

# Contingency Management & The Research Cooperative

This research project aims to guide each participating court through the implementation of an individualized contingency management protocol. Contingency management (CM) interventions utilize systematic reinforcement with rewards (or punishment) to alter problem behaviors in offenders. Rewards have been used widely in treatment programs and has been shown to successfully change targeted behaviors of substance abusers including decreasing the number of positive drug tests and increasing treatment attendance. The process of developing and implementing such an intervention will take several steps. In this study, George Mason University will assist each court through the implementation from the formation of a local multidisciplinary team to the utilization of new technology tools, and the formation of a larger supportive network of courts also implementing a rewards system.

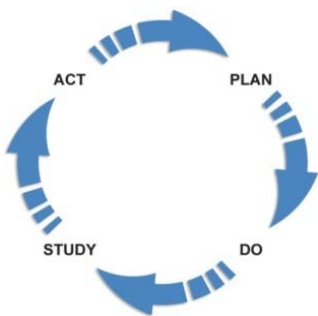
## Forming a Team

Effective teams include members representing three different kinds of expertise within the court: system leadership, technical expertise, and day-to-day leadership. There may be one or more individuals on the team with each kind of expertise, or one individual may have expertise in more than one area, but all three areas should be represented in order to drive improvement successfully.

## Contingency Management & J-STEP

Each court's team will be asked to develop a reward protocol specific to their court. These protocols will identify various levels of tangible and social rewards that can be earned by fulfilling program requirements. The protocols will be piloted at each site using specialized software called J-STEPS that is designed to guide court officers through the process of delivering graduated sanctions and incentives based on offender progress towards specified behavior goals.

## Testing the Change



Once a team has established its membership, set an aim, and developed measures to determine whether a change leads to an improvement, the next step is to test a change in the real work setting. The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle is shorthand for testing a change — by planning it, trying it, observing the results, and acting on what is learned.

This model will be used within each court to assess their progress and adjust their reward protocol.

## The Research Process and Working as a Cooperative

The teams will come together as part of the larger cooperative for a variety of learning activities that will improve rewards procedures. These activities will include two work sessions hosted at George Mason University in January and October of 2010, bi-monthly webinar sessions, and case conferences with clinicians to review difficult cases. The courts working in the Cooperative will also be asked to test the J-STEP software and participate in surveys. GMU will be collecting data and will provide information back to each court to help inform their use of rewards.

