

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Directive: 76.05

Subject: Positive Reinforcement
Effective Date: August 2, 1999 Review and Re-Issue Date:
Supersedes: NEW APA Rule Number:

Recommended for approval by:		Authorized By:	
_____ Signature	_____ Date	_____ Signature	_____ Date

1. Authority:

1.1 Authority for this directive is derived from VSA Title 28, Chapter 3.

2. Purpose:

2.1 The purpose of this directive is to provide the Department of Corrections with philosophical and research-based underpinnings for the use of positive reinforcement in its correctional and administrative practices and then to provide direction for specific applications.

2.2 In Choosing Correctional Options that Work, a book edited by Alan T. Harland and published in 1996, Paul Gendreau has contributed a chapter entitled, "The Principles of Effective Intervention with Offenders." Gendreau concludes from his meta-analysis of correctional programs a number of principles associated with successful programs. The first principle states that, "services should be intensive and behavioral in nature. Virtually all offender behavioral programs are based on the principles of operant conditioning. At the core of operant conditioning is the concept of reinforcement, which refers to the strengthening or increasing of a behavior so that it will continue to be performed in the future. The most efficient and ethically defensible way to achieve this goal is to use positive reinforcers (something pro-

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- social the offender considers pleasant or desirable) and to ensure that reinforcers are contingent (contingency management) on the behavior being enacted."
- 2.3** In Paul Gendreau's "Correctional Program Assessment Inventory" (CPA), a program that can demonstrate that positive reinforcements are used at least at a 4: 1 ratio over punishment or negative reinforcers, is more likely to be effective in supporting positive behavioral change. Gendreau sets an expectation that this principle be clearly articulated in treatment manuals and training and that it be documented when it occurs.
- 2.4** This level of valuing and clarity is especially important in the culture of corrections where punishment or consequence for negative behavior were traditionally the sole perspective. This concept of positive reinforcement does not contradict or even compromise concepts of accountability or logical consequence. The concept challenges corrections professionals to be proactive in recognizing and developing personal strengths and assets in addition to more reactive focuses on risk and need. The challenge is in finding the balance that is most effective in meeting all correctional goals. Protecting the community is very important, but the ultimate protection is achieved when former offenders are motivated and equipped to "do right" independently into the future.
- 2.5** The concept of positive reinforcement is relevant and important for all human relationships. Consequently it is as important for staff to staff (including manager and supervisor to staff) and client to client relationships as it is to staff to client relationships. Bob Nelson's book, Money Isn't Everything, 1001 Ways to Reward Employees, is full of ideas on how to formally and informally recognize positive motivation and achievement and ways to reinforce the many staff contributions to a positive culture in the workplace.
- 2.6** Positive reinforcement practice among staff is valuable in and of itself, but it is also important in terms of role modeling and establishing a belief in staff genuineness in the experience of the client. The principle should be clear and present in performance evaluations, staff supervision, treatment teams, unit programs, treatment programs and virtually in all interactions throughout all the cross-sections of culture that exist in the organization.

3. Applicability/Accessibility

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3.1 Anyone can have a copy of this directive.

4. Directive

4.1 All Department of Corrections programs and services will have clearly articulated strategies and mechanisms to systematically and individually utilize positive reinforcement to acknowledge and/or bring about positive change and continuous improvement. This will apply to all levels of relationship in the organization, i. e., staff to client, manager/supervisor to staff, client to client, and staff to staff. DOC training programs will utilize positive reinforcement as a principle of effective learning.

4.2 Positive reinforcement strategies and mechanisms will be documented so their occurrence can be demonstrated and culturally reinforced to enhance their value. Examples of expected documentation locations are case notes, CO contacts and treatment team notes for offenders; and supervisory notes, personal management interviews (PMIs) and performance evaluations for staff. Documentation also enables analysis and consideration of strategies to become continuously more effective. Specific programs and local sites will articulate strategies and mechanisms specific to their focus in program manuals and local procedure.

4.3 Positive reinforcement is strongly present in many DOC methods that are commonly in practice. This directive intends to sharpen the focus in understanding where and what it is, to underline its importance, and to support efforts to use it more frequently. It also serves to increase awareness of strategies and behaviors that may be in use that unintentionally undercut the ability to achieve the most desired results.

4.4 EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

4.4.1 Cognitive behavioral treatment - exposes clients to criminal thinking, its risk and its consequences without judgment; provides opportunities to learn and choose intervention skills.

4.4.2 Relapse prevention - self efficacy is prepared for, practiced and continuously acknowledged; lapses are anticipated, and depending upon severity, addressed in a supportive manner.

4.4.3 Motivational interviewing and Group Process Inventory 's referred skills – affirmations open questions, closed questions, reflection, summarization (active listening), soliciting self-motivating statements.

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- 4.4.4 Supportive supervision- external monitoring by staff which engages clients and positively supports the change process in genuine and meaningful ways.
- 4.4.5 Intrusive cognitive reflective communication technique - communication from a human, respectful foundation in order to assist one in looking inward at underlying thoughts, feelings and beliefs that effect how one sees and acts in the world; supporting self responsibility.
- 4.4.6 DARES principles for creating an environment conducive to offender change: develop discrepancy, avoid argumentation, roll with resistance, express empathy, support self-efficacy.
- 4.4.7 Restorative justice principle - client accepts responsibility; potential to experience authentic gratification by making reparation to the victim and/or the community; the community accepts the offender back into its fold.
- 4.4.8 Quality assurance evaluations - acknowledge and publicly highlight demonstrations of high performance and excellence; identify, support and encourage with regard to performance needing improvement.
- 4.4.9 FRAMES - feedback, responsibility, affirmation, menu of options, empathy, support self efficacy.
- 4.4.10 Performance evaluations - formal acknowledgement of performance accomplishments and goal setting for new challenges and continuous improvement.
- 4.4.11 Personal management interviews (PMIs) - periodic and informal process for positively motivating staff.
- 4.4.12 Mentoring, modeling, coaching - managers, supervisors, and veteran staff provide this to new inexperienced staff, and all staff provide it to the clients with whom they are in relationship.
- 4.4.13 Staff as treatment facilitators - provides positive professional development for staff and enables staff and client to work closely together in the change process; has potential to break down "us/them" barriers.
- 4.4.14 Involving family /significant others in treatment - extends potential for positive support to "real life" away from the professional support system.
- 4.4.15 Aftercare - essential in providing continuing support and weaning from more intensive phases of treatment programs.

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- 4.4.16** Earned reduction of term (ERT) - physical work and satisfactory participation in needs reducing activities is rewarded.
- 4.4.17** Encouraging supporting the use of self-help programs - extends potential for positive support away from the professional support system to a peer group of people struggling with similar problems.
- 4.4.18** All intentional efforts formal and informal to recognize and acknowledge accomplishment, show gratitude, say thank you and give encouragement.
- 4.4.19** It cannot be emphasized enough that this refers to all levels of relationship in the organization.

5. Training Method

5.1

6. Quality Assurance Processes

6.1

7. Financial Impact:

7.1

8. References

Choosing Correctional Options that Work, Alan T. Harland (editor), Sage Publications, 1996.

Correctional Programs Assessment Inventory, Paul Gendreau

Money Isn't Everything,. 1001 Ways to Reward Employees, by Bob Nelson, Workman Publishing Company, 1994.

DOC Directive 02.02 Program Manuals .

DOC Directive 421.02 Contact Standards

9. Responsible Director and Draft Participants

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