

Rewarding Positive Behavior

Rewarding positive behavior is an ongoing risk reduction strategy as offenders demonstrate positive choices and behaviors, particularly those related to skill deficits and other risk factors (Step 7). The goal is for offenders to internalize rewards by reinforcing the link between prosocial behavior and the achievement of their specific short- and long-term goals.

Agents should try to find some type of behavior to reinforce in each appointment, and the reinforcement should be meaningful, individualized, genuine and proportionate to the positive behavior that is being reinforced. Positive reinforcement should be above and beyond a “good job” statement. To be most effective in reinforcing prosocial behavior, agents should:

- State what specific type of behavior or speech just exhibited is being reinforced.
- Provide specific examples why the behavior or speech is being reinforced.
- Help to elicit from the offender why the behavior being reinforced is desirable for them and identify the short- and long-term benefits that will result from continued use of the behavior

Verbal reinforcers such as praise, acknowledgement, attention, and approval are natural reinforcers that can have a powerful influence. Other tangible or symbolic reinforcers can also be used in addition to verbal reinforcers, especially when used to reward a larger positive behavior change. These can include letters of praise, approval of a special activity, or removal of a restriction, such as lessening a curfew restriction, or removing or reducing a special condition. Rewards shall be documented in COMPAS Notes using the Positive Behavior/Rewards note sub type