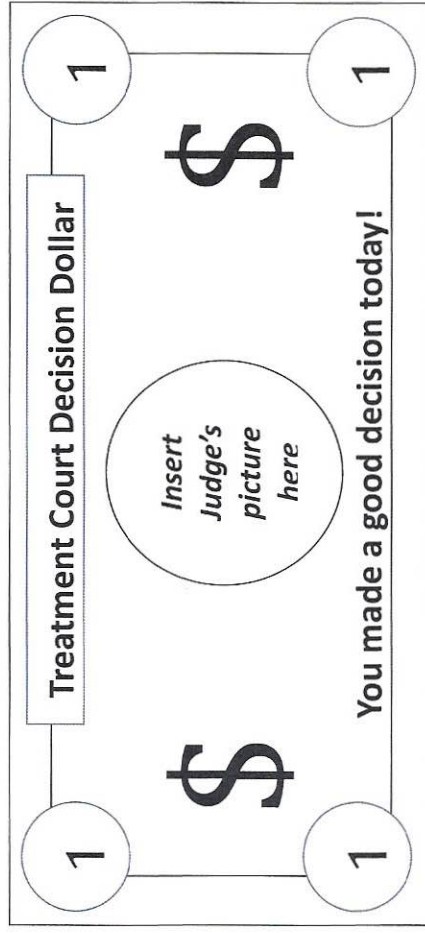
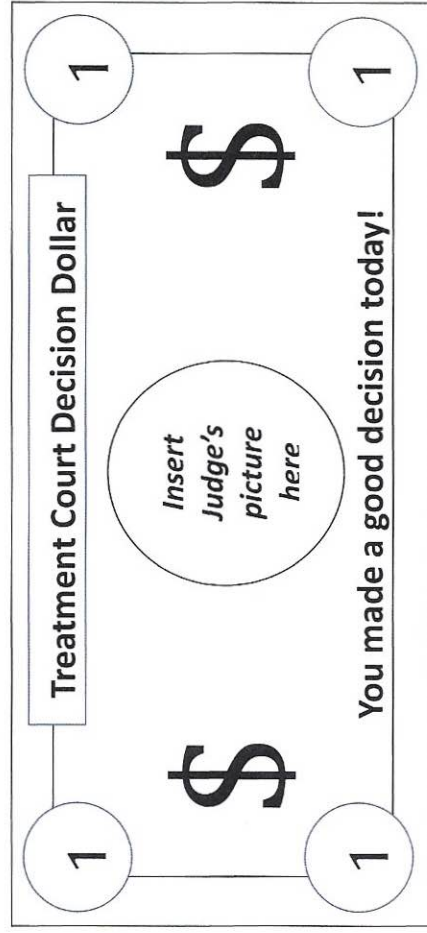
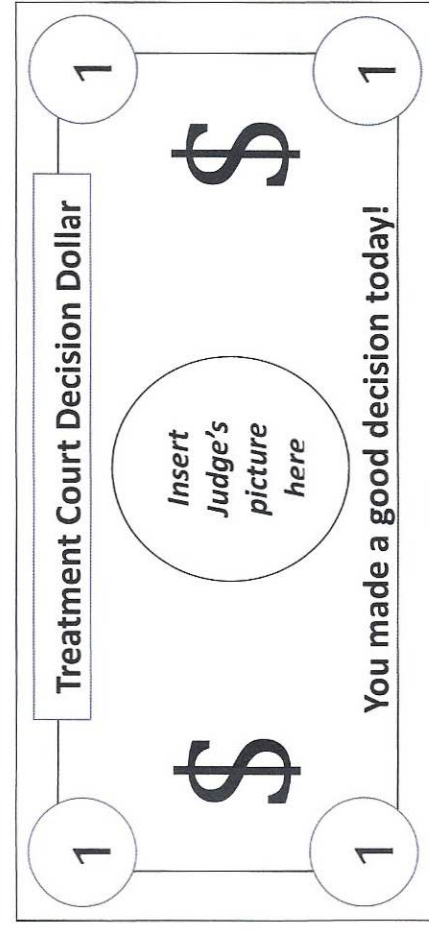
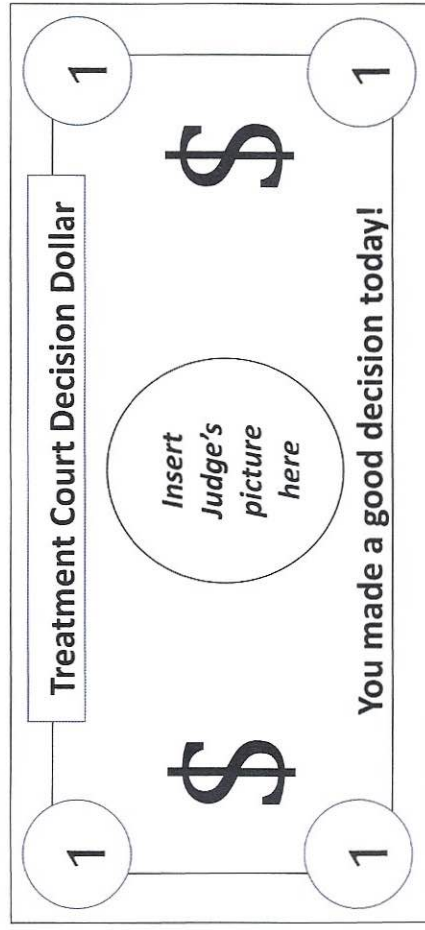
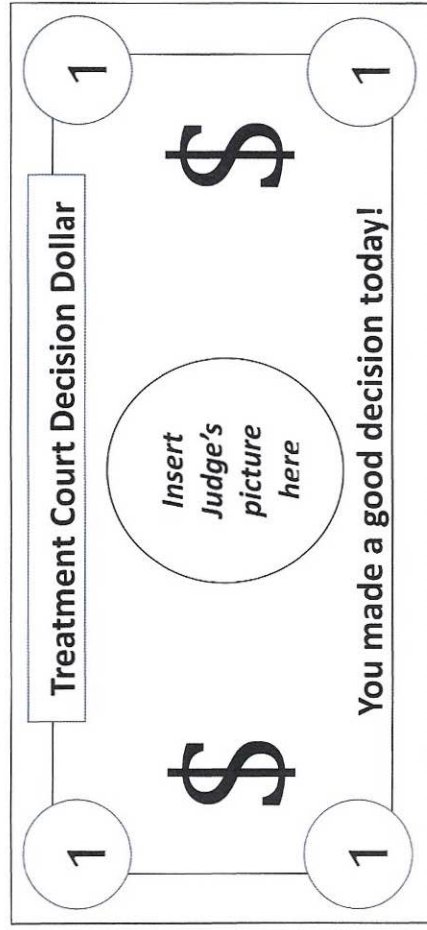
- **To purchase items in your Treatment Court Store:** Reach out to community partners for donation of useful items that participants need and like such as laundry soap, cleaning products, children's books, school supplies, etc.
- **Raffle drawings:** Decision Dollars may also be submitted for drawings in gift basket raffles. Participants write their names on the back of each dollar. The more dollars one has, the more chances to win.

To maximize the effect of this motivating incentive, empower everyone on the team to distribute them for a variety of compliant behaviors. For example:

- **Probation:** For good reports at office visits, field visits and testing
- **Law enforcement:** Exemplary field visits and curfew checks
- **Public defenders:** When clients decide to be honest with the judge and team about noncompliance
- **Prosecutor:** In court, when clients bring in necessary paperwork, regain driving privileges
- **Treatment:** For group participation, support of fellow participants
- **Judge:** When participants share good news, and make good choices

You can print them in bulk on green paper using the following template. It is especially fun to put the judge's picture on the face of the dollar.





## **2. Negative Reinforcers: We Give So We Can Take Away**

Removing things that participants don't like is a highly effective incentive that typically costs the treatment court nothing. There is little that is more valuable than people's time. Consider rewards that give back time, such as allowing a participant to go first in court and leave. If there is no budget for incentives, consider making a standard amount of community service an across-the-board program requirement for all. (We found 60 hours to be a workable amount.) Each week, we can remove small amounts (4 - 8 hours) incrementally as a reward for compliance. Participants are motivated to comply with program requirements in order to eliminate all of the required service hours. Almost all succeed in this endeavor.

Some examples of negative reinforcers as incentives include:

- A one-time pass to go first in court and leave early.
- A one-time pass to report virtually (Zoom) to a supervision office visit or court
- A weekend pass to travel out of the jurisdiction
- Removal of an amount of required community service
- A one-time extension of curfew (1 – 2 hours)
- A one-time fast pass to avoid a line at the testing lab
- A free month of testing
- A one-time reduction in supervision fees
- A one-week free parking pass (or specially designated VIP parking spot) at the courthouse or supervision office

**YOU'RE  
DOING  
GREAT!  
YOU EARNED  
A \$25 FEE  
DISCOUNT!**

**Congrats!  
You have  
earned a  
Report by**  
  
**Pass!**

**GREAT JOB!  
You get a  
VIP parking  
spot by the  
courthouse  
door!  
Keep it up!**

**YOU'RE #1 !  
GO 1<sup>ST</sup> AT  
COURT REVIEW !**

**You've got it made  
in the shade!!  
Subtract 8 HOURS of  
community service.**



### **3. Negative Reinforcers, cont'd.**

To maximize the effect of this incentive:

- Set some ground rules. For example:
  - The reward may only be used when participant is otherwise in compliance.
  - Fee reduction coupons can only be used when the remainder of the monthly fee is paid.
  - Community service removals cannot apply to community service given as a sanction.
  - Incentives like travel passes and curfew extensions can be saved for special occasions but not “stacked.”
- Do not eliminate supervision, court, or treatment contacts as rewards. These contacts are needed. A good compromise is virtual reporting.
- Include these highly valued but no-cost prizes in your fishbowl and wheel prizes.

### **4. Fishbowl/ Wheel: A Chance to Win**

#### **a. Fishbowl**

The fishbowl and its exotic cousin, the wheel, are fun no-cost/ low-cost, low-to-moderate magnitude incentives. About half of the draws/ spins earn only a written declaration of success in the program, paired with applause or other social approval. Others might elicit small prizes comparable to a \$5 to \$15 value (e.g., transportation passes or gift certificates to fast food restaurants). Finally, a small proportion of the draws might elicit moderately larger prizes. There is typically one mega prize that is highly coveted. None of the prizes need have any monetary value. No-cost prizes can include:

- Extra fishbowl draws (or wheel spins)
- Reductions (in various increments) of program-required community service.
- A one-time, 1-hour extension of curfew.
- An overnight or weekend travel pass
- A pass to go first at the court hearing and leave.
- A pass to report to court or a supervision office visit virtually (Zoom)
- A pass for a special privilege, such as a special parking place on court day
- A fast pass to jump the line at the lab for testing
- A one-time monthly supervision fee reduction
- Free lunch or coffee with the judge or a favorite team member

Research has shown that the fishbowl procedure can bring about comparable, or even better, outcomes than providing participants with rewards for every achievement. The excitement of possibly winning a higher-magnitude reward appears

to compensate for the reduced chances of actual success. This permits treatment courts to offer effective positive reinforcement on a shoestring budget. It also introduces some entertainment value into the process. Significantly, concerns that this procedure might trigger gambling behavior have been disproven in research studies. To the contrary, providing concrete rewards is associated with reductions in drug use, higher success rates, and greater satisfaction with the treatment court program.

The template for fishbowl slips on the following page illustrates there are many highly valued prizes that have no monetary value. Note that all the affirmation prizes are paired with an interactive approval response such as applause, standing ovations, fist bumps and more.

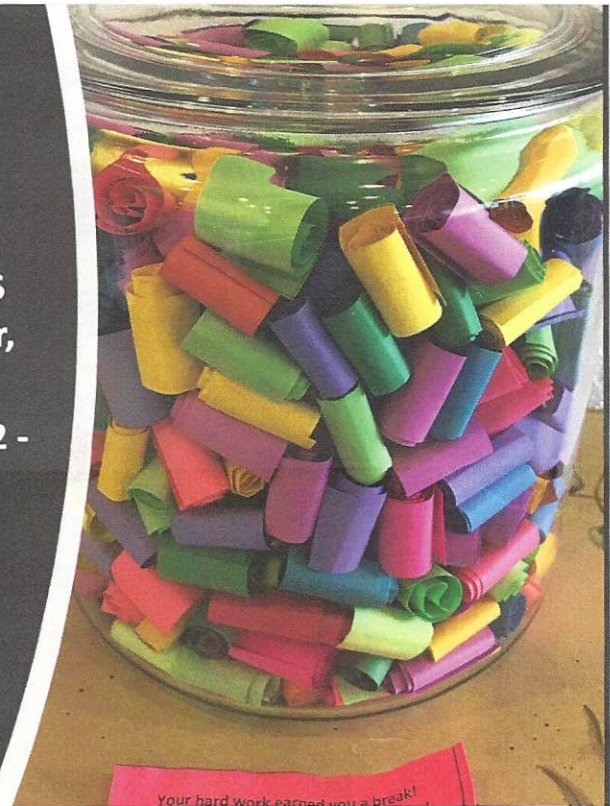
As indicated by research, an effective model that I utilized generally consists of half of the prizes as written congratulations on a job well done (paired with social approval), the next most likely option (about 40%) will be low-to-moderate value prizes, a few (about 10%) will be high-moderate in value, and one will be highly valued. My fishbowl is very colorful and typically has a minimum of 200 - 300 slips to choose from.

## EB Fishbowl Formula

**Based on research, for every 500 slips:**

- ✓ **250** affirmations + social approval
- ✓ **209** low-level reinforcers: 4 – 12 hr CS vouchers, bus passes, curfew voucher, Go First in Court, \$1 - \$5 gift card
- ✓ **40** moderate/ high-level rewards: >12 - 24 hr CS vouchers, Report By Zoom, Jump the Lab Line, \$25 - \$50 fee voucher, \$15 – \$20 gift card
- ✓ **1** mega prize: 60 hr CS voucher, \$50 - \$100 fee voucher, \$25 - \$50 gift card

Petry, Nancy M., Jessica M. Peirce, Maxine L. Stitzer, Jack Blaine, John M. Roll, Allan Cohen, et al. 2005. Effect of prize-based incentives on outcomes in stimulant abusers in outpatient psychosocial treatment programs. *Archives of General Psychiatry* 62: 1148–1156.



On the following page is an example of a template for fishbowl slips where none of the prizes have any monetary value. Note that our affirmation slips all invite team and audience interaction such as applause, standing ovations, high fives and fist bumps. This creates an atmosphere of fun and somewhat softens the blow of not winning a higher magnitude prize.



|                                                                                                              |                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Standing ovation!</b><br/><b>You're doing great!</b></p>                                               | <p><b>Two thumbs up!</b><br/><b>You're on a roll!</b></p>                                                     |
| <p><b>Fist bump!!</b><br/><b>You've got this!</b></p>                                                        | <p><b>High five!</b><br/><b>Keep up the great work!</b></p>                                                   |
| <p><b>Your hard work earned you a break!</b><br/><b>Subtract 16 hours of community service!</b></p>          | <p><b>You've got it made in the shade! Subtract 30 hours of community service! Good job!</b></p>              |
| <p><b>Your hard work earned you a break!</b><br/><b>Subtract 4 hours of community service!</b></p>           | <p><b>Your hard work earned you a break!</b><br/><b>Subtract 8 hours of community service!</b></p>            |
| <p><b>Take a day off! Your hard work earned you A REPORT BY SKYPE PASS for Court Review!</b></p>             | <p><b>Your hard work just paid off!</b><br/><b><u>Draw again</u> for another chance at a fun reward!</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Team salute!</b><br/><b>Job well done—you have our attention!</b></p>                                  | <p><b>You deserve a hand!</b><br/><b>Your hard work is noticed and appreciated!</b></p>                       |
| <p><b>You've got it made in the shade! Subtract 12 hours of community service! Good job!</b></p>             | <p><b>Your hard work just paid off —you get to jump the lab line!</b></p>                                     |
| <p><b>Your hard work just paid off!</b><br/><b><u>Draw again</u> for another chance at a fun reward!</b></p> | <p><b>Pick 1: 2 bus passes, 1-hour curfew extension <u>or</u> 4-hour community service voucher</b></p>        |
| <p><b>Fist bump!!</b><br/><b>You've got this!</b></p>                                                        | <p><b>High five!</b><br/><b>Keep up the great work!</b></p>                                                   |
| <p><b>Go to the head of the class! One FREE PASS to jump the line and go first at Court Review!</b></p>      | <p><b>Cha-ching! It's official: you rock!</b><br/><b>Take \$25 off your next supervision fee payment!</b></p> |

## b. The Wheel

When using the wheel, a good choice has at least 20 numbered segments. My homemade wheel (below) worked great, but this item is available for purchase at:



[https://www.amazon.com/WinSpin-Tabletop-Colorful-Carnival-Editable/dp/B013UIX1KE/ref=sr\\_1\\_22?dchild=1&keywords=fortune+wheel+20+slots&qid=1622853614&sr=8-22](https://www.amazon.com/WinSpin-Tabletop-Colorful-Carnival-Editable/dp/B013UIX1KE/ref=sr_1_22?dchild=1&keywords=fortune+wheel+20+slots&qid=1622853614&sr=8-22)

Each number on the wheel corresponds to a listed prize. (See the following page.) The prize ratios are identical to those used in the fishbowl.

To maximize the impact of this incentive:

- If court is held in person:
  - Qualified participants should each draw or spin for themselves, each having the chance to win the big prize. Putting names in a basket where only one person will have a chance to win that day is not very fun or engaging for the participants.
  - The prize won should be delivered immediately to the winner.





# THE WHEEL OF RECOVERY

1. We treasure your success! Go to the DA's Treasure Chest for a fun surprise!
2. Engage in recovery and everyone wins. Go back to the wheel for 2 free spins!
3. You've been working so hard! Claim a \$10 gift card!
4. Go to the head of the class and jump the line with this pass! Go first at Court Review!
5. Help yourself to a DA Treasure Chest treat—your hard work and success can't be beat!
6. Two thumbs up! You're on a roll!
7. Your hard work just paid off! Draw from the Fishbowl and spin again!
8. You've got it made in the shade! Subtract 8 hours of community service! Good job!
9. You've earned a trip to the Fishbowl! Congratulations for reaching your goal!
10. Fist bump!! You've got this!
11. You earned a fast pass! Skip the Lab line at your next UA.
12. You've earned a \$15 card for your hard work. Keep it up!
13. Double your fun! Select a prize each from the DA's Chest and draw from the Fishbowl!
14. Your hard work earned you a break! Subtract 4 hours of community service!
15. Say goodbye to downtown traffic! Your hard work earned you one Report by Zoom  
Pass for Court Review!
16. Your hard work just paid off! Draw from the Fishbowl, then draw again!
17. High five! Keep up the great work!
18. Time to visit the Treasure Chest! Thanks for doing your very best!
19. You've earned a \$10 gift card for your efforts. Well done!
20. Enjoy free VIP parking next week as a reward for all the good work you've done!
21. Your hard work earned you a break! Subtract 16 hours of community service!
22. Round of applause! Your hard work is noticed and appreciated!
23. Pick one: 2- hour curfew extension, 3 bus passes, or 4-hour community service voucher.
24. Standing ovation! Congratulations, you're doing fantastic!

- If court is held virtually:
  - The participant can choose a team member to draw/ spin for them.
  - A better option might be to create a low-tech fishbowl allowing the participant to choose from multiple paper fish on a document or white board with prizes written on the back.
  - A high-tech option is a virtual wheel spin that can be conducted in real time at the virtual hearing at [www.wheel-decide.com](http://www.wheel-decide.com)
  - The drawing/ spin should be conducted on camera and prizes should be announced orally via Zoom.
  - Prizes can be mailed or dropped at the participant's door.



Wheel-decide.com



## 5. Tangible Items

I hope I have adequately demonstrated you don't need a big budget– or any budget at all really– to have meaningful incentives that your participants will love. But if you want to have tangible reinforcers, small items with special significance can be highly valued.

Some examples:

- Keychains, silicone bracelets, pins, coins, and other items with the treatment court (or recovery-themed) logo
- Participants' favorite candy bars, snacks, and treats
- Popular gift cards (gas, coffee, fast food) in small increments (\$5 - \$15)
- Small useful items such as flashlights, manicure sets, small tool kits
- Things for participants' children (books, school supplies, toys)



**Participants may not get excited about low value items. To maximize the effect:**

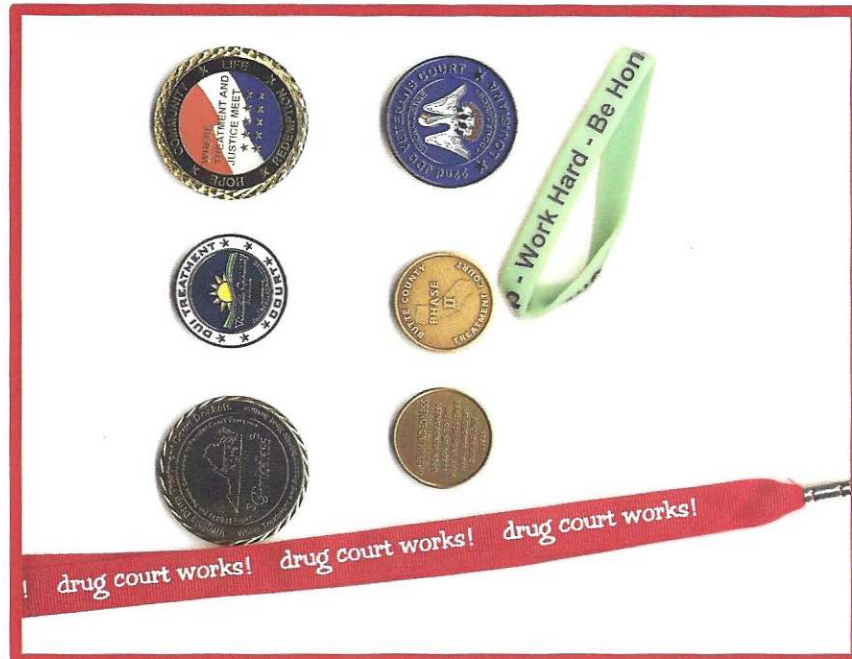
- Include these items in a “treasure chest.”
- Have law enforcement or the prosecutor take charge of this incentive and assist the participant with selection of an item. An accompanying smile and a handshake from these former “adversaries” can be a very powerful additional reward, indeed.
- If your items are particularly low value (candy, office supplies, leftover party favors) add amusing puns and labels to increase entertainment value.
- Acknowledge to the group that we are using the term “treasure” rather loosely. Yes, the prizes are often silly and that is part of the fun. Lean in.



## 5. Tangible Incentives, cont'd

Small items, delivered correctly, have a BIG impact! Recovery-related items with the treatment court logo can have special significance, particularly if they are tied to big achievements such as phase advancement and graduation.

Remembering the participant's favorite candy bar and having it on hand as a small reward shows participant we see him or her as an individual. How do we know what participants like? We ASK them. Create a form asking participants to list their favorite treats—and incentives. Incentives are not effective unless the participant actually likes them.



Source: Helen Harberts



## 6. Promoting Engagement

Incentives are extremely effective responses that motivate our participants to engage in treatment, recovery, and prosocial behavior. When clients make extraordinary efforts to comply with treatment and supervision requirements, to create recovery support networks, to help others and volunteer in the community, we should be rewarding these efforts with praise and additional incentives.

We can motivate this behavior by creating task lists and challenges with incentives built in, such as bingo cards and checklists.

### Recovery Court's Bingo Incentive Orientation, Phase 1 and Phase 2

| B                                                                    | I                                                                   | N                                       | G                                                  | O                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Attend treatment on time (by phone or virtual)                       | Did a workout, walk or yoga two times in a week                     | Attend 3 online support groups a week   | Engaged in meditation twice in one week            | Attended treatment groups by phone or virtual All week   |
| Added one person to healthy support network                          | Demonstrated asking for help two times                              | Made a gratitude list                   | Attended probation appointment by phone or virtual | Reached out to a medical provider when needed            |
| Called into UA line daily for 1 week                                 | Made a coping skills list                                           | <b>Free</b>                             | Was honest when it was hard to be                  | Checked in with a Peer Support person 1 time             |
| Attended probation appointments by phone or virtual 2 times in a row | Wrote in journal 3 times in one week                                | Attended 2 online support groups a week | Reached out to a healthy support when struggling   | Clearly demonstrating use of skills learned in treatment |
| Remained in sober, supportive housing situation.                     | Deleted phone numbers/social media attached to a negative influence | Demonstrated taking accountability      | Attended on-line support group 1 time              | Submitted UA when required                               |

Each square = 1 point

A Bingo (5 in a row) = 10 points

Please show documentation! Points will add up and be turned in for gift cards or other prizes!

15 points = \$10 gift card

30 points = \$25 gift card

# Recovery Court's Bingo Incentive Phase 3 and 4

| B                                                                    | I                                                                   | N                                                | G                                                                    | O                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Attend treatment 4 times in a row on time (by phone or virtual)      | Did a workout, walk or yoga three times in a week                   | Attend 3 online support groups a week            | Engaged in meditation twice in one week                              | Attended 5 treatment groups by phone or virtual          |
| Added two people to healthy support network                          | Demonstrated asking for help two times                              | Made a gratitude list twice a week for two weeks | Attended probation appointments by phone or virtual 2 times in a row | Reached out to a medical provider when needed            |
| Called the UA line 2 weeks in a row every day                        | Made a coping skills list                                           | <b>Free</b>                                      | Was honest when it was hard to be                                    | Checked in with a Peer Support person 3 times            |
| Attended probation appointments by phone or virtual 4 times in a row | Wrote in journal 3 times in one week                                | Attended 2 online support groups a week          | Reached out to a healthy support when struggling                     | Clearly demonstrating use of skills learned in treatment |
| 3 self-care activities                                               | Deleted phone numbers/social media attached to a negative influence | Demonstrated taking accountability               | Submitted all required UAs for 3 weeks                               | Attended 5 online support groups in a week               |

**Each square = 1 point**

**A Bingo (5 in a row) = 10 points**

**Please show documentation!**

**Points will add up and be turned in for gift cards or other prizes!**

**15 points = \$10 gift card**

**30 points = \$25 gift card**



## 6. Promoting Engagement, cont'd.

### START Court Recovery Challenge

Below is a list of incentivized activities you can participate in while START Court is impacted by COVID-19. We want to encourage and support you while you continue working on your recovery. Please ask your PO for details. Stay in contact with your PO to track owed incentive cards:

#### Probation:

- |                                                                                                    |                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check-in as directed by probation officer for one week                    | \$5 incentive card                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete two assignments with probation officer                           | \$5 incentive card (for each assignment)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete more than two assignments from probation officer                 | \$5 of supervision fees waived per additional assignment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call the UA line and text the color code to your PO each day for one week | \$5 off supervision fee coupon                           |

#### Community:

- |                                                                                                                             |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Join the START/STOP Each One Teach One Facebook group                                              | Fastpass            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend first online recovery support meeting and write to counselor or PO about the experience     | \$5 incentive card  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend the START/STOP Each One Teach One Facebook Group virtual alumni group                       | Fastpass            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend daily online recovery support meetings for one week with documentation per PO               | \$5 incentive cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reach out to a fellow START client and complete an online meeting with them. Documentation per PO. | \$5 incentive card  |

#### Treatment:

- |                                                                                        |                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily phone (voice) contact with recovery mentor for one week | \$5 incentive card                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily check-in with treatment counselor for one week          | \$5 incentive card                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete two elective treatment assignments                   | \$5 incentive card                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete more than two elective treatment assignments         | \$5 of supervision fees waived per additional assignment |

If the court determines at the conclusion of the COVID-modified START operations that the START participant has been in "very substantial compliance" with the START program during the period of modified operations, the court will reward the participant with a reduction in the probation term of up to 6 months.

### In Closing

The most powerful incentives are natural ones—the wonderful things that come with recovery: feeling better, repairing relationships, gaining employment and more. But we know it will take time, a lot of treatment and practice. There will be stumbles along the way. Until those natural reinforcers take root, we must be generous in our praise and application of incentives when participants make progress. Incentives nurture and motivate true recovery. For most of us, the incentives we are currently awarding is probably not enough. We must shift our focus from detecting infractions to looking for progress. It is often subtle and difficult to see. Some ways that we can increase our use of incentives include:

- Creating a space on our staffing forms for proposed incentives. Many only have a box for sanctions.
- Creating a staffing practice to always ask, "Is there something that we can praise/reward this participant for today?"
- Tracking incentive history, just as we record previous sanctions. There is no other way to know if our incentives are outnumbering sanctions.
- Understanding that participants receiving sanctions may, and should, also receive incentives for the good things that they are doing.