



### **1. What is the Irvine Paraprofessional Program?**

The Irvine Paraprofessional Program (IPP) is a school-based intervention designed to target children with mild to severe Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who are failing both academically and socially in general education classrooms. Premised upon research indicating that students with ADHD can perform at an equivalent academic level equivalent to their non-ADHD peers with frequent reinforcement, this twelve-week intensive program endeavors to teach and provide positive feedback for a number of operationally defined social and classroom behavioral skills. Specially trained paraprofessionals (e.g., educational assistants or undergraduate students) function as teachers' aides to facilitate the implementation of behavior management strategies and a token economy across the twelve-week period, with the goal of fading out the necessity of their presence by the end of the program.

### **2. With whom can the program be used?**

The program may be employed with a maximum of three students with ADHD per classroom at one time, with priority given to the youngest and most severely affected children. The curriculum and content of the IPP is relevant for students in kindergarten through grade six.

### **3. What are the components of the IPP?**

The IPP is comprised of six components:

- 1) To ensure treatment integrity, paraprofessionals must undergo a rigorous 30-hour training course covering modules ranging from symptoms, assessment, and treatment of children with ADHD to the use of token economies and response maintenance. Subsequently, trainees are required to obtain 200 hours of supervised field experience in a general education classroom in which the IPP is being implemented.
- 2) Participating school psychologists must receive sixteen hours of training in the implementation of the IPP, and are responsible for meeting with paraprofessionals biweekly to discuss students' progress and provide feedback regarding paraprofessionals' performance.
- 3) In conjunction with classroom teachers, school psychologists discuss targeted students' individual needs and thereafter select up to four of nine behaviors (commencing tasks, staying on task, interacting with peers and staff, following quiet rules, following seat rules, completing tasks, producing neat and accurate work, switching tasks, following directions, and following class rules) to be addressed by the intervention.
- 4) The paraprofessional, who is assigned to a classroom for half of each school day during the 12-week intervention period, holds primary responsibility for implementing the IPP point system in the mornings when academic and behavioral demands are typically more intensive. Teachers are responsible for implementing the system during the less demanding afternoons.



The point system operates as follows:

- ◆ Successful performance of each behavior selected for intervention within a specified time period earns a stamp on a daily report card. All stamps earned on the report card during one school day may be turned in for token reinforcement during the last twenty minutes of that day. Reinforcement consists of the opportunity to select from various activities to engage in during the twenty-minute period, with greater selection available for those who have earned more stamps.
  - ◆ In addition to earning stamps, children are verbally prompted and praised by the paraprofessional or teacher a predetermined number of times during each time interval.
  - ◆ Students initially receive feedback from paraprofessionals regarding whether stamps were earned every fifteen minutes; feedback from teachers is provided every forty-five minutes. The child also receives a maximum of two verbal prompts or social reinforcers for performance of target behaviors within those intervals.
  - ◆ The time intervals for earning stamps are systematically increased, and the number of prompts and reinforcers used to maintain target behaviors are systematically decreased, through a level system. When a child has earned 90% of his or her stamps over a period of ten consecutive days, the child progresses to a subsequent level. If a child earns less than 75% of his or her daily stamps over a period of ten consecutive days, the child is returned to the previous level. This process culminates in the child reaching the Transition Level, in which the teacher becomes solely responsible for providing feedback regarding stamps, and the paraprofessional may only provide prompts or social reinforcers at a rate of two per hour and a half.
- 5) During the 12-week intervention, paraprofessionals also conduct one-hour social skills training sessions with targeted students twice per week outside of the classroom. The paraprofessional subsequently promotes the generalization of these social skills by serving as a cue and source of reinforcement for the appropriate use of learned skills in the classroom. Skills introduced in the training modules include good sportsmanship, ignoring provocation, assertion, and accepting. Children are also taught to discriminate among basic emotions and understand how those emotions serve as antecedents or consequences of behavior. During these sessions, students chart both the percentage of stamps earned on their daily report cards and the percentage of stamps they predict will be earned each day. Charts are reviewed weekly, and for each day that a child has received 90% or more of their stamps, an opportunity to try and throw a ball into a basket and win a given value of “Big Deal Stickers” is earned. These stickers are also awarded to individuals, or to the entire social skills training group, for choosing appropriate behaviors and reaching certain goals both in and out of the classroom. The incentive to earn Big Deal Stickers is that once the group has accumulated a predetermined number of stickers, a Big Deal Fiesta with food and games is scheduled for the next training session.
  - 6) Once the twelve-week period is completed, the paraprofessional is removed from the classroom and the teacher assumes sole responsibility for the behavioral intervention. The school psychologist and teacher determine the details of the point



system to be employed on an ongoing basis, and the students are followed up upon transition to their subsequent classrooms.

#### **4. What has research indicated about the utility of the IPP?**

Preliminary studies support the efficacy of the IPP. Findings have indicated that the use of frequent positive reinforcement in the classroom in combination with social skills training significantly bolsters appropriate classroom behaviours (e.g., staying on task and completion of assignments). Moreover, rating scales used to measure hyperactivity and inattention revealed a more than 50% decline in disruptive behaviors among students with ADHD subsequent to their receiving the classroom and social skills training components of the IPP. Results of this research also suggest that participating teachers continue to apply learned reinforcement strategies following program completion and thus intervention effects are maintained.

#### **References:**

1. Kotkin, R. A. (1995). The Irvine Paraprofessional Program: Using paraprofessionals in serving students with ADHD. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 30*, 235-240.
2. Kotkin, R. A. (1998). The Irvine Paraprofessional Program: Promising practice for serving students with ADHD. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 31*, 556-564.

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