TECHNICAL NOTE

*A "PAPER MONEY" TOKEN SYSTEM AS A RECORDING AID
IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS*

The combined tasks of contingent reinforcement of desired behaviors and accurate recording of behavioral change consume much time and effort of hospital staff whose goal is the implementation of a token economy program. The most commonly used tokens include poker chips, whose various colors can represent different monetary denominations, machine stamped metal coins, and Mexican or other inexpensive coins. The inherent flaw in the use of such tokens is that they are easily lost, stolen, or traded.

As a means of remedying some of these problems in the token economy system at Terrell State Hospital, the print shop was asked to print a large amount of rectangular-shaped "paper money." (See Fig. 1). The money was color-coded according to broad classes of behavior. Money bearing the labels "Self-Care", "Ward Work", and "Social Contact" was printed in different colors to facilitate easy recognition and quick sorting. The money was also stamped according to denomination (1 cent, 5 cents, and 10 cents). The amount paid for a specific behavior, however, was based entirely on the desirability of having a given patient emit that behavior. On the face of the "paper money" is a place for the patient's name, the attendant's name, the date, and the specific response that was reinforced. Specific

responses have included such items as "moping the dorm", "emptying the trash", "playing checkers", etc. Tokens bearing a name other than that of the holder are not honored.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of "paper money" tokens is that they completely replace standard book-keeping systems. When the patients exchange their tokens for perishables, personal items and clothing, the tokens become the permanent records. Compartmentalized bins are easily constructed to facilitate counting and storage of tokens. Although a brief amount of time is involved in filling out the information on the face of the money, staff seem to prefer this type of record keeping to previous methods that involved tedious tabulation of data at the time of token exchange. Unfortunately, the present program is not structured such that the success of the "paper money" system can be accurately compared to other recording methods.

Sorting the money according to color provides rapid feedback regarding the frequency with which broad classes of behavior are being reinforced. Determination of specific behaviors being reinforced can be made by examining the responses specified in writing on the face of the bills. Sorting according to attendants' names

Fig. 1. Example of the type of "paper money" used in the token economy system.

yields information regarding number of patients and the number and kind of behaviors being reinforced by each attendant.

As a safeguard against loss and mutilation of the "paper money" tokens, patients who have earned a

specified number of tokens can purchase bill-folds in which to carry their money.

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