

Positive Achievement Time

November 2019



The Department of Corrections (DOC) is seeking changes that would allow most individuals on community supervision to earn time off of their community custody sentence. This would allow DOC the opportunity to expand its current swift and certain sanctioning model to include the application of incentives to further enhance offender compliance as well as reduce recidivism.

Research and evidence-based practice strongly support the use of both positive and negative re-enforcers to effectively change human behavior. The application of swift and certain sanctions in combination with swift and certain incentives during supervision, will support behavior change and reduce risk to reoffend. It should also be noted that behavior based incentives also provide for positive engagement on supervision and allow the case manager to recognize small milestones that continue individual engagement in the supervision process, thereby creating a path for successful supervision completion.

Proposed Changes

The earned incentive days, referred to as Positive Achievement Time (PAT), may only be awarded to individuals who have clearly shown positive behavior for a continuous 30 day period through strict compliance with their case management plan. Earned PAT may be accrued over the course of the individual's supervision sentence. Additionally, accrued PAT may be taken away from the individual as a sanction for violation behavior. The result is that higher performing individuals will move off of supervision more quickly, thereby allowing DOC to focus limited resources on those individuals who need it the most.

Compliance with supervision plus completion of specific treatment, programming or reentry goals, will result in the granting of PAT. Each month, the CCO and supervised individual will determine the specific program/treatment participation or goal where the individual can earn PAT. These determinations will be made based upon the individual's specific risk, needs and responsivity factors. The CCO will provide coaching, mentoring, direction, guidance and resources that will support the individual's success. The individual will be responsible to participate in programming/treatment or complete the goal during the month. Participation in programming and treatment will be mandatory and imposed as a condition of supervision. Individual's failure to participate in programming or treatment will be considered non-compliance and may result in a violation process or loss of incentives.

"Similar to how a sanction can act as stimuli to deter future unwanted behaviors, incentives ranging from verbal recognition to early discharge from supervision, can act as a stimuli to reinforce positive behavior. In fact, to be most effective, correctional interventions with individuals involved in the justice system should consist of positive reinforcements that outnumber sanctions or punishments. (Andrews & Bonta 2010; Gendreau, 1996; Lester, Braswell and Van Voorhis, 2004)"

Effective Responses to Offender Behavior: Lessons Learned for Probation and Parole Supervision: APPA/NCSC/Pew Charitable Trusts

Advantages to Positive Achievement Time


- ***Results in positive behavioral change.*** Provides the much needed “carrot” to our current Swift and Certain “stick-only” behavior management model by incentivizing positive behavior above the mere avoidance of bad behavior.
- ***Targets resources to the highest needs.*** Individuals demonstrating positive behavior will earn time off of supervision, allowing DOC to direct limited resources to individuals who need it most: those who are struggling to maintain compliance, have higher criminogenic needs, and remain at a high risk to reoffend (Risk Needs Responsivity principle).
- ***Provides an impactful alternative to arrest and confinement.*** Individuals can lose accrued PAT for violations. This sanction alternative can be used immediately at the point of violation, can be implemented statewide without the need for external resources, and will allow for the individual to maintain participation in programming and other prosocial activities.
- ***Focuses the individual on supervision to established reentry goals.*** The use of PAT or incentives of supervision allows the individual to establish goals that are attainable, measurable and meet their needs for successful reentry into the community. These goals are established at the beginning of supervision and create opportunities for engagement, and a coaching and mentoring model between the CCO and the individual, so that they can collaborate towards successful completion of supervision.

Individuals already receiving alternative sentences are not allowed positive time credits (DOSAs, SOSSAs, FTOWs, & FOSAs). Individuals supervised through the interstate compact are not allowed credits. Individuals under ISRB (pre-SRA and CCBs) do not get positive time credits.

For more information:

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