

Addressing Attendance and Tardiness through Adaptation of the Check-In, Check-Out Intervention

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Citation: Kladis K, Hawken LS, O'Neill RE (2018) Addressing Attendance and Tardiness through Adaptation of the Check-In, Check-Out Intervention. Educ Res Appl: ERCA-147. DOI: 10.29011/2575-7032/100047

Received Date: 23 March, 2018; **Accepted Date:** 02 April, 2018; **Published Date:** 09 April, 2018

Abstract

Check-in/Check-out for Attendance (CICO-A) is an extension of the Tier 2 intervention Check-In/Check-Out which supports students with externalizing behavioral problems. CICO-A can support students in school settings who are at risk due to moderate rates of absenteeism and tardies through: a) increased supervision during morning check-ins, b) increased positive interactions with an adult in the school and c) reinforcement for attendance behavior. This article will provide a detailed description of CICO-A along with suggestions for implementation and demonstration of elements.

Introduction

Mrs. Kirner is a fourth-grade teacher at Park View Elementary. She has a student, Jasmine, who struggles to get to school on time and misses on average one to two days of school each week. Mrs. Kirner has contacted Jasmine's parents several times and expressed concern about her frequent tardiness and absenteeism. Jasmine lives two blocks from school and walks to school with friends. However, on some days she refuses to come out of the house when her friends stop by to pick her up, saying she doesn't like school. When Jasmine is at school, she works hard and is able to complete most academic tasks. However, Jasmine's absenteeism and tardy behavior is starting to affect her academic performance. Jasmine was on track for meeting grade level benchmark goals but she is now starting to fall behind due to the number of days she has missed. Mrs. Kirner is frustrated with the lack of interventions to address problem behaviors such as absenteeism and tardiness in her school.

Many schools struggle with reducing the rates of student tardiness and absenteeism. The research conducted on student attendance suggests attendance may be one of the most impactful issues affecting student success in schools today [1-3]. Researchers have identified several risk factors at the individual, family, and community level that may affect a child's rate of attendance [1,4-7]. Barriers to regular school attendance include lack of stable housing, limited access to reliable transportation, lack of health care, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, and involvement in

the criminal justice system [5]. Furthermore, students from low socio-economic communities who are affected by violence or lack appropriate role models of positive social norms can affect their ability to attend school and stay on track for school success [5].

Students who have high rates of tardiness and absenteeism at the elementary school level are more likely to develop a pattern of increased nonattendance throughout their school career [2,3]. Research on student attendance provides evidence that, beginning as early as first grade, students who have chronic rates of absenteeism are more at-risk for dropping out than students who do not [1,3]. Furthermore, students with chronic rates of absenteeism and tardiness are more at-risk for other problem behaviors such as violence, crime, alcoholism, and future unemployment [3,7]. Research has indicated that students with disabilities have higher rates of absenteeism and tardies and student with emotional and behavior disorders (EBD) experience the highest rate among all disability categories [8]. Ultimately, chronic rates of absenteeism and tardiness place students with EBD at greater risk for school failure due to missing academic instruction.

Students who do not participate in social activities due to lack of attendance may not be able to form social relationships with their peers which can also affect their success in school [1]. For example, a student who arrives to school 30 to 60 minutes late will not be able to participate in activities which are designed to build a connection to classmates and transition into the classroom environment and daily routines [9]. It is important for elementary

schools to intervene and reduce chronic absenteeism and tardiness because research has shown that students with low attendance in elementary school are at an increased risk for dropping out of high school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; McConnell & Kubina, 2014)[1,3].

Research indicates that students who are engage in moderate levels of absenteeism and tardiness problem behaviors have a lack of connectedness and engagement to the school community [1,2,3,9]. Therefore, the majority of previous interventions to address absenteeism include ways to increase school connectedness through teacher-written praise notes; building school, family, and community partnerships; building caring relationships; increasing family involvement; and check and connect interventions [1,2,3,9]. The aforementioned research has had an impact on absenteeism, but these strategies are often implemented after absenteeism becomes chronic and they can be costly in terms of time and resources. One resource efficient way to address attendance issues and support school connectedness is adapting the evidenced-based Tier 2 intervention Check-in, Check-out (CICO) to support attendance behavior. Check-In, Check-Out is typically implemented to increase appropriate behaviors and decrease disruptive behaviors. By capitalizing on the flexibility of CICO, schools can adapt CICO to build school connectedness and engagement for students who have moderate rates of absenteeism and tardiness.

Check-In, Check-Out: Brief Overview

CICO is one of the most widely implemented Tier 2 behavior interventions. Multiple researchers have conducted reviews and have concluded that CICO is an evidence-based intervention for intervening with externalizing problem behavior in both the elementary and secondary settings [10-12]. To address problem behavior such as high rates of student absenteeism and tardiness, schools can implement a modified version of the CICO intervention. Students can benefit from increased supervision during morning check-ins with an adult in the school building. This supervision provides additional opportunities for positive interactions with an adult in the school, which may increase the student's feeling of school connectedness and engagement. The purpose of this article is to (a) provide recommendations for the use of a Check-in, Check-out for Attendance (CICO-A) attendance and tardy intervention in an elementary school setting, (b) describe key components of CICO-A, and (c) detail how to use CICO-A data for decision making.

The CICO intervention is implemented as follows. First, the student checks in with a CICO coordinator to receive a copy of a Daily Progress Report (DPR) which lists the school-wide behavioral expectations. The CICO coordinator is typically a paraprofessional in the school who serves as a daily positive contact for the student but also provides corrective feedback when needed [13]. The student then gives the DPR to the teacher to receive feedback after each class period on their behavior. At the end of the school day,

the student checks out with the coordinator. During the afternoon check out, the coordinator determines whether the student met the daily percentage of point goal. If the student did meet the daily percentage point goal, the student can select a reinforcer. Last, the student takes the DPR home for parents to review and sign. School teams review the daily data from the DPR to determine student progress on CICO [13]. The school team, typically comprised of the principal, special education teacher, school psychologist, and social worker, meet bi-weekly to review student progress.

Check-in, Check-out for Attendance

Key elements of CICO can be used to address additional problem behaviors such as internalizing and attendance problem behaviors [14-18]. CICO-A is an extension of the CICO intervention with adapted features to support students with moderate rates of absenteeism and tardiness. CICO-A can reduce rates of absenteeism and tardiness through: a) increased supervision during morning check-ins; b) increased positive interactions with an adult in the school to build school connectedness; and c) positive feedback on attendance behavior and reinforcement.

The key to the effectiveness of CICO-A is to target students who are not attending school due to lack of interest or feeling of connectedness. These students may not be intrinsically motivated to attend school and need additional reinforcement and connections with adults in the school building to increase attendance behavior. It's also important that, similar to regular CICO, at-risk students are targeted versus those who are chronically absent and may need more intensive, Tier 3 interventions such as wraparound or mental health support. Finally, student absences and tardies that are the result of parent/caregivers versus student behavior need to be ruled out. If parents/caregivers are unable to get their children to school on time regularly, a different intervention is warranted than CICO-A.

Jasmine is struggling with coming to school and misses on average one to two days of school per week. Park View Elementary Student Services team met and using a combination of attendance data, academic data and teacher data on classroom behavior, the team decided to place Jasmine on a Tier 2 behavior intervention to address Jasmine's attendance problems. The school determined that Jasmine's attendance issues were related to her dislike of school and lack of feeling connected. Her parents reported Jasmine makes statements such as "I don't want to go to school, I just don't like it there." After securing parental permission, Park View Elementary decided to put Jasmine on CICO-A to improve her school attendance. Jasmine checks in every morning with the coordinator (see Figure 1 for critical components of CICO-A intervention). During check-in, Jasmine receives praise and encouragement for arriving on time and ready to learn. Her weekly CICO-A report form is marked by the coordinator each morning when she arrives to school on time. Depending on school

resources and preferences, the CICO-A report form can either be on paper or an iPad (see Figure 2).

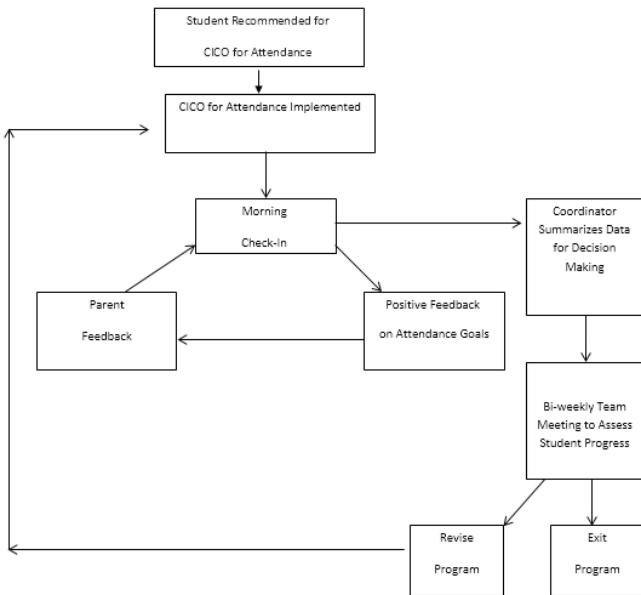


Figure 1: CICO for Attendance Flowchart.

Student: _____		Teacher: _____		
Date: _____				
Monday	Great Job!	Time In	Minutes Missed	
Tuesday	Great Job!			
Wednesday	Great Job!			
Thursday	Great Job!			
Friday	Great Job!			
Total: _____				
Weekly _____ %		Parent's Signature _____		

Figure 2: CICO-A Check in Forms - Paper and Electronic.

Schools that have access to an iPad can create a CICO-A report form using the Google Docs™ program, which will include a timestamp when the student checks in each morning. Each week, a copy of the CICO-A report form is sent home to Jasmine's parents so that they can see her progress. If schools are using an iPad, then the coordinator can email a copy of arrival days and times for each student to their parent or guardian. Every day Jasmine arrives to school on time, she marks her reinforcement tracker with a sticker or color marker. The reinforcement tracker is a chart that keeps track of how many days the student arrives to school on time (see Figure 3). For each day that Jasmine arrives to school on time, she receives a sticker on her chart and after five cumulative she is able to select a reinforcer of her choice.

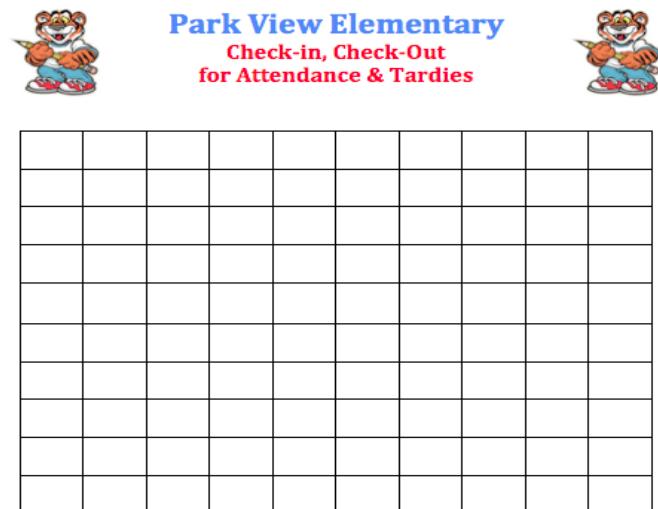


Figure 3: Reinforcement Tracking Form.

If Jasmine arrives to school after the tardy bell, she still checks in with the coordinator and her time of arrival is documented. The coordinator also documents the number of minutes Jasmine missed that day. For example, if the bell rings at 8:10 am and Jasmine arrives at 8:45 am, the coordinator marks the time she arrives and notes that she has missed 35 minutes of the school day. It should be noted that the morning check-in is a positive and encouraging exchange between the student and coordinator. Therefore, if Jasmine arrives after the bell rings, the coordinator provides her with a positive interaction that includes encouragement and a prompt to try to get to school on time the next day.

The final step of CICO-A includes using data for decision-making. An existing team in the school responsible for behavior support (e.g., school-wide PBIS team or Tier 2/3 team) use data from the CICO-A report form to monitor Jasmine's progress towards her goals. Student attendance data from the weekly tracker allows the coordinator to track the percentage of school week missed by using the number of minutes missed per week. For example, if a typical

school day is 375 minutes then a typical five day school week is 1,875 minutes. Therefore, if a student misses one school day, then the student missed 20 percent of the school week ($375/1875 \times 100$). Student data can be graphed by percentage of school week missed and also number of whole school days missed. A graph of Jasmine's pre and post CICO-A data is displayed in Figure 4. The line graph depicts the percent of the school day missed and the bar graph depicts full day absences per week. When examining Jasmine's tardy and attendance data it can be determined that on average she was missing about 21.1% of the school week prior to intervention. Following CICO-A implementation on week 11, her percentage of school missed was reduced to an average of 2.9% per week.

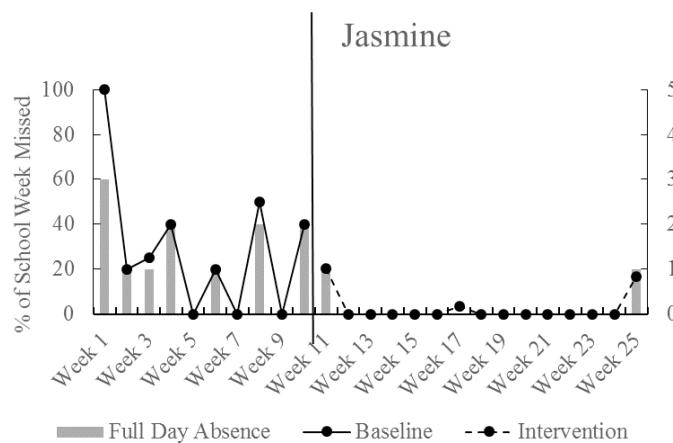


Figure 4: Jasmine's Pre and Post CICO for Attendance data.

Which Students Could Benefit From CICO-A?

CICO-A is a Tier 2 intervention for students who are at-risk. CICO-A can support students who are just starting to engage in problem behavior (i.e., missing school) but do not require intensive, individualized supports. These are typically students who miss enough school that they are flagged in the school's attendance system, but not the students with the most chronic rates of absenteeism and tardies. Currently, there are no research-based recommendations for selecting students for this intervention. However, Attendance Works, a national and state initiative that promotes awareness about school attendance states that students who miss 5 to 9 percent of the school are "at-risk" [5,19]. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year or about 18 days a year (about two days per month) [5,19]. Schools that have implemented this intervention typically select students who have missed at least 10 percent of the current school year. The school team selected Jasmine for this intervention because she was missing an average of 20.1% of the school year or about one day of school per week. If Jasmine was missing 3 to 4 days per school week or more than 10 days per month, CICO-A alone would likely not be the best intervention to

support her needs. In that case, home visits from a social worker or other qualified school staff would be appropriate to assess the factors influencing school attendance.

Who should be the CICO-A Coordinator?

The coordinator should be a staff member who has flexibility in the morning before school to check students in both before and after the school bell rings. In most school settings, this can be a para professional or supplemental staff who does not have a class to supervise [13]. It is important to note when selecting a coordinator, that schools should select a staff member who is well liked by students and a person who is able to provide both positive as well as corrective feedback. Schools that are implementing basic CICO for students with externalizing behavior problems may use the existing CICO coordinator to facilitate both programs.

Reinforcement Procedures

Students are able to earn reinforcement when they arrive to school on time a cumulative total of five days. The goal of the CICO-A is to reduce the amount of school a student is missing by increasing positive interactions, reinforcement, and encouragement. Therefore, if a student misses school once or twice that week, the student still has a chance to earn reinforcement once they have reached a total of five on time arrivals. That being said, school teams may work together to identify different attendance goal for students. There are no research-based recommendations for goal setting, however some schools have set 95% attendance rate as their student goal. This means that a student is only missing one day of school or less per month.

Another goal of the CICO-A is to provide support while requiring minimal resources. Therefore, some of the more frequently used reinforcers tend to be activity-based which include activities such as playing a game of Uno, five minutes of iPad or computer time, playing tea party with a friend, or ten minutes of basketball time. If non-activity based reinforcers are used, they can be simple and low cost also. Schools have used pencils, small sticky pads, or stickers as tangible rewards for students. It is recommended that the coordinator asks the student what they would like to earn to create student buy in and motivation.

While there are no research-based recommendations for utilizing intervention data for decision making, there are several guidelines that schools have used to make decisions whether to continue or modify the intervention. If the student has an attendance rate of 95% or higher (missing only one day of school or less in a month) over an 8 to 10-week period, schools may decide to graduate the student from CICO-A but continue to monitor his or her progress. If a student has increased their rate of attendance by at least 20%, then it can be determined that intervention is having an effect on the student's attendance behavior and it is recommended to continue the intervention. If the intervention appears to have

no effect on the student's rates of absenteeism or tardiness, some schools have intensified the intervention by increasing home communication. In addition to increased home communication, schools can intensify support by reinforcing families for meeting attendance goals.

Conclusion

CICO-A is a Tier 2 intervention that can be implemented to support students who exhibit moderate rates of absenteeism and tardiness in an elementary school setting. Absenteeism occurs at higher rates in students with disabilities with students with EBD experiencing the highest rates [8]. Interventions are needed not only to address problem behavior in the classroom for students with EBD, but also getting them to attend school on time to begin with. Based on key elements of CICO, CICO-A supports students through: a) increased supervision during morning check-ins, b) increased positive interactions with an adult in the school, and c) positive feedback on attendance behavior and reinforcement. We have provided a detailed explanation of key components to implementation of CICO-A and how it can support students in an elementary school setting. CICO-A requires minimal resources, which makes it an ideal intervention to support students with attendance and tardiness problem behaviors.

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