

# EBP Corner

## Special points of interest:

- Evidence Based Principles in DYC
- Principle 5: Increase Positive Reinforcement
- Positive Reinforcement Basics
- Examples of Positive Reinforcement in DYC

## Evidence Based Principles in DYC

The 8 Evidence-Based Principles have a great impact on the effectiveness of services and interventions used with youth and their families, regardless of whether the service or intervention is applied within a placement or facility, or in the community.

The conventional approach to supervision and treatment has emphasized accountability of an individual without consistent application and practice of new skills, tools, or resources. Without these, the risk for reoffending and/or recidivism greatly increases.

Effective services and interventions do not need to sacrifice or ignore proven methods and best practices, however. There is a growing body of research and literature that supports the influence of building and maintaining positive relationships between staff and clients with the goal to teach, role-model, and practice skills with real-time, relevant reinforcement practices. While sanctions can be applied when necessary, the consistent practice of reinforcing positive behaviors and behavior change results in more positive outcomes.

National Institute of Corrections. (2004). Implementing evidence-based practices in community corrections: The principles of effective intervention. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Crime and Justice Institute.

## Principle 5: Increase Positive Reinforcement

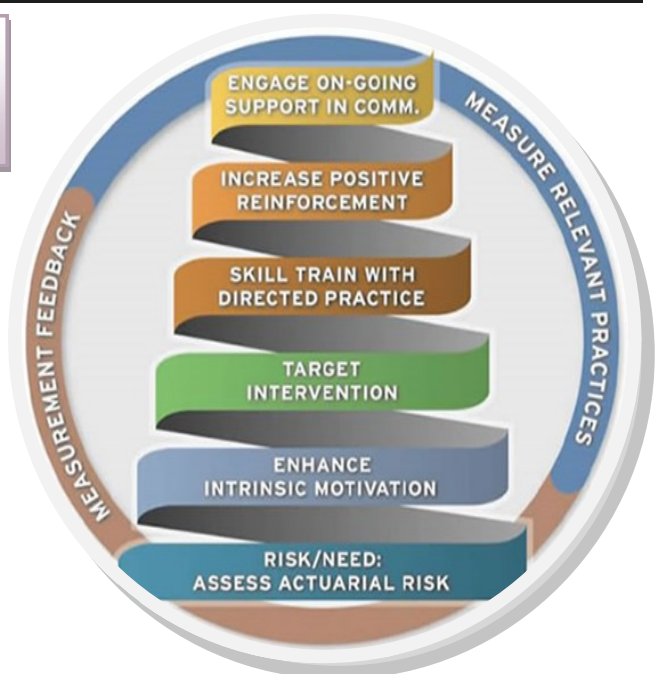
Learning new skills and making lasting behavior changes is difficult for anyone. This is especially true when facing personal challenges and limitations.

Behavioral research has shown that individuals respond better and maintain learned behaviors for longer periods of time when reinforced with

positive feedback rather than negative feedback.

In addition, regularly providing a minimum **four-to-one ratio** of positive reinforcement to negative has proven to promote and achieve sustained behavior changes.

Positive reinforcement does not take the place of swift and fair sanctions when necessary for unacceptable and/or harmful behaviors.



## Colorado Division of Youth Corrections

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[colorado.gov/cdhs/dyc](http://colorado.gov/cdhs/dyc)

## Important Questions to Remember about Increasing Positive Reinforcement

*Do we model positive reinforcement techniques in our day-to-day interactions with our coworkers?*

*Do we model positive reinforcement techniques in our day-to-day interactions with our supervisors?*

*Do our staff understand the four-to-one theory in their interactions with their coworkers?*

*Do our staff practice the four-to-one theory in their interactions with their coworkers?*

*Do our staff understand the four-to-one theory in their interactions with youth?*

*Do our staff practice the four-to-one theory in their interactions with youth?*

## Positive Reinforcement Basics

Viewing individuals based only on limitations or challenges reinforces stereotypes and preconceptions about who they are, their strengths, and abilities.

It is quite common to view our youth as being “deficit based”, which results in lower expectations, limited options for learning, and fewer interpersonal interactions.

Recognizing and emphasizing strengths in young people isn't a naïve way to ignore problem or risky behaviors. Recognizing strengths links to internal motivation and capacities to learn, grow, and improve.

Empowering individual strengths can lead to reinforcing positive emotions which helps to solve problems and build positive relationships.



## Examples of Positive Reinforcement in DYC

Verbal praise

Written feedback

Tangible/material goods—commissary and certificates

Phase/level/status incentives

Phase/level/status privileges

Access to community activities

Home/transition passes

Reduction in supervision level (parole or community placement)

Continuum of Care

A dark blue rectangular graphic with a white crown at the top. Below the crown, the text "KEEP CALM AND Use Positive Reinforcement" is written in white. "KEEP CALM AND" is in a smaller, all-caps font, while "Use Positive Reinforcement" is in a larger, title-case font.

**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
Use Positive  
Reinforcement**

## Questions about EBP?

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