Use of Positive Behavioral Interventions with Severely Behaviorally Challenged Children
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ABSTRACT
The Check In/Check Out (CICO) program has been deemed effective in reducing disciplinary referrals among school-aged children (Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007). The program is designed to reinforce positive behavior by providing regular feedback and enabling students to earn points on daily progress cards for reaching identified goals.

Critics, however, suggest this intervention is time and resource intensive and yields limited results when used with children with severe behavioral challenges (Campbell & Anderson, 2011).

This study examines whether coupling CICO with another positive behavioral intervention, mentoring, can result in improved behavior in a severely behaviorally challenged child. Mentoring involves a weekly voluntary meeting (at least fifteen minutes) between the student and their mentor to support and encourage them in reaching their goals.

This study uses observational data to determine whether the addition of mentoring results in improved behavioral outcomes in a timely manner with limited use of additional resources.

CASE DESCRIPTION
Molly (name changed to protect confidentiality) is in her first year at a Buffalo Public School. She was adopted at age six but currently resides in a local residential treatment facility due to behavioral concerns at home.

Molly has been physically aggressive towards peers at school. The behavior led to increased attention from the School’s Social Support Staff and a decision was made to place Molly in the Check In, Check Out (CICO) Program in October 2017.

CICO is an evidence-based program designed to provide additional support to challenged students related to their behavior and academic performance. As part of the program, she carried a daily progress card for reaching identified goals.

After being placed in CICO, Molly continued to have physical altercations with peers at school. The Social Support Team determined that mentoring services would also be necessary to assist Molly in achieving her CICO goal of 80%.

Mentoring services included a meeting with Molly and her mentor for at least fifteen minutes weekly. Molly is pulled from her lunch period once a week to allow time for the mentoring session.

Each week, the mentor engages Molly in activities to support her development. Boys Town Lesson plans are incorporated into the mentoring sessions to help Molly develop her social skills. The Boys Town curriculum is also considered part of an evidence-based intervention.

Molly is further encouraged to discuss topics she is interested in. For example, friendship building is an area that she finds particularly challenging. Therefore, Molly was asked to complete an activity that involved her engaging with a few friends so the mentor could observe her interactions and make constructive suggestions.

LOGIC MODEL

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
A single subject design presents an opportunity for the social worker to track client performance on specific goals and/or outcomes while simultaneously evaluating the effectiveness of their social work practice. This study uses observational data to determine whether the addition of mentoring resulted in improved behavioral outcomes for a severely behaviorally challenged student.

Hypothesis
Mentoring coupled with the Check in/Check Out intervention will yield improved behavioral outcomes for this student.

Protocols/Measurement
CICO data was collected by Molly’s facilitator on a daily basis, beginning in mid-October and continuing through the end of March. Her behavior was monitored in each of six classes using three criteria (be safe, be responsible, and be respectful). She was able to earn up to six (6) points per class for a total of 36 points per day.

A daily CICO score was computed by dividing the total number of points earned from the total number of points available (36). Molly’s daily CICO goal was to secure twenty-nine out of a total of thirty-six points (80%). If she did so, she was rewarded with an end of the day treat (such as chips, gym time, computer time).

A weekly CICO score was also calculated based on the number of days in which Molly met her daily goal. A score of one indicates that Molly met her daily CICO goal each day she attended school.

Impact
Improved School Behavior

RESULTS
These data suggest that Molly began CICO fairly strong and was able to fully meet her goals for the first three weeks. This is not wholly unexpected as many students respond favorably to the increased attention they receive as part of CICO. During week four, however, Molly experienced a set-back which included a series of physical altercations with peers at school just before mentoring services were introduced (Week Six).

Once mentoring was introduced, Molly was able to meet her daily goals for the remainder of her time in the program. She did so without any documented physical altercations. This suggests that the addition of mentoring to CICO served to improve this student’s behavior.

CONCLUSIONS
This single subject research project examined the effectiveness of mentoring services in combination with CICO to improve the behavior of a severely behaviorally challenged student.

While the data suggests that mentoring was helpful in modifying Molly’s behavior, there are real concerns regarding the quality and usefulness of the information collected.

Notably, CICO tracks teacher ratings of classroom behavior based on three criteria (being safe, being responsible, and being respectful). As such, it is entirely possible for Molly to secure points necessary to meet her daily goal while still engagement in problem behavior.

Future research activities will incorporate information about specific physical altercations and/or behavioral concerns as part of the design.

REFERENCES