

# LOW-COST/ NO-COST INCENTIVES

---



## A GUIDE FOR MOTIVATING CHANGE ON A BUDGET

---

Hon. Diane Bull, Ret.  
[Hon.DianeBull@gmail.com](mailto:Hon.DianeBull@gmail.com)



# What's in this guide:

- 3-5 INCENTIVES: FACTS & FEATURES
- 6 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE RESPONSES
- 8 SOCIAL APPROVAL & EFFECTIVE DELIVERY
- 9 SAMPLE RESPONSE SCRIPTS
- 10 PRAISE FROM THE TEAM
- 11-13 POSITIVE PEER BOARDS & THE "A" TEAM
- 14-15 CERTIFICATES
- 16-17 TOKENS
- 18 DECISION DOLLARS TEMPLATE
- 19-20 NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT
- 21 FISHBOWL
- 22 FISHBOWL SLIPS TEMPLATE
- 23,25 THE WHEEL
- 24 WHEEL OF RECOVERY PRIZE LIST TEMPLATE
- 26-27 TANGIBLE REINFORCERS (TREASURE CHEST & MORE)
- 28 FUN WITH CANDY
- 29 SHIFTING OUR FOCUS
- 30 PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN REWARDS
- 31 PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT
- 32 TREATMENT BINGO TEMPLATE
- 33 CONCLUSION
- 34 TRAINING AND CONTACT INFO



Changing behavior is hard! If you've ever tried to make a big change such as stopping smoking, weight loss, or starting an exercise regimen you may recall how overwhelming, even impossible, it may have felt in the beginning. You may even have been ambivalent about the change. Maybe someone else was pushing the change, such as a doctor or loved one, and you were just along for the ride. If you're like me and have trouble keeping those New Year resolutions, imagine how hard it would be with the additional barriers our participants face: substance use disorder (SUD), mental illness, trauma, a lack of resources of almost every kind, lack of recovery support at home, and a lack of motivation. To help our participants we must use all our treatment court tools effectively: treatment, monitoring, sanctions, and incentives. Treatment builds skills and understanding but studies show that, despite what our potential participants may tell us, most of our incoming folks are not yet ready to change. Our responses to participant behavior, incentives, and sanctions, increase motivation and promote engagement. Vigilant

monitoring allows us to detect and respond to behavior effectively. In a nutshell, treatment teaches new behaviors and monitoring detects behavior, allowing us to respond appropriately. Sanctions stop noncompliant behavior, and incentives increase or encourage repetition of compliant behaviors. Incentives are among our most powerful and underutilized tools of behavior change. By their very nature they are validating, instill hope, build confidence, and feel good! Research has shown incentives often have long-lasting effects far beyond the duration of the program. Why is this important? SUD is a chronic disease. Even with treatment, participants have a 40-60% likelihood of recurrence. What helps those who lapse reengage in recovery? It can be small incentives like sobriety milestone certificates that continue to remind the person, "I did it before. That means I can do it again."

**"INCENTIVES ARE VALIDATING, BUILD CONFIDENCE, INSTILL HOPE AND FEEL SO GOOD."**

## Change is HARD.

If you've ever found it hard to keep those New Year's resolutions...



### Imagine How Difficult it Would Be With Additional Barriers...

- SUD, Mental Illness, Trauma
- Lack of Resources
- Antisocial lifestyle
- Lack of Support
- Lack of Motivation

To succeed, we utilize a coordinated approach to treat the whole person and instill hope!



### In a Nutshell...

- Treatment **TEACHES** new behaviors
  - Supervision **DETECTS** behavior
  - Sanctions **STOP** behavior
  - Incentives **REPEAT** behavior
- ❖ Used together, they motivate **CHANGE**.



## SOBRIETY MILESTONE SUPERSTAR

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

**Meghan P.**

is recognized for achieving at least 90 consecutive days of sobriety!  
Your outstanding commitment to recovery shines brightly!

Hon Diane Bull  
Presiding Judge

Victor Alexander  
Case Manager





# FOLLOWING THE DATA, ADHERING TO THE RESEARCH

I was the elected judge of a criminal court in Houston, TX for 24 years. The last 10 of those years, I additionally had a treatment court, specifically a DWI Court. Houston has a very big DWI problem and consequently we had a very large, highly specialized DWI Court program. I presided over an all-female caseload.

Unfortunately, our data showed that the women's outcomes were not where we wanted them to be. Under our excellent probation department's leadership, we retooled the program to address the problem. Inspired by a recent study (See slide, lower right: Wodahl, E. J., Garland, B. Culhane, S. E., and McCarty, W.P., 2011) we decided to dramatically increase our use of evidence-based incentives.

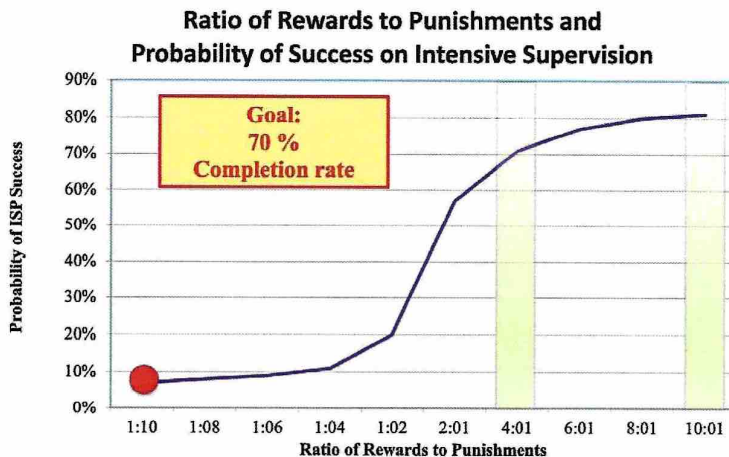
There was only one problem: we had no budget for incentives. In the months that followed, I read every incentives-related study I could get my hands on and spent a lot of quality time at the craft store. I quickly learned that we do not need a big budget (or any budget at all) to implement fun, effective, research-supported incentives. In this handbook, I will demonstrate how to create and effectively deliver evidence-based incentives that will motivate your participants to engage in treatment, build confidence and nurture long-term recovery. All of the incentives presented in this guide are those that I have used in my program or were successfully implemented by teams that I have worked with in my role as a consultant.

## How Much is Enough? Incentives Should Far Outnumber Sanctions!

➤ 4:1?



➤ 10:1 is better.



Wodahl, E. J., Garland, B. Culhane, S. E., and McCarty, W.P. (2011). Utilizing Behavioral Interventions to Improve Supervision Outcomes in Community-Based Corrections. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 38 (4).

**"INCENTIVES SHOULD FAR  
OUTNUMBER SANCTIONS.  
4:1 IS JUST THE STARTING  
PLACE."**



# KEY FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE INCENTIVES

Now that I am retired, I have the great pleasure of working as a treatment court judicial consultant. In this role, I have worked with many teams all over the country, and I quickly realized that the things that my team and I struggled with are the same things that teams everywhere struggle with. I often hear the complaint, "Our sanctions and incentives don't seem to be working." In these circumstances, I work with the team to see how they are detecting and responding to participant behaviors. We know from research that there are certain key elements that if not met will lessen the impact of our responses and may even cause harm:

**Must be valued by the person.** For an incentive to be effective, i.e., motivate repetition of compliant behavior, it must be something that the participant wants, likes, or values. How do we know what participants like? Ask them. (See slide, an excerpt from a quarterly participant questionnaire.) Better yet, let them choose from an array of comparable awards. Several times a year we surveyed our participants asking them to identify their favorite incentives. Interestingly, those favorites often change over time.

**Need not be extravagant. Can be tangible and intangible.** Valued incentives need not include gift cards and tangible items, which is good news if you are on a limited budget. Our participants' favorite incentives were those that had little or no monetary value, such as fishbowl, community service reductions and virtual reporting passes. They also favored incentives with high entertainment value such as Treasure Box and the wheel.

**Opportunity for reward is motivating.** As has been established by research, just providing an opportunity to win, as with the

## How Do We Know What Rewards Work? **ASK THEM!**

What are your favorite incentives? (Circle all that apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fishbowl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spin the Wheel	Praise, positive feedback	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gift Card	Movie Passes	CS Removal	Curfew Reduction
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Zoom Court	Candy, treats	Treasure Chest	"A" Team/MVP
Certificates	Snack Box	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision Dollars/Store	
VIP Parking	Treatment Bingo	Fast Pass: Court / Lab	
Other: (Specify) _____			

What are some fun things you do that help you stay sober?

**Mix it up!** As fun as the wheel is, if we used it all the time it would no longer be exciting and something to look forward to. Instead, have a weekly rotation of your top four incentives such as fishbowl, wheel, Decision Dollar Store and Treasure Chest.

**Don't miss the baby steps!** In the beginning, everything is difficult and distal. Remember that substance use disorder is a serious disease. New participants will not achieve extended abstinence for a long time. It will take a lot of treatment and multiple opportunities to practice and master new skills. In the beginning, many will struggle with simply showing up. Most participants have not come to us from a lifestyle that demanded responsible behavior, punctuality and prosocial attitudes and behaviors. There will be many stumbles and setbacks along the way, and we must be patient and realistic in our expectations. Instead of focusing on what is going wrong (which will be quite easy to see) look carefully for what is going well and reward it with generous praise and additional incentives.

**"HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT PARTICIPANTS LIKE? ASK THEM. BETTER YET, LET THEM CHOOSE."**



# ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE RESPONSES

As with all responses to participant behavior, the key elements must be in place:

**Respond with certainty.** We must respond appropriately to achieving—or failing to achieve—all target behaviors. That means we must have vigilant monitoring and reliable detection. We cannot effectively do this if we are, for example, only testing on weekdays, or not conducting home visits. If we are only detecting some behaviors, we are setting up a rather chaotic reward/punishment system that will not effectively motivate behavior.

**Respond immediately.** Participants' situations change rapidly, and intervening behaviors occur. We must NOT wait until staffing and court to reward compliance or punish noncompliance. Research has demonstrated we have a distressingly small window of opportunity to motivate change with our response-- as little as a matter of hours to a few days, at most. It is best practice for the team to communicate information about participant progress and behavior with each other, as it occurs, throughout the week via email. Empower team members to respond to compliant behavior immediately with incentives.

**Respond consistently and fairly.** It is essential that team members understand proximal and distal behaviors—what we can and cannot expect clients to do in each phase of the program—and respond appropriately. For compliant behavior, we reward proximal behaviors (the things participants CAN do now) with smaller rewards. If participants can achieve distal, more advanced behaviors BEFORE we expect them to be able to achieve them, we reward them with larger magnitude incentives. A good response matrix makes this easy.

**EMPLOYMENT**

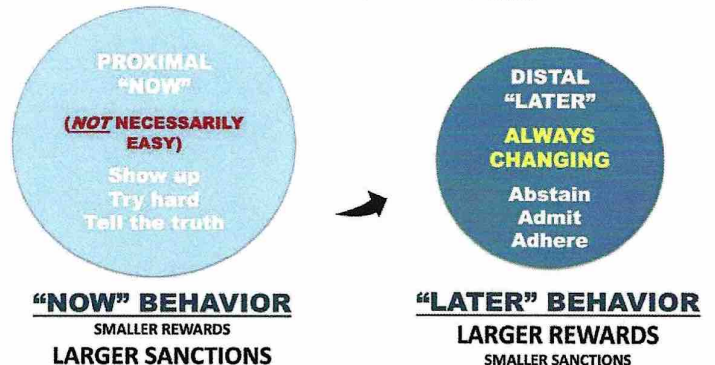
**Achieving All Target Behaviors:**

- Showing up\*
- Timeliness\*
- Honesty\*
- Neg UAs/ Blows
- Phase Promotion
- Treatment Progress
- Sobriety Milestones
- Helping Others (Clients, Community)
- Recovery Support Achievements
- Prosocial Achievements (job, GED, volunteer work)

\* Proximal behaviors

**What Behavior Do We Reinforce?**

## How do we know what responses to choose?



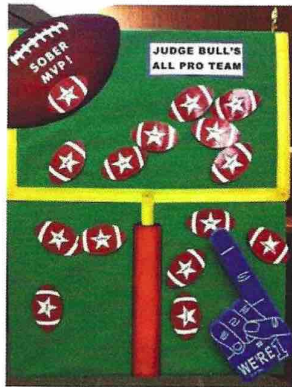
**Associated with the behavior.** Remembering that our responses are more about motivating positive change and less about simply rewarding compliance or punishing noncompliance, it is essential to create a learning opportunity with every response. It is vitally important that participants understand what specific behavior we are looking for and why. Many who come to us may not yet recognize or value prosocial behavior. Therefore, make it a practice to utilize the response script on page 7 of this resource, always identifying WHAT behavior we are responding to, WHY we like (or dislike) it and HOW continuing will help (or harm) them if they continue it.



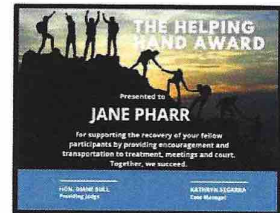
# LOW-COST/ NO-COST INCENTIVES

---

**I  
N  
C  
E  
N  
T  
I  
V  
E  
S**



**YOU'RE  
#1! GO  
FIRST AT  
COURT  
REVIEW**



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



**NO BUDGET?  
NO PROBLEM!**

---



# SOCIAL APPROVAL FROM THE JUDGE, THE TEAM & PARTICIPANTS

It is a well-established principle of behavioral psychology that social approval can be a significant source of motivation. In treatment court, sincere and specific praise is given to participants by the judge and the team throughout the week in response to compliant behavior. In court, participants are frequently held up as positive examples to emulate, and the audience of fellow participants is invited to show their approval in the form of applause.

## **Praise from the Judge:**

Never underestimate the redemptive power of praise. Research has repeatedly 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 the team) is free, limitless in supply, can be applied immediately and is effective. Dr. Brian Lovins taught our Houston judges this highly effective method for delivering incentives (and a similar script for delivering sanctions):

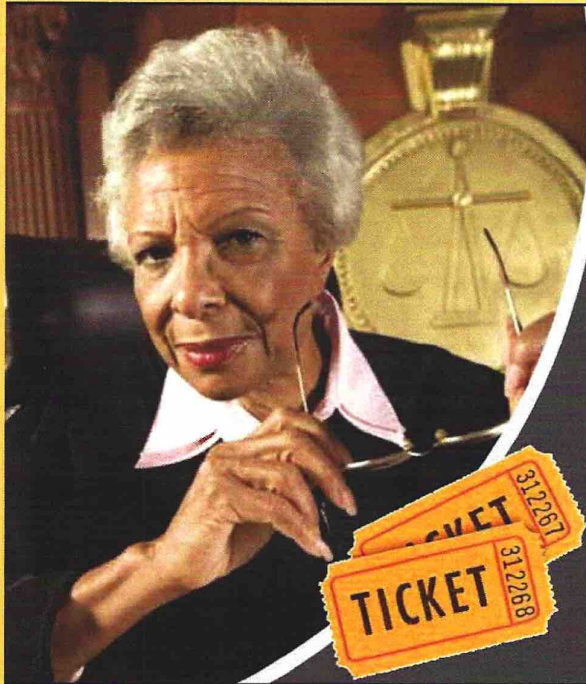


## **DELIVERING EFFECTIVE REINFORCEMENT**

1. "I really liked how you (specifically describe compliant behavior)
  - Because (describe specifically WHY the behavior was good for them)."
  - Add verbal affirmation, acknowledging client's efforts:  
"You should be proud of yourself; I know you have worked hard to change."
2. "Right now, how do you think (repeat the specific compliant behavior) has, or will, help you?"
3. "Can you see where it might have any long-term benefits for you?"  
(Tie participant's personal goals into this conversation.)
4. "I'm going to give you a (Describe incentive) for this behavior.
5. I'm really proud of you. Keep up the great work!"

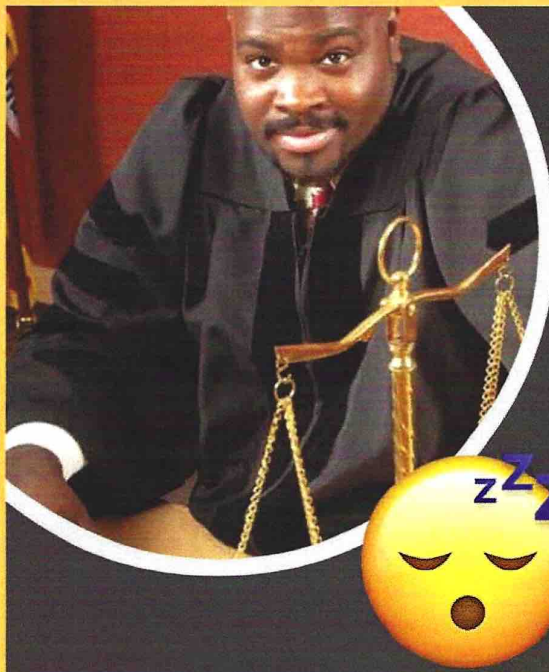


# SAMPLE SCRIPTS



## Effective Incentive Delivery

- **WHAT:** I really liked how you showed up on time for treatment
- **WHY:** because it shows me you are not only considerate, but more importantly, it shows me you understand that when you are on time you won't miss information that can help you.
- **HOW:** Right now, how do you think being on time for tx will help you?
- Can you see how it might have any long-term benefits for you?
- **RESPONSE:** I'm going to give you a raffle ticket for this behavior. I'm so proud of you!



## Sanction Delivery

- **WHAT:** It was not appropriate that you fell asleep in treatment again
- **WHY:** because it's not just disrespectful -- you missed important information that could help you.
- **HOW:** Right now, how do you think sleeping in tx might cause problems for you down the road? Let's discuss what you could've done instead, and how that would've looked
- **RESPONSE:** I'm going to give you an 8:00 p.m. curfew for 3 days. I recommend an early bedtime, so this doesn't happen again."

**THIS METHOD HELPS CLIENTS INTERNALIZE THERE ARE INTRINSIC REASONS FOR CHANGE BEYOND STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE. "I NEED TO LEARN SO I CAN GET BETTER AND LIVE MY BEST LIFE."**



# PRAISE FROM THE TEAM

---

Team members who have direct contact with participants throughout the week have multiple opportunities to immediately deliver effective praise. There are a variety of ways we can use team approval effectively:

**Supervisor Praise.** At office visits with probation officers or case managers, participants often have great news to share in terms of treatment progress and prosocial achievements. In addition to the team member's praise, the team member can effectively demonstrate the magnitude of the achievement by bringing in his or her supervisor to hear the good news repeated. "That is amazing news! I really want my supervisor to meet you and hear about this."

**Follow up texts/ emails.** Sometimes clients need to hear it AGAIN to understand the importance of their achievement. "I wanted to tell you again how proud I am of you for using your treatment skills today to resist cravings. This tells me you are serious about your recovery and understand that these skills won't just help you succeed in the program- they will help you live your best life and achieve the things that are important to YOU."

**Follow up video clips from the judge.** When something truly significant has happened, we don't wait until the next court review. The more quickly we respond to the behavior, the more likely our response will motivate repetition of the positive behavior. When significant events occurred, my case manager would come to court, film a 30-second video on her phone of me congratulating the client and immediately send it out.



**Cards, letters.** Isn't it great to receive something in the mail that's not a bill? There are times when we cannot see our participants, and it is vitally important to maintain connection and engagement with the client. This was certainly proven during the pandemic! In addition to phone calls, texts, FaceTime, etc., it is a great idea to occasionally send cards and letters of support and encouragement in the mail to participants. As with certificates, participants hold on to these items for years, long after the program has ended.

**Letter home to a loved one.** This is a technique that we occasionally utilized under special circumstances when the participant (especially a young person living with a parent or other caring adult) has a supportive loved one at home. A letter to that individual highlighting the participant's success can be very powerful and go a long way toward easing tensions at home.

**Written commendation for the file.** A judge or other team member's letter of commendation for the file praising specific achievements may be deeply appreciated by participants.



# POSITIVE PEER BOARDS & THE "A" TEAM

A public courtroom display of the names of participants who have performed well since the last meeting (and who are not receiving a sanction) is a powerful evidence-based incentive. This validating no-cost incentive is actually four incentives in one:

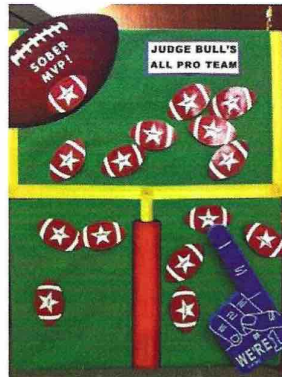
1. It conveys approval from the judge and the team
2. It holds the participant up as a positive example to others
3. It invites the peer approval of the fellow participants in the audience in the form of applause.
4. If we are using "A" Team correctly, the "A" Team participants are seen first. Not having to wait is an excellent incentive!

## Creating the Positive Peer Board

Most courts do a simple display on a white board. You may include a space to celebrate participants who have distinguished themselves with extraordinary achievements, whom you might call "MVPs" or "All Stars", etc. An MVP would include someone who is advancing to the next phase in the program or being singled out for a special achievement such as reaching a sobriety milestone or engaging in a prosocial activity. (See Certificates.) If anyone on the team has artistic ability, I have found it unifying for participants to collaborate and vote on a theme for the display. In my DWI Court program, the men chose football as a theme and the women chose butterflies. (See photo.)



## Creative Ways to Use "A" Team



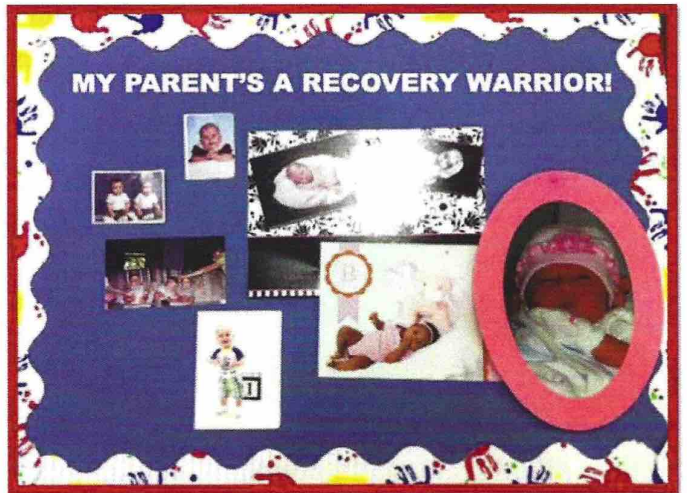
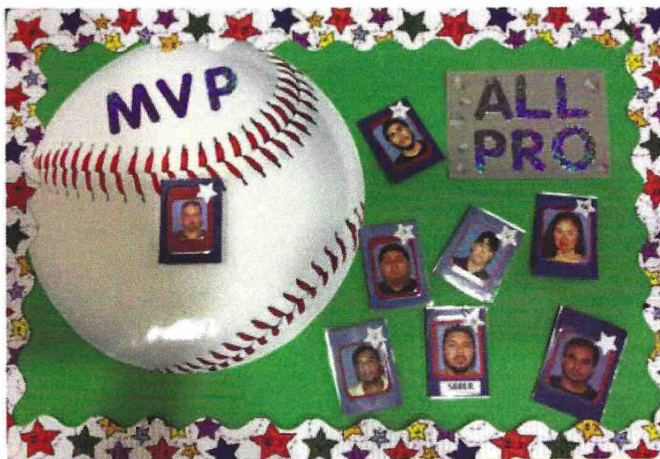
**"WE ARE  
LOOKING FOR  
PROGRESS NOT  
PERFECTION."**



# OTHER USES & APPLICATIONS OF POSITIVE PEER BOARDS

**Celebrating Phase Advancement.** My colleague, Judge Robin Brown, an avid Astro's fan, created a baseball-themed "A" Team board. Embracing the theme, she had an additional board for celebrating participants' phase advancement. Part of the celebration included having the participant move his baseball card to the next phase, paired with praise from the judge, applause, and additional incentives. (See photo, bottom left.)

**Celebrating Family Support.** Another use of a positive peer board is to provide a space for participants to post photos demonstrating their commitment to end the cycle of substance abuse in their families and show their families' support of their recovery. This board can be displayed and referenced at court hearings and at graduation.



**Virtual Hearing Application:**  
If hearings are conducted virtually, the positive peer board can still be used effectively. The judge can share a document with the "A" Team's names listed or create an "A" Team PowerPoint display.

## POSITIVE PEER POWER POINT

<p><b>Look Who's Flying High!</b> Congratulations from Judge Buff and the SOBER Court Team!</p>	<p>IF YOU SEE YOUR NAME ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SLIDES, YOU ARE NOT ON THE SANCTION LIST. IT MEANS THE SOBER COURT TEAM AGREES YOU ARE DOING GREAT!</p> <p>If you don't see your name, please DON'T PANIC. It may just mean we have some questions or issues to discuss.</p>	<p><b>Monica</b> IF NOTHING SEEMS CHANGED, TICKET NO. BUYER PLEASE NO BUYER PLEASE</p>
<p><b>Elizabeth</b> Cool &amp; handsome, intelligent, and beautiful, women like her, and my party, cannot be the only thing and parents, don't working on this one!</p>	<p><b>Amy</b> "No matter what you are, no matter where you've come from, you can always change, become a better version of yourself." Madonna</p>	<p><b>Kathryn</b> "At any given moment you have the power to say: this is not how the story is going to end."</p>
<p><b>Vivian</b> It's your day You're the one who has to make it Your turn to shine I'll be there for you</p>	<p><b>Melanie</b> Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it turned into a...</p>	<p><b>Lasandra</b> I've got a million dreams and I'm gonna make 'em</p>

**USE INCENTIVES THAT MODEL PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR.**



# MAKING THE MOST OF THE POSITIVE PEER BOARD

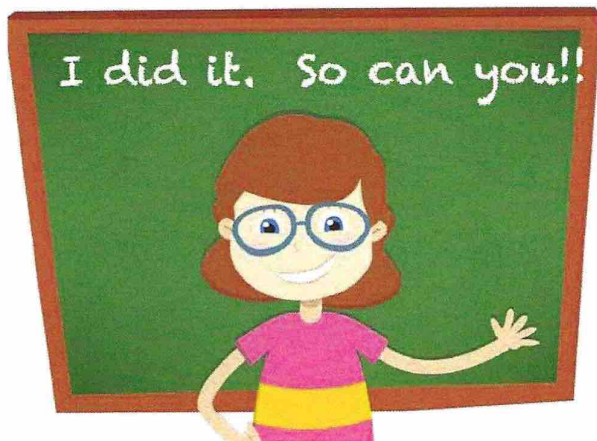
## 1. **We are looking for progress, not perfection.**

The "A" Team is a list of participants who are not receiving a sanction in the court hearing. Remember that for our participants almost everything is distal and difficult in the beginning. Some minor noncompliance should not prevent a person from making the "A" Team. Phrasing like "perfect week" and "zero tolerance" is daunting and even triggering for many. Allowing some flexibility especially in the early phases is strongly encouraged.

2. **Be sensitive to triggers.** Allowing participants to pick the theme of the board-- and deciding what it will be called-- avoids messaging that could be traumatizing. My female caseload simply called their positive peer board the Butterfly Board. They disliked the idea of having just one "MVP" and we quickly adjusted the incentive to allow recognition of multiple people who had distinguished themselves during the week. Listen to your participants in these matters, as one of the basic tenets of reinforcement is that the participants enjoy the reward.

## 3. **Display the "A" Team list to the entire group.**

Being held up as a positive example to all and receiving peer approval is an integral component of this evidence-based incentive. Everyone in the court hearing, whether in person or virtual, must be able to clearly see the names on the board.



4. **Take the "A" Team first**, beginning with the late-phase, soon to graduate participants. In a five-phase program, you would docket these clients in descending order: Phase 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 "A" Team, then the sanctions. Phase 5 and 4 "A" Team participants have earned the privilege of going first and being able to leave after seeing the judge if they choose to do so. These successful participants instill hope, successfully conveying the message, "I was just like you. I struggled at first, but now I'm about to graduate. That means you can do it, too!" These participants often have great advice and tremendous insight to inform and inspire newer participants. Everyone else should stay and view the entire court hearing. Research has shown participants not only benefit from their "magic three minutes" with the judge, but also by watching the judge interact with the other participants present.

5. **Create a learning opportunity for all.** In the court hearing, the judge congratulates the participants enthusiastically and asks them to explain why they are on the "A" team today. Ideally, the participants' case managers have prepared them well for this question. If not, the judge knows and will carefully go through each of the compliant behaviors. As always, we specifically describe WHAT behavior we liked, WHY we liked it and discuss HOW continuing that behavior will help them. The reason we do this is that we want the person to understand there are intrinsic reasons for following the rules beyond staying out of trouble. Specifically, we want the person to understand that, more importantly, compliance will help them learn, get better, and achieve their personal goals. Reviewing the compliant behaviors of the week not only benefits the individual, but it also models prosocial behavior and provides a learning opportunity for all participants at the hearing. New participants don't always recognize progress and prosocial behavior.



# CERTIFICATES

Certificates, signed by the judge and case manager, celebrate abstinence, program and treatment progress and prosocial achievements. They are excellent evidence-based incentives and cost pennies to create. There are websites (such as [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)) that offer templates and photos allowing the team to create beautiful, highly customized certificates free of charge.

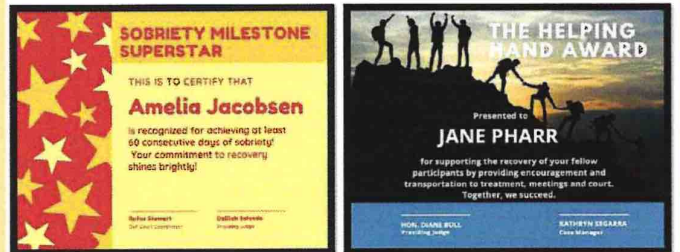
As with positive peer boards, certificates deliver four incentives in one:

1. They publicly convey praise from the judge and the team.
2. They hold the participant up to his or her peers as a positive example.
3. They invite peer approval in the form of applause.
4. They are tangible items that the person can take home, keep, and display to loved ones.

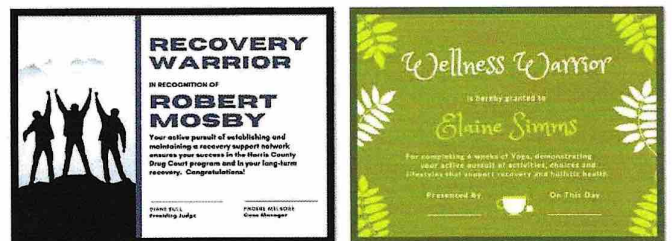
Certificates are used to celebrate achievement of target behaviors such as:

- Establishing a pattern of attendance at treatment
- Establishing a pattern of negative drug/alcohol screens
- Exemplary participation and progress in treatment
- Seeking recovery support and establishing a recovery network
- Promotion to the next phase in the program or the next stage of treatment
- 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

## Celebrate Abstinence and Prosocial Behavior



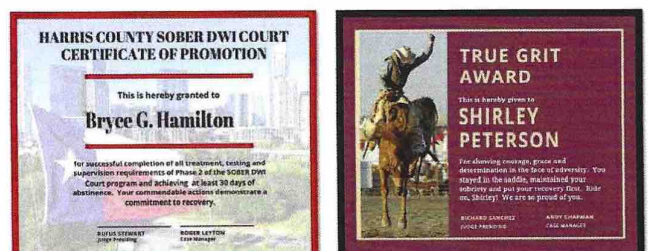
## Establishing Recovery Support and Adopting Healthy Habits



## Celebrate Treatment Progress



## Celebrate Phase Promotion and Extraordinary Efforts

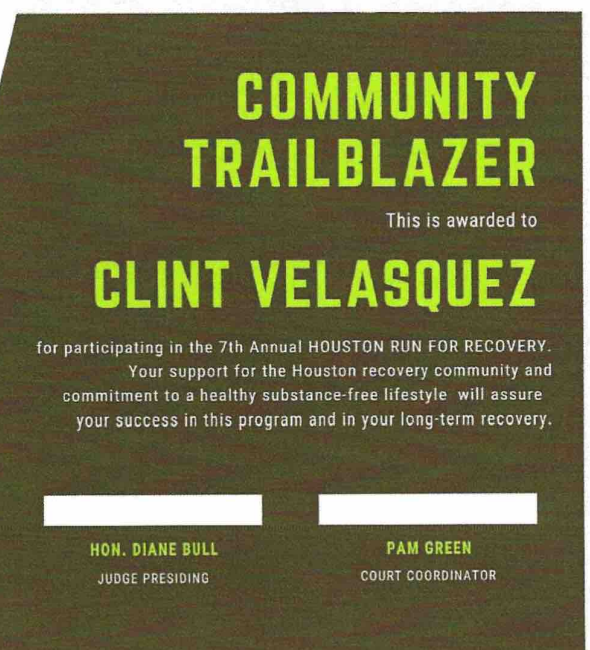




# CERTIFICATE TEMPLATE



**Language on your certificates must specifically state WHAT behavior is rewarded and WHY the behavior is noteworthy.**





# MAKING THE MOST OF CERTIFICATES

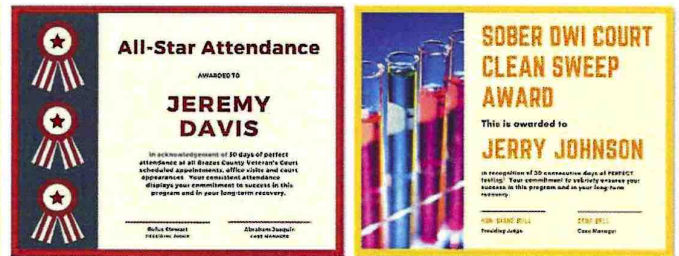
**Reward a variety of target behaviors with certificates.** Many programs only use certificates to celebrate big achievements such as phase promotion and graduation. That is a missed opportunity. Cultivate a team understanding that if failing to achieve a target behavior warrants a sanction then achieving it should earn praise and additional incentives. Transitioning from the traditional criminal justice model's focus on detecting and punishing noncompliance to the treatment court's transformed focus on also identifying and rewarding compliant behavior with equal (or greater) vigor can be difficult for some team members. It can feel unnatural and counterintuitive. Training in the treatment court model and behavior modification principles is essential to develop a team dynamic that is focused on detecting and celebrating compliance, building citizenship, instilling hope and confidence!

**Use certificates frequently in early phases** to acknowledge and reward small steps forward—which are likely giant leaps for our participants. A mistake we often make is measuring our participants' behavior by our personal yardsticks. Prolonged use of alcohol and drugs has a significant negative impact on brain function. Healing takes a very long time. We must be patient and realistic in our expectations.

**Include specific language on the certificate.** Note the wording on the sample certificates in this guide. As with all interactions with participants, create a learning opportunity when presenting the certificate in court, and ensure participants understand WHAT compliant behavior is being rewarded and WHY continuing it is desirable.

**Read the certificate aloud to the group.** When presenting the certificate, a little showmanship may be required. Remember, we are creating learning opportunities for all present by modeling the desired target behaviors. Present the certificate in a way that conveys the magnitude of the achievement. It's all in the delivery. This is a BIG deal!

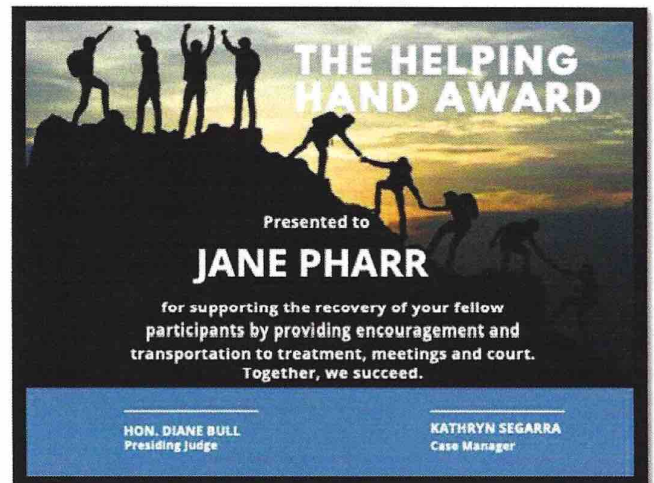
## Team: Look for the Baby Steps!



**“If NOT doing something earns a sanction, then DOING it should earn a reward.”**

## Virtual Hearing Application:

If hearings are conducted virtually, the judge should share the document on the screen and present the certificate in the same manner as one would in court, creating a learning opportunity for all. Following the hearing, a signed, scanned copy can be emailed to the recipient. Additionally, the signed certificate should be mailed to the participant's home in a large flat envelope. It is always exciting to receive something in the mail that is not a bill, and it will feel like an extra incentive! For truly extraordinary achievements, the certificate could be framed and delivered to the participant's residence. Dollar store document frames are surprisingly attractive and perfect for this purpose.



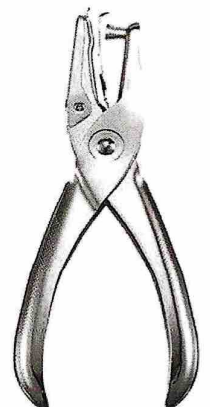
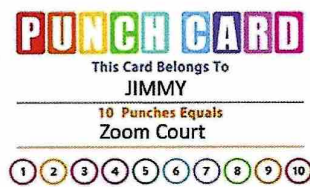
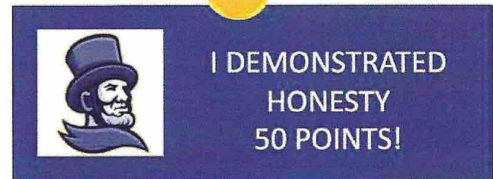
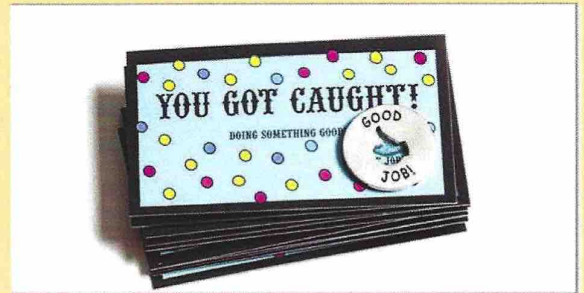


# TOKENS

Tokens are among my favorite low-cost incentives. Tokens are items that have no value of their own but instead can be exchanged for things that are desirable to participants. Examples of tokens include tickets, chips, coins, punch cards, coupons and utilizing a point system. The more tokens one receives, the more one can do with them. Thus, they are particularly motivating. Participants will work hard to accrue more tokens. One of the best features of tokens is that they can be rewarded immediately following compliant behavior by any team member. You might ask, "Aren't incentives just for the judge to deliver in court?" Absolutely not! Waiting for court may likely mean missing a prime opportunity to motivate. Judges should empower team members who frequently interact with participants to deliver a variety of low to moderate level incentives immediately. Create a written policy that includes guidelines for appropriate awards (fishbowl, Decision Dollars, wheel, etc.) for specific behaviors. The team can decide how many tokens are an appropriate reward for various behaviors for each phase of the program. Using a response matrix keyed to proximal and distal behaviors makes this a simple process. At the court hearing, the judge will certainly ask the participants about the tokens they earned that week and what behaviors prompted them. We never miss a chance to create a learning opportunity for the participant and the group.

## Here are some situations where team members can award tokens:

- Treatment provider: attendance, participation in group, timely completion of homework
- Probation/case manager: timely arrival for office visits and testing, task completion, producing a negative drug screen
- Law enforcement: participant is present for curfew check, onsite testing is negative
- Defense attorney: participant chooses to be honest with the team about use or noncompliant behavior
- Judge and prosecutor (in court only): providing requested paperwork, acquiring a new job, earning a GED, volunteerism





# FUN WITH TOKENS!

**Raffles:** Tokens can be exchanged for raffle tickets in a monthly drawing. Even with no budget, typically the team can pool resources and put together a desirable (if occasionally chaotic) gift basket once a month.

## **Exchange for other incentives:**

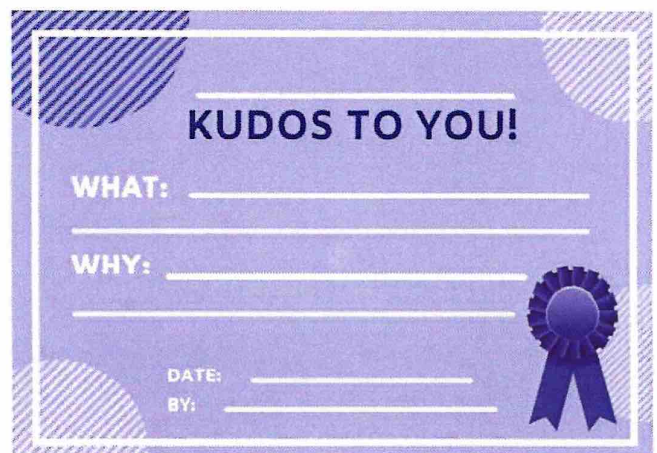
Tokens can be used to reduce monthly program fees and program-mandated volunteer hours (but not to reduce community service sanctions!) Tokens can be traded for perks such as a fast pass in court or at the lab, a VIP parking spot by the door, or a pass to report virtually in court.

## **Treatment court store:**

This is perhaps the most entertaining use of tokens for participants, particularly if you are using Decision Dollars or Bravo Bucks (pictured right). To stock the store, the program's community partners (big box stores, dollar stores, nonprofits) donate housewares, cleaning supplies, items for kids, etc. Once a month, the treatment court can open its "store" and allow participants to use their tokens to "purchase" items of choice. One of the key tenets of reinforcement is that the reward must be desirable to the participant. Allowing the participant to choose ensures that the incentive will be valued and an effective reinforcer.

**As we've seen with other incentives, tokens deliver multiple incentives simultaneously.** In fact, tokens can deliver as many as six incentives in one, as with the Kudos Cards (pictured bottom right):

1. Immediate, specific praise (WHAT they did and WHY it's great) by the team member awarding the card
2. At the next court date (in person or virtual), the judge asks to see the cards and conveys specific praise from the judge and the team.
3. The judge holds the person out as a positive example to the group.
4. The person receives peer approval in the form of applause.
5. The kudos cards are placed in a bowl for drawing prizes, providing an opportunity to win a desired prize.
6. All kudos cards are then returned to the participant as a keepsake and reminder of a job well-done.





# DECISION DOLLAR TEMPLATE

1

Treatment Court Decision Dollar

1

\$

Insert Judge's picture here

\$

1

1

You made a good decision today!

1

Treatment Court Decision Dollar

1

\$

Insert Judge's picture here

\$

1

1

You made a good decision today!

1

Treatment Court Decision Dollar

1

\$

Insert Judge's picture here

\$

1

1

You made a good decision today!

1

Treatment Court Decision Dollar

1

\$

Insert Judge's picture here

\$

1

1

You made a good decision today!

1

Treatment Court Decision Dollar

1

\$

Insert Judge's picture here

\$

1

1

You made a good decision today!

1

Treatment Court Decision Dollar

1

\$

Insert Judge's picture here

\$

1

1

You made a good decision today!



# NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT: EASING THE BURDEN

There are two ways to reward participants for compliant behavior: we can give them things they like, known as positive reinforcement, or take away things that they do not like, known as negative reinforcement. As the term "negative reinforcement" sounds a bit like an oxymoron, I prefer to think of it as "easing the burden". Participants in treatment court are in short supply of three things: time, money, and freedom. When we can give them back these things (in small increments) it is deeply appreciated, and it 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 early.

If there is no budget for incentives, consider making a standard amount of community service an across-the-board program requirement for all. Each week, we can remove small amounts of the program-mandated community service (4 - 8 hours) incrementally as a reward for compliance. In our Houston program, we found 60 hours to be a workable amount. Participants are motivated to comply with program requirements in order to eliminate all of the required service hours. Almost all participants 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 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!**

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

**SKIP TO  
THE HEAD  
OF THE  
LINE!  
GO **FIRST**  
AT YOUR  
NEXT UA**

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

**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.**



**Set ground rules.** Bearing in mind that we often encounter some advanced criminal thinking among our participants, it is necessary to set ground rules regarding how these (and all) incentives may be used. Some examples of ground rules include:

- Everyone must earn their own incentives. You may not give your incentive to another participant.
- Fee reduction coupons can only be used when the remainder of the monthly fee is paid.
- Community service reductions 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.”
- The reward may only be used when the participant is otherwise in compliance.

**Let participants choose.** As always, it is best practice to allow participants to choose from an array of comparable rewards. If the participant does not value the reward, it is not an incentive and will have no positive effect on motivation. For example, a one-hour curfew extension would not be valued by a “home body” who goes to bed at 9:30. Instead, that person may prefer a community service reduction or a fast pass to go first in court.

**Do not eliminate contacts as rewards.** Other than as a consequence of phase promotion, do not remove court, treatment or supervision contacts as rewards! These contacts are therapeutic and necessary. A virtual reporting pass is a better incentive and a good compromise.

**Use negative reinforcers as fishbowl prizes.** “Easing the burden” incentives are great options to include in your no-cost fishbowl and wheel prizes, as we will see in the next section.



**"PARTICIPANTS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY OF TIME, MONEY, AND FREEDOM. USE INCENTIVES THAT EASE THE BURDEN."**



# FISHBOWL

The fishbowl and its crazy cousin, the wheel, are fun no-cost/low-cost, low-to-moderate magnitude incentives. Participants earn opportunities to draw from a fishbowl or similar container or spin a numbered fortune wheel as a reward for target accomplishments in the program, such as attending treatment sessions and providing negative drug/ alcohol screens. Research has shown that even though the fishbowl only provides a relatively low opportunity to win, this incentive 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 chance of actual success. This permits treatment courts to offer highly entertaining, effective reinforcement on a shoestring budget. 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. Following the research, I utilized the formula depicted below where half of the prizes are congratulations on a job well done (paired with peer approval), the next most likely option (about 40%) are low-to-moderate value prizes, a few (about 10%) are high-moderate in value, and only one is a very highly valued "mega" prize.

## Fishbowl Formula: 50, 40, 10 + 1

Based on research, for every 500 slips:

- ✓ 250 affirmations + social approval
- ✓ 209 low-level reinforcers: < 4 – 12-hr CS reduction, movie passes, > 1 hr curfew, Go 1st in Court, \$1 - \$10 gift card
- ✓ 40 moderate/ high-level rewards: < 12 – 24-hr CS, Report Virtually, Jump the Lab Line, \$25 - \$50 fee reduction, \$15 – \$20 gift card
- ✓ 1 mega prize: 60-hr CS reduction, \$50 - \$100 off fees , \$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.*



Take a day off! Your hard work earned you  
A REPORT BY ZOOM PASS for Court Review!





# FISHBOWL SLIPS TEMPLATE

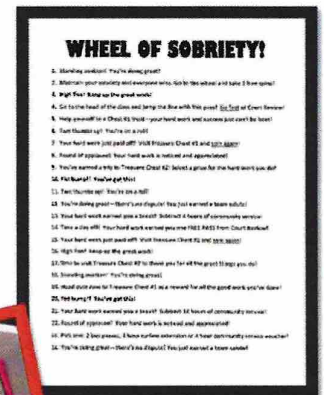
<p><b>You are doing great! Draw again!</b></p>	<p><b>Two thumbs up! You're on a roll!</b></p>
<p><b>Fist bump!! You've got this!</b></p>	<p><b>High five! Keep up the great work!</b></p>
<p><b>Your hard work earned you a break! Subtract 16 hours of community service!</b></p>	<p><b>You've got it made in the shade! Subtract 30 hours of community service! Good job!</b></p>
<p><b>Your hard work earned you a break! Subtract 4 hours of community service!</b></p>	<p><b>Your hard work earned you a break! Subtract 8 hours of community service!</b></p>
<p><b>Take a day off! Your hard work earned you A REPORT BY ZOOM PASS for Court Review!</b></p>	<p><b>Your hard work just paid off! <u>Draw again</u> for another chance at a fun reward!</b></p>
<p><b>Team salute! Job well done—you have our attention!</b></p>	<p><b>You deserve a hand! 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! <u>Draw again</u> for another chance at a fun reward!</b></p>	<p><b>Pick 1: 2 bus passes, 1-hour curfew extension or 4-hour community service voucher</b></p>
<p><b>Fist bump!! You've got this!</b></p>	<p><b>High five! 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! Take \$25 off your next supervision fee payment!</b></p>



# THE WHEEL

The Wheel of Recovery incentive was perhaps the most popular incentive among our participants. We need look no further than popular TV game shows like "Wheel of Fortune" and "The Price is Right" to understand there is something very exciting about spinning a wheel. Although there are no studies on the efficacy of the wheel, think of it as another form of fishbowl. We use the identical formula outlined in the Petry study, with one exception. There is no mega prize, as it would tremendously alter the probability of winning a high-value prize when there are only twenty or so sections on a typical wheel. Just as with fishbowl, on the wheel, 50 percent of the possible prizes will be congratulatory affirmations, 40 percent will be low to moderate value prizes and 10 percent will be moderately high value prizes. As you can see from the photos, on my budget of zero, I had a homemade wheel. Fortunately, wheels are now readily available on Amazon and elsewhere. On many of these commercially available wheels, you can simply write the prizes in with an erasable marker. Personally, I prefer a numbered wheel with a corresponding prize list so we can easily make changes if special prizes are donated. (See template on the next page.)

**The Wheel:  
50-40-10  
(No mega  
Prize)**





# WHEEL OF RECOVERY PRIZE LIST TEMPLATE

---

## WHEEL OF RECOVERY PRIZE LIST

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 Snack Box 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. Cha-ching! Take \$25 off this month's fees. Great job!!
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 DA's 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, 2 movie passes, or 4 hour community service reduction.
24. Standing ovation! Congratulations, you're doing fantastic!



### No-Cost Prizes are the Best!

You may have noticed that my Wheel of Recovery prize list on the previous page included some gift card options. Eventually we were able to get funding for gift cards. Maybe because they were accustomed to our DIY prizes, most of our participants actually preferred our unique, occasionally ridiculous no-cost options. To illustrate, here is a list of no-cost prizes that participants truly enjoy:

- Reductions in:
  - Court-mandated community service (but not CS sanctions)
  - Fees (lab, supervision)
  - Curfew (one-time, 1-2 hours extension)
- Fast pass: court, lab
- VIP parking: courthouse, probation office
- Virtual reporting pass
- Donated passes (movies, bowling, yoga)
- Inclusion of other court incentives: (Decision Dollars, Treasure Chest, Snack Box, Fishbowl, Wheel)
- Something crazy: DA Joke of the Day, Team Deputy push-ups
- Homemade baked goods (banana bread, cookies)
- Spin/ draw again optionsake the Affirmations Fun and Interactive

**Make the affirmations fun.** You may also have noticed that our fishbowl slip affirmation options always include an activity (See photo, upper left) to get the team and participants on their feet to show our enthusiasm, such as:

- Standing ovation
- Fist bumps
- Team salute
- High fives
- Two thumbs up
- The Wave



**Two thumbs up!  
You're on a roll!**

**High five!  
Keep up the great work!**

**Team salute!  
Job well done—you have our attention!**

### Virtual Hearing Applications:

Bear in mind that the fishbowl studies envisioned that each person would have a chance to draw for themselves—not have a team member do it for them. This can still be accomplished easily while in a virtual hearing. While the participants could choose a team member to draw/ spin for them, a better option might be to create a low-tech fishbowl allowing the participants to choose from multiple paper fish visible on a shared document or white board with prizes written on the back. A truly entertaining high-tech option is a virtual wheel spin that can be conducted in real time at the virtual hearing, such as found at [www.wheel-decide.com](http://www.wheel-decide.com). The drawing/ spin should be conducted on camera for all to see, and prizes should be announced immediately. Prizes can be mailed or dropped at the participant's door by a team member.

Wheel-decide.com





# TANGIBLE REINFORCERS (ON THE CHEAP!)

I hope I have adequately demonstrated that you don't need a big budget – or any budget at all – 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 court (or recovery-themed) logo--especially when used as part of a phase promotion or graduation ceremony tradition
- 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)



**Treasure Chest & Snack Bar:** Participants may not get excited about low value items. The primary value in these incentives should be entertainment. Our team created an incentive that we called the "Treasure Chest". It was truly a box of worthless items—office supplies, leftover party favors, snacks, dollar store items and white elephants donated by the team. Somewhat known for my collection of truly groan-worthy puns, I attached a little card to each item in the chest with a pun. As you can see from the photo (upper right), they were pretty silly. Treasure Chest evolved because our team prosecutor lamented that she rarely had the opportunity to interact with the participants, and she wanted to show them her support and encouragement. In the court hearing, the "A" team was awarded a trip to the Treasure Chest. Our prosecutor gave them a big smile, a high five and enthusiastic congratulations. She helped them select the "judge's lamest pun" and read it aloud to the group. This incentive was so silly that it was an instant hit and became part of our regular rotation. In fact, it was so much fun that the team defense attorney got in on the action, too. Her version of the incentive was the Snack Bar. These items also had silly puns attached. (See photo, bottom right.)

## Making the most of Treasure Chest/ Snack Bar

- 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, add amusing puns and labels to increase entertainment value.
- Acknowledge to the group we are using the term "treasure" rather loosely. Yes, the prizes are often silly and that is part of the fun. Embrace it!





### Small items of significance:

Small items, delivered correctly, can 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. A judge from Maine shared an incentive with me that was quite meaningful in her mental health court. As part of their celebration of phase promotion, the judge gave the participant a silicone bracelet along with an inspiring speech about what the new phase represented. Each phase (and bracelet) had a specific theme:

Ph. 1 Believe

Ph. 2 Focus

Ph. 3 Strength

Ph. 4 Inspire

This highly personal, special event conveys the magnitude of the achievement, praise from the judge and team, holds the person up as a positive example, invites peer approval, and provides the person with a tangible reminder of how far they have

### Individualized treats:

Remembering the participant's favorite candy bar and having it on hand as a small reward shows the participant we see him or her as an individual. We had quite a few participants that did not eat candy for health reasons or simply personal preference. One participant's guilty pleasure was hot pickles. We made sure to have this delicacy on hand as a candy substitute! And, of course, I found the perfect pun!



Keep up the GREAT work, Shay-- We think you're kind of a big "DILL"



# FUN WITH CANDY

As mentioned, not everyone likes candy, but I have worked with some teams who implemented very fun, creative candy-themed incentives that their participants loved.

## DIY Wrappers & Golden Tickets:

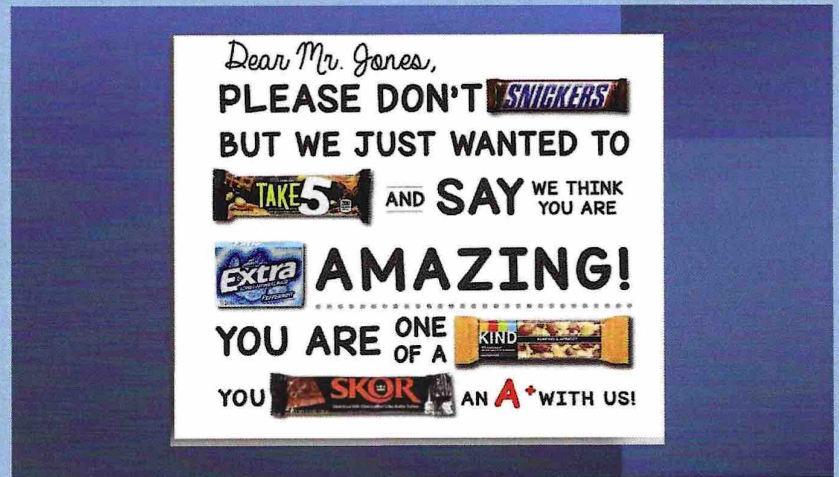
A Chatham County, GA team has a fun Willy Wonka-inspired incentive. They have a variety of candy bars with added DIY wrappers (emblazoned with the treatment court logo) covering the bars. Some of the wrappers have golden tickets (See photo, bottom right) tucked inside that can be exchanged for prizes including a free month of treatment!

## Candy cards:

Candy cards are another low-cost, fun incentive and are particularly budget-friendly around Halloween when popular snack-sized candies can be bought in bulk. (See photo, top right.)

## DIY Candy Bouquets:

With our male caseload, we had some surprising success with candy bouquets. At the time, my daughter was taking a class in floral design and helped me create a variety of candy bouquet incentives with dollar store candy. (See slide, middle right.) Nothing cost more than \$2.00. As Valentine's Day approached and requests for bouquets increased, we eventually learned that they were regifting the bouquets to their significant others! As long as they were valued by the participant, I consider that a win.



## Sweet Treats

- Team member's special baked treats (cookies, cupcakes, etc.)
- Fun brand name items:
  - "Kudos" candy bar
  - "Smarties" candy
  - "Extra" gum
  - Star themed candy
  - "Starburst"
  - "Trolli All Star" gummies

**And, for that team member with a Pinterest Account...**

# WINNER!

One free month of treatment!



---

# SHIFTING OUR FOCUS

---

## **Participant as partner.**

In addition to treating a very serious disease, we are on a mission to change hearts and minds and provide opportunities for personal growth. When we mandate behaviors and activities, we are typically successful in creating a compliant participant who will follow the rules in order to avoid sanctions. But what happens after the program ends? In the words of Dr. David Mee-Lee, "Pay attention to whether your participants are doing time or doing change." What can we do to foster recovery that will endure long after the program ends? Rather than mandating recovery support, volunteerism, and prosocial activities, we should instead encourage, make readily available, and heavily incentivize these behaviors.

**Recovery is highly personal.** Each path may differ. Allowing the participant to choose his or her path increases the likelihood they will continue these activities post-program. We should be open to non-traditional recovery support activities if they are helping the participants. When we control the recovery path, specifying a particular organization, format, and frequency of attendance, we are tremendously lessening the likelihood that, post-program, the person will continue the mandated group or activity. When participants voluntarily engage in recovery support, volunteerism, wellness, and other prosocial activities, we must immediately reward these efforts with praise and generous incentives if we wish them to be repeated!

**"PAY ATTENTION TO WHETHER YOUR PARTICIPANTS ARE DOING TIME OR DOING CHANGE."**



**Timing is everything!** A great mistake we often make is to require these advanced prosocial activities in the initial phases, wrongly concluding that exposing them to these concepts early will educate them, "keep them busy" and out of trouble. Research has shown that the majority of our participants come to us not yet ready to change, typically in the precontemplative stage of change or contemplative, at best. Recovery support meetings are not education classes or treatment. Their purpose is to support recovery. It is counterintuitive, and potentially harmful, to order participants to attend recovery support meetings before there is any recovery to support. Research shows that, for most, the optimal time to nurture these advanced behaviors is after they have received a substantial dosage of treatment, typically at the end of Phase 2 for recovery support activities and during Phase 3 for prosocial activities such as volunteerism. Don't push too soon, and generously reward participation with incentives.



# PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN INCENTIVES

When the time is right, we can provide multiple opportunities to engage in healthy, prosocial behaviors. These heavily incentivized activities promote engagement and model desired behavior. We can motivate the desired behavior by providing ample opportunities to earn incentives.

**Challenges that encourage prosocial behavior.** I worked with a very creative team in St. Lucie County, FL. They created a number of wholly voluntary challenges that, once completed, earned generous incentives. The challenges were short in duration, well-defined and each effectively modeled healthy, prosocial behaviors. As you can see from the slide (top right) the applications are only limited by your imagination.

**Contests.** In our Houston program, we had several recovery-themed contests each year that coincided with our graduation ceremonies. The contests included art, photography, and essay submissions. All participants who entered the contest received incentives such as fishbowl draws or small-increment community service reductions. Contest winners received public recognition, certificates and donated gift cards.

**Community Activity Board.** To encourage community engagement and prosocial activities, we created a board and weekly flyer with numerous local wellness and recovery-related activities. Participants were encouraged to try an activity, then report back to the group at the next court session. Participants received praise and generous incentives for participation.

## Incentivizing Productivity: A Florida Judge's (Optional) Challenges

Judge gives incentives for completing short-term, well-defined challenges for:

- Fitness (5K run/walk with mentors)
- Wellness (CM-led yoga, meditation, nutrition class & snack prep)
- Vocational (resume service, community partner fork-lift training/certification)
- Literacy (Alumni Recovery Book Club: read & discuss)
- Life skills (budget class, grooming/dressing for an interview)

Why it's great:

- Realistic and achievable
- Models/builds prosocial behavior and healthy habits



## Contests Promote Engagement

- **Recovery-themed contests:**
  - Essay Contest
  - Poster Contest
  - Photography Contest
  - Art/Mixed Media Contest
- **Incentivize participation**
- Judges can be local celebrities, media, etc.
- Have contests coincide with graduation ceremony
- Winners receive prizes and talk about their entries



## Create a Community Bulletin Board

- Research fun local activities that support recovery.
- Encourage choosing an activity from the board.
- Report to the group if it is something they enjoyed and supported their recovery.
- Give praise generous incentives to reward the behavior.





# PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT

Early engagement in the program can be a challenge. Creating task lists and challenges with incentives built in, such as bingo cards and checklists, can be very effective. Here are some examples of how teams created opportunities to earn incentives while promoting engagement. These generously incentivized activities modeled desired behavior in a fun and engaging way. You will note that these well-funded teams used gift cards as rewards. I want to reiterate that while gift cards are indeed great incentives, we have also seen there are many no-cost incentives we could use that participants would value just as highly.

## Getting new participants to show up in the beginning is a challenge.

The first two weeks following program entry are crucial, and often new participants become overwhelmed and disappear. A California team created this tic-tac-toe formatted checklist (below) to encourage participants to show up and keep coming back. The team celebrated completion with heaps of praise and a very generous incentive to reward the participant's efforts.

### Treatment Progress Tic Tac Toe!

Client's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Earn a \$20 gift card!

<b>Fourth Visit</b> Date:	<b>Second Visit</b> Date:	<b>Third Visit</b> Date:
<b>Task:</b> 3 Negative UAs	<b>First Visit</b> Date:	<b>Task:</b> Probation Office Visit
<b>Task:</b> Negative UA	<b>Task:</b> Negative UA	 14 Day Anniversary!

**Engagement with treatment.** This clever Texas treatment team clinician created a very engaging check list to encourage participants to use the new skills they were learning in treatment— with substantial rewards for compliance.

### 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	Free	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 = \$20 gift card

**Engagement during times of isolation.** At the outset of the pandemic, this creative Oregon team put together a very doable checklist that encouraged engagement with treatment, supervision and community support. The more boxes the individual checked off, the more incentives they earned. For substantial compliance, the judge reduced the term of probation up to 6 months!

### 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:**
- Check-in as directed by probation officer for one week
  - Complete two assignments with probation officer
  - Complete more than two assignments from probation officer
  - Call the UA line and text the color code to your PO each day for one week
- Community:**
- Join the START/STOP Each One Teach One Facebook group
  - Attend first online recovery support meeting and write to counselor or PO about the experience
  - Attend the START/STOP Each One Teach One Facebook Group virtual alumni group
  - Attend daily online recovery support meetings for one week with documentation per PO
  - Reach out to a fellow START client and complete an online meeting with them. Documentation per PO.
- Treatments:**
- Daily phone (voice) contact with recovery mentor for one week
  - Daily check-in with treatment counselor for one week
  - Complete two elective treatment assignments
  - Complete more than two elective treatment assignments
- Incentives:**
- \$5 incentive card
  - \$5 incentive card (for each assignment)
  - \$5 of supervision fees waived per additional assignment
  - \$5 off supervision fee coupon
  - Fastpass
  - \$5 incentive card
  - Fastpass
  - \$5 incentive cards
  - \$5 incentive card
  - \$5 incentive card
  - \$5 incentive card
  - \$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.



# TREATMENT BINGO TEMPLATE

## 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**



# IN CLOSING...

---

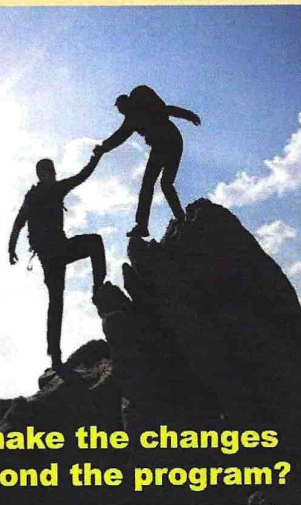
Let us end where we began: change is hard, and recovery is a long and challenging journey. The most powerful incentives are natural ones—the wonderful things that happen as the result of good treatment: feeling better, repairing relationships, gaining employment and more. But we know it will take time, a lot of treatment and practice to get there. 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 engagement and facilitate recovery. For most of us, the number of incentives we are currently awarding in treatment court is probably not enough. How can we increase our use of incentives? We must shift our focus from detecting infractions to looking for and rewarding progress. It is often subtle and difficult to see. Here are some ways that we can increase our use of incentives:

- Create a space on our staffing forms for proposed incentives. Many staffing sheets only have a box for proposed sanctions.
- Create a team staffing practice to always ask, "Is there something that we can praise/ reward this participant for today?"
- Record/track incentive history, just as we record previous sanctions. There is no other way to know if our incentives are outnumbering sanctions at our 4:1 minimum incentive to sanction ration and our 10:1 goal.



- Understand that participants receiving sanctions may, and should, also receive incentives for the good things that they are doing.
- Change the tenor of the court hearing by leading with incentives, having the "A" Team always go first at the court hearing.
- Remember even the most engaging incentive can become stale if overused. Mix them up with designated weeks for participant favorites such as fishbowl, wheel, and treasure box.
- Pay attention to what participants enjoy and wherever possible, let them choose their rewards.
- Most of all, have fun. Your enthusiasm is contagious!

**"At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel."  
- Maya Angelou**



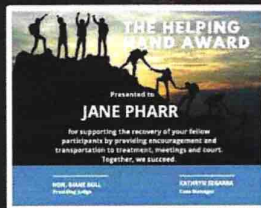
**How can we help make the changes permanent, even beyond the program?**

**"IT IS OUR BUSINESS TO BUILD SKILLS, CONFIDENCE AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, INSTILL HOPE. INCENTIVES ARE A POWERFUL, EFFECTIVE TOOL TO AID IN THAT ENDEAVOR."**



# QUESTIONS, TA, TRAINING?

Judge Diane Bull  
Hon.DianeBull@gmail.com



**THE PRESENTATION THAT ACCOMPANIES  
THIS HANDOUT IS OFFERED IN-PERSON  
OR VIRTUALLY AS:**

- A 75-MINUTE TRAINING
- A 90-MINUTE TRAINING
- A 3-HOUR WORKSHOP

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
HON.DIANEBULL@GMAIL.COM**