

TFCO for Adolescents

Treatment Foster Care Oregon for Adolescents

The Behavior Plan

Treatment Foster Care Oregon and TFCO are registered
service marks of TFC Consultants, Inc.



Table of Contents

Background.....	2
Overview	4
Level 1	4
Level 2	5
Level 3	6
Using the Behavior Plan	14
Level 1 Privileges.....	16
Level 2 Privileges.....	16
Level 3 Privileges.....	17
The Art of Giving and Taking Points	20
The Daily Review.....	22
Level Drop.....	26
Incentives.....	32
Using the Behavior Plan During Unusual Circumstances	35
School Cards and Other Cards.....	36

Copyright © 2015 by Treatment Foster Care Consultants, Inc. No part of this manual may be reproduced by any means, nor transmitted, nor translated into a machine language without the written permission of TFC, Inc.

Background

What is the TFCO Behavior Plan?

The behavior plan is an intensive daily intervention designed to teach prosocial skills, reinforce appropriate behavior, and discourage problem behavior. The plan specifies daily expectations and assigns point values that can be earned for meeting those expectations. Points are used within the plan. Foster parents award points each day to provide the youth with frequent positive reinforcement for normative and prosocial behavior. Removal of points is a way to provide clear yet mild sanctions for problem behavior. Although the system is highly structured, it is flexible enough to allow Team Leads and foster parents to individualize the program according to each youth's needs.

The system is comprised of three levels distinguished by a gradual reduction in structure and an increase in privileges for the youth. It usually takes 4 to 6 months for a youth to progress through the three levels. Youth are able to progress to less restrictive levels by accumulating points earned in their current level.

What makes the system effective?

The behavior plan is based on elements supported by research on youth with social and behavior problems and their treatment. Three elements in particular are considered key to the system's effectiveness.

1. Development of Prosocial Skills

The first key element focuses on the development of prosocial skills. People new to this system are often surprised to see how focused the system is on normal everyday prosocial skills; these skills are often taken for granted. They may have expectations that a program focused on youth with behavior problems should rely heavily on correcting inappropriate behaviors. Suppressing misbehavior is certainly an important target of the TFCO program, but equally important is the development of prosocial skills that will sustain the youth's progress outside of a structured system in the bigger social sphere.

Developing prosocial skills is especially important for youth with emotional and behavioral problems who are often less skilled than their typical peers in a number of areas important to their development. These youth tend to have lower academic achievement, poorer peer and adult relationships, less involvement in activities such as hobbies or sports, and often lack the skills needed for employment. They tend to rely on aggressive or coercive tactics to get what they want and, indeed, this may be an effective short-term strategy in that coercion often "works" to get them what they want. However, it also puts them at risk for further rejection and progression into an unhealthy lifestyle. Positive peers and adults tend to disassociate with youth who are aggressive and coercive. When that happens there is less opportunity for socialization and skill development that naturally occurs through interactions with adults and normal peers. With diminished opportunity, they start to lag in the development of prosocial skills and their behavior becomes more extreme. These youth are then likely to increase their association with deviant peers and be reinforced by that group for coercive strategies. Over time, they may completely fail to develop the ability to use prosocial

strategies to achieve their goals. Consequently, a focus of the behavior plan is to help youth overcome their skill deficits and develop the ability to function appropriately in their social environment.

2. Use of Tangible Rewards

A second important element is the use of tangible rewards to motivate youths' prosocial development and sanctions to suppress their problem behaviors. The system uses explicit reinforcement in the form of points that are then used to "buy" privileges, material things, and even money. This style of reinforcement is based in research on the development and treatment of youth with both externalizing and internalizing problems. Studies have shown that youth with behavior problems are less responsive than their normal peers to social rewards such as adult approval, but learn equally well when tangible rewards such as tokens, food, privileges, or money are used.

One key feature of TFCO is the individualization of the treatment to fit youth interests and skills. Developing a menu of reinforcers that are motivating to youth occurs with input from the foster parents. Access to items or the items themselves need to fit the foster parent home as well as the youth interest. Studies also show that with these youth, social disapproval is much less effective than tangible punishments such as point loss or time out. Since youth with severe behavior problems are unresponsive to the kinds of approval and disapproval that occur naturally in daily interactions, a much more material approach to impacting their behavior is needed. The behavior plan structures the home environment so that youth receive tangible rewards and sanctions for prosocial or problem behavior in a timely manner throughout the day. Through repeated and consistent use of these very tangible responses, youth learn from the consequences of their behavior. Over time, pairing tangible consequences with matched social responses from foster parents (and others) may also assist these youth in learning to respond to the social cues that guide much of our daily behavior.

3. Addressing Challenges

The third key element is the system's ability to address a challenge typically faced by people working with youth who exhibit severe problem behavior. It is common for these youth to have a strong sense of having been treated unfairly. They often feel victimized by the people in their lives (their families, the police, or their teachers). Many have been raised with a history of abuse, crime, and disrupted relationships making it easy to be sympathetic to their feelings of victimization. This sense of unfairness can be a significant obstacle during treatment, predisposing youth to be wary and distrustful. They come to expect unfair treatment and rationalize noncompliant behavior accordingly. The behavior plan, if used correctly, addresses this challenge by creating an environment that may seem fair to them. Because expectations for their behavior are clearly articulated, youth know in advance exactly what they must do to earn points and for what behaviors they will lose points. This minimizes the opportunity for them to perceive foster parents' responses to their behavior as random acts of unfairness and discourages feelings of victimization.

Overview of the Three Levels

Level 1: Getting Off to a Good Start

Youth start the behavior plan on Level 1 as they are settling into the home and start forming several important relationships. The foster parents and the youth are getting to know each other, and the foster parents are learning to work with their Team Lead. The youth and his/her family are also beginning to work with their therapists. It is important to establish these relationships and get the youth and foster parents off to a successful start in the program. Initial success will help all of the participants to be motivated and engaged in treatment and will help them have confidence in the program and staff.



To maximize the potential for success in this early phase, the focus of Level 1 is on very close supervision and immediate reinforcement of prosocial behaviors.

Maintaining a very close level of supervision during this initial phase minimizes the number of situations in which the youth can misbehave. During Level 1, the youth is virtually never left unsupervised. At home, an adult is present at all times. Whenever possible, the youth is taken to school and picked up from school by the foster parent while on Level 1. At school, the youth's attendance in each class is accounted for and activity time with friends before or after school is not allowed. Home visits don't begin until Level 2 because there is no way to assure adequate supervision during home visits, and home visits early on can distract the youth from settling in with the foster family.

The focus on immediate reinforcement for appropriate behavior lets the youth know what is expected and that meeting the expectations will have positive consequences. By the time most youth enter the TFCO program, they have had multiple experiences with failure in programs, schools, relationships, etc. Many enter the program expecting to fail and overly focus on negative aspects of a situation, which may lead them to give up easily when they encounter difficulty. Foster parents should be coached to immediately and frequently reinforce appropriate behavior. Research indicates that the more positive foster parents can be during this initial period, regardless of how positive or negative the youth's overall behavior might be, the better the outcome. Very reinforcing foster parents can help bolster the youth's confidence in his ability to succeed in the program. Frequent reinforcement also draws the foster parents' attention to what the youth is doing right and away from the problems. Severely limiting the opportunity for problem behavior and focusing on reinforcing positive behavior during Level 1 helps to create a setting in which treatment can be most effective.

The basic premise for all levels is that youth must "buy" privileges with points earned through appropriate behavior. Behavior charts (described below) are used to keep track of these points. On Level 1, points earned in one day are traded for privileges used the next day. Level 1 is limited to a few privileges. Most youth find this initial level restrictive and they are motivated to do well so they can move on to Level 2 where they enjoy more privileges and fewer restrictions. On Level 1, youths must first buy Basics, which

include a 9:30 pm bedtime and a radio in the bedroom. Level 1 Basics cost 50 points. With the remaining points, youths can select from a list of additional privileges.

Youth must accumulate a total of 2100 points to move to Level 2, which most do in about three weeks. Typically, they earn 100 to 130 points a day.

Examples of Additional Privileges

- Later bedtime (50 Points)
- Other (50 Points) — Computer time, stereo, video games, etc.
- TV (50 Points)

Level 2: Learning New Skills

Most of the change in the youth's behavior occurs during Level 2. What the team learned about the youth on Level 1 can now be used to customize their behavior plan and target specific skills. Foster parents will have an idea of their youth's interests and will know more about what kind of incentives motivate the youth. Youth typically look forward to more privileges on Level 2 including activity time and allowance.

On Level 2, points earned during one week are used to buy privileges for the next week. Privileges on this level have a higher cost and youth typically earn 700 to 900 points per week. Buying privileges one

week at a time helps youth learn to plan ahead and work toward their goals. The amount and quality of privileges increases in Level 2, offering opportunities to become increasingly more responsible and confident. As with Level 1, youth must still buy Basics first. Level 2 Basics include the added privilege of use of telephone for 15 minutes daily. Along with the usual privileges such as telephone time, allowance, TV/computer time, or a later

Amit wants to go to a football game on Friday night. On Monday he asks his foster parents if he can go to the game on Friday with his friend Peter. Amit gives his foster parents Peter's parents' names and phone number and the time the game starts and ends. Amit's foster parent calls the Team Lead to ask if this is a reasonable plan for this stage of Amit's program. The Team Lead approves of the plan if the foster parents and Peter's parents are in agreement about the plan and if Amit is on Level 2 on the day of the game. The foster parents drive Amit to the game and identify a place and time where they will pick him up when the game is over.

bedtime, we now individualize privileges according to the youth's interests. For example, the youth may buy the privilege of taking music lessons or attending an event. The youth can also buy activity time with friends.

The assignment of points and privileges on Level 2 is more flexible and dynamic than on Level 1. Individualization should take place in order to keep up with changes in the youth's interests and increasing competencies and to help keep her engaged in the system. The behavior plan is adjusted as the youth progresses through Level 2 so that standard privileges are adjusted and other special privileges of interest are added to the list. This helps to keep the youth interested and offers an opportunity to guide her toward prosocial activities. Typically, the therapist works with the youth to propose new privileges that are of interest to the youth such as pursuing a hobby or participating in a

sport or activity. The youth is then coached on how to appropriately ask and negotiate for what she wants.

One additional privilege on Level 2 is activity time. There are specific rules and guidelines for the use of activity time.

- Activities in the community must be planned and arranged in advance.
- The Team Lead must approve all activity time arrangements.
- Youth must give foster parents the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the friends they will be spending time with.
- Youth are told in advance that the Team Lead is responsible for knowing where they are at all times and will confirm their whereabouts during unsupervised activities.

Typically, youth are on this level for 12 to 16 weeks. Youth move to Level 3 by buying bonds that cost 50 points each. They are allowed to buy one bond per week and must have 12 bonds to move to Level 3. Once on Level 2, youth are demoted to Level 1 on the day following a low point day (earning fewer than 100 points) and are allowed only Level 1 basic privileges. They then must earn at least 100 points the next day to be reinstated to Level 2. This demotion is described in more detail later. Throughout the placement, serious rule violations such as law violations, truancy, and drug use result in a demotion to Level 1 the following day, and the Team Lead may decide to accompany the demotion with additional consequences, such as a work chore, before returning to the previous level.

Sylvia is on Level 2. Sylvia's foster mom completes a room check and finds earrings in her room. The foster mom calls the Team Lead. The Team Lead tells Sylvia she is on Level 1 the next day for suspicion of stealing for having earrings without permission, which is not allowed in the program. The Team Lead gives her a 2-hour work chore and tells her that she is on Level 1 the next day and will stay on Level 1 until the work chore is completed.

Sylvia can complete the work chore the next day and return to Level 2 the following day. If she takes longer to complete the work chore she will be on Level 1 longer...the decision is up to her!

Level 3: Making it More Real

Level 3 is considered a maintenance phase. During this time, youth are expected to maintain their newly learned skills with less structure. They have more opportunity to exercise their own judgment and must handle that responsibility reasonably well to stay on this level. The Team Lead and foster parents use their discretion to customize privileges and expected behaviors, being careful not to allow more freedom than the youth can handle, but also being sure the youth has opportunities to practice appropriate skills and behaviors in more natural settings. To minimize later transition problems, Level 3 should be structured to fit with the program that will be implemented in the youth's home or other aftercare placement.

The basic difference between Level 2 and Level 3 is that it is no longer necessary to buy privileges on Level 3. As long as youth earn at least 120 points a day, privileges are

automatic. Activities must still be approved in advance and it is important that the program continues to check on youths' activities and whereabouts during their activity time. Youth earn a weekly allowance if they have at least 120 points a day for the week. To help them manage money, youth are required to maintain a record that tracks their income and expenses and must still return receipts for money the program has approved for use.

Sabrina is currently on Level 3. On Monday she earned only 85 points, and so on Tuesday she was on Level 1. Tuesday she earned 130 points and returned to Level 3 on Wednesday.

Youth who drop below 120 points on any one day are automatically demoted to Level 1 the next day, and allowed only Level 1 privileges for that day and their allowance for the week should be reduced. If they are on Level 1 for more than one day in a week, they should not be awarded any allowance. As with Level 2, any law violation results in an immediate demotion to Level 1.

Summary of the Levels in the Behavior Plan

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Number of points to be earned (minimum)	100	100	120
Level of supervision	1:1 adult supervision	Some activity time if approved in advance	Some activity time if approved in advance
Allowance	No	Yes	Yes
Points used to buy privileges	Yes, they use their points to buy privileges for the next day.	Yes, the points add up and are used to buy one week's worth of privileges.	No, on level 3 you automatically have the privileges.

Daily Point Sheet

Point sheets are used throughout the youth's placement to keep track of points earned and lost each day. Foster parents are trained and supervised to use the point sheet. Each daily sheet contains items in their routine and appropriate social behaviors, a time deadline and point value. Expected behaviors are outlined in the description page of the system which should be customized for each youth and each level if needed. Foster parents should be involved in setting up the expectations so their family routines can be incorporated and definitions can be adjusted to reflect individual situations.

The description or explanation for each item in the youth's program should be written as clearly as possible so there is little ambiguity about what the youth is expected to do to earn points. This will help the youth take responsibility for his behavior and accept consequences. Clear and specific descriptions will also make it easier for foster parents to be objective about whether points are earned and how many points should be given or taken. A lack of objectivity may encourage the youth to try to negotiate or argue with the foster parents or may support the youth's feelings of unfairness. It is easy to give clear descriptions that define exactly what is acceptable for behaviors such as getting ready or cleaning up in the morning. For other items, such as attitude and maturity, it is more difficult. It is natural for foster parents to be more subjective in the way they give and take points when dealing with these less clearly defined behaviors. When more subjectivity is involved in determining what is and isn't acceptable, it is helpful to give as many examples as possible to illustrate what behavior is expected. As everyone gets to know each other better, adjustments can be made to the descriptions so they are more applicable to individual situations.

For behaviors that need to occur repeatedly throughout the day, such as "attitude and maturity," it is a good idea to break the day into time periods (morning and afternoon). A youth may have a poor attitude in the morning, but have a positive attitude in the afternoon, or visa-versa. Dividing up the day for these kinds of behaviors gives the youth an opportunity to try again with a fresh start even after getting off to a bad beginning. It could be a long, long day for both the foster parents and the youth if the youth "blew it" early in the day and decided that since he lost points already, his behavior really didn't matter for the rest of the day. The purpose of the system is to teach youth adaptive, prosocial responses. By dividing the day into parts for behaviors that need to occur throughout the day, the youth is encouraged to try again and learns not to give up so easily.

Jon woke up late, was rude, and argued with the foster parent before leaving for school. When he returned from school, he was pleasant and helpful. He lost points in the morning on "attitude and maturity," but he gained points in the afternoon in that category. This allowed the foster parent to pay attention to his positive effort in the afternoon and not to let his rough start affect his entire day.

Charts are easy to modify. The basic template provided here is used as a starting point to design a daily behavior management program for each individual. As the Team Lead becomes more aware of individual needs, specific target behaviors can be added to the youth's chart. In addition, greater point values can be given to areas that require more effort on the part of the youth. For example, the Team Lead may want to give a youth

who struggles in school more points for the school card or for completing homework. Some examples of individualized targets that might be included are:

- Practicing specific social behaviors such as using good table manners, being verbally polite, asking about other's well being, etc.
- Appropriately expressing needs by asking for help, asking for reassurance, expressing likes and dislikes, etc.
- Practicing self-control by being patient, taking a break when angry or frustrated, etc.
- Demonstrating sustained performance at difficult tasks, not giving up when faced with adversity.

The foster parent notices that when she asks Brenda to start her chore, Brenda explains why the request is not convenient for her and gives her opinion of why she cannot do the task. The Team Lead adds "following directions without comment" to her point sheet. This allows the foster parent to reinforce Brenda when she does what she is asked to do without comment and also allows the foster parent to take points that specifically target this behavior.



To encourage a focus on the positive, tasks added to the point charts should be framed in a positive manner. This means that they should be worded in terms of what youth *should* do—not about what they shouldn't do. Only the creativity, energy, and resources available within the program limit the extent to which the system can be customized. In fact, this individualization is a cornerstone of the TFCO program and a primary benefit to those involved.

The initial behaviors for Level 1 (i.e., up on time, attitude and maturity, chores) remain for the duration of the program—even when the youth has mastered the behavior. This is because we want to make sure that the youth continues to be reinforced and encouraged for success.

Sample Point Sheet for Emily

School Days Level 1				
Name: Emily			Date: January 25	
POINTS	THINGS TO DO TO EARN POINTS	BONUS	TAKEN	TOTAL
10	UP ON TIME	2		12
10	READY IN MORNING			10
10	MORNING CLEANUP			10
5	GO TO SCHOOL			5
2/Class	CARRY SCHOOL CARD			12
5/Class	BEHAVIOR IN CLASS			30
10	SCHOOL CARD BONUS			
20	READ AND STUDY			20
10	CHORE			10
15 A.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY	5		20
15 P.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY		10	5
2-10	VOLUNTEERING			
5-10	EXTRA CHORE			
10	BED ON TIME (last night)			10

Daily Total: 134

COMMENTS
+5 and +2 this morning, great job!
No bonus for school card because no homework.
You lost points for arguing about your school card.
Thanks for helping with dinner, nice job!

Level 1

Name:

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	TIME	POINTS
UP ON TIME	Out of bed		10
READY IN MORNING	Showered, teeth brushed, hair combed, dressed in clean clothes, and ate breakfast		10
MORNING CLEAN-UP	Bed made, dirty clothes put away, room neat, bath towel and wash cloth put away, and dishes in sink		10
GO TO SCHOOL	Attend school each day (All classes)		5
CARRY SCHOOL CARD	Carry school card to each class and get signature from each teacher		1/class*
BEHAVIOR IN CLASS	Positive behavior in class		2/class*
SCHOOL CARD BONUS	Signatures on card, homework turned in, on time & good behavior for each class		10
READ AND STUDY	50 minutes reading/writing each day (not including letter writing)		20
CHORE	To be explained each day		10
ATTITUDE/MATURITY	Being helpful, taking feedback maturely, being pleasant, accepting no without pushing limits, etc.		15 A.M. 15 P.M.
VOLUNTEERING	Volunteering to do extra tasks (Foster Parent will decide on points)		2 – 10
EXTRA CHORE	Optional (Must be approved by Foster Parents)		5 – 10
BED ON TIME (last night)	IF you CAN buy BASICS IF you CAN'T buy BASICS	9:30 pm* 8:30 pm	10

Level 2

Name:

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	TIME	POINTS
UP ON TIME	Out of bed		10
READY IN MORNING	Showered, teeth brushed, hair combed, dressed in clean clothes, and ate breakfast		10
MORNING CLEAN-UP	Bed made, dirty clothes put away, room neat, bath towel and wash cloth put away, and dishes in sink		10
GO TO SCHOOL	Attend school each day (All classes)		5
CARRY SCHOOL CARD	Carry school card to each class and get signature from each teacher		1/class*
BEHAVIOR IN CLASS	Positive behavior in class		2/class*
SCHOOL CARD BONUS	Signatures on card, homework turned in, on time & good behavior for each class		10
READ AND STUDY	50 minutes reading/writing each day (not including letter writing)		20
CHORE	To be explained each day		10
ATTITUDE/MATURITY	Being helpful, taking feedback maturely, being pleasant, accepting no without pushing limits, etc.		15 A.M. 15 P.M.
VOLUNTEERING	Volunteering to do extra tasks (Foster Parent will decide on points)		2 – 10
EXTRA CHORE	Optional (Must be approved by Foster Parents)		5 – 50
BED ON TIME (last night)	IF you CAN buy BASICS IF you CAN'T buy BASICS	9:30 pm 8:30 pm	10

Level 3

Name:

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	TIME	POINTS
UP ON TIME	Out of bed		10
READY IN MORNING	Showered, teeth brushed, hair combed, dressed in clean clothes, and ate breakfast		10
MORNING CLEAN-UP	Bed made, dirty clothes put away, room neat, bath towel and wash cloth put away, and dishes in sink		10
GO TO SCHOOL	Attend school each day (All classes)		5
CARRY SCHOOL CARD	Carry school card to each class and get signature from each teacher		1/class*
BEHAVIOR IN CLASS	Positive behavior in class		2/class*
SCHOOL CARD BONUS	Signatures on card, homework turned in, on time & good behavior for each class		10
READ AND STUDY	50 minutes reading/writing each day (not including letter writing)		20
CHORE	To be explained each day		10
ATTITUDE/MATURITY	Being helpful, taking feedback maturely, being pleasant, accepting no without pushing limits, etc.		15 A.M. 15 P.M.
VOLUNTEERING	Volunteering to do extra tasks (Foster Parent will decide on points)		2 – 10
EXTRA CHORE	Optional (Must be approved by Foster Parents)		5 – 50
BED ON TIME (last night)	IF you CAN buy BASICS IF you CAN'T buy BASICS	9:30 pm 8:30 pm	10
ALLOWANCE	<p>\$15.00 per week when on level all week. \$7.50 if on Level 1 once in the week and no allowance if on Level 1 more than once in the week.</p> <p>All purchases must have receipts and you must show your money to your foster parents.</p> <p>Money spent at school in pop / candy machines must have Team Lead approval</p>		

Using the Behavior Plan

Determining Privileges and Rewards

On Level 1 the types of privileges that are offered are fixed. On Levels 2 and 3, foster parents and the treatment team can individualize privileges and rewards for each youth. In addition to privileges that are “purchased” with points, extra rewards can be provided as incentives for appropriate behavior, particularly in situations that are especially difficult for the youth. Extra rewards are typically used as incentives for sustained performance rather than a single event. These rewards can range from small things such as something to eat to larger ones such as music or clothing. Effective privileges and rewards have the following characteristics:

- **They are well defined.** It is common for youth in this program to have experienced many “broken promises” where adults led them to believe they would get something that never materialized. To prevent misunderstandings and disappointment, it is important that youth understand exactly what is being offered in the privileges they “buy.” For example, when offering “extra telephone time” as a privilege, it should be clear how much time is being offered, 15 minutes or 30 minutes? Can the time be used whenever the youth wants or is there a specified time the youth can use the phone?

***This:** The youth can buy an extra 20 minutes for one phone call (not long distance) before 8pm.*

***Not This:** The youth can buy extra phone time.*

Vanessa identifies herself as a “girly girl” and loves earrings, makeup, nail polish, and gabbing with her friends. The foster parent reports that she has struggled with cleaning her room.

 - *This: Vanessa can earn \$5 toward hoop earrings for 5 days of making her bed (not necessarily consecutive days).*
 - *Not this: Vanessa can earn earrings if she keeps her room nice.*
- **They fit the youth’s level of interest and maturity.** This can be a real challenge. Although it is always a good idea to ask what the youth wants, it should not come as a surprise to hear “I don’t know” or “nothing.” After spending a little time together, it will be easier for foster parents and therapists to come up with suggestions for what they think the youth may like. To be effective, privileges and rewards have to be of interest and motivating. For a youth who likes to go to bed early, staying up late would not be a particularly attractive privilege. Being able to earn a new pair of shoes might be highly motivating for one youth, but hold no appeal for another.

***This:** The youth can earn \$1 per day toward a basketball for 5 days of her teachers reporting all good behavior on her school card (not necessarily consecutive days).*

***Not This:** The youth can earn a basketball if she is good at school.*
- **They must be affordable and readily available.** It is easy to get into a trap by offering something as a privilege that is difficult to provide on an ongoing

basis. For example, it might be very motivating for a particular youth to earn the privilege of playing computer games and the youth might “buy” that privilege over and over again. This might create a conflict in a household where several family members need to use the same computer for work or school. In this case, there may be a limited number of times per week that the youth is allowed to pick this privilege from the list.

This: As a privilege on Level 2, for 75 points the youth may buy 20 minutes of computer time each day between 4 pm and 6 pm.

Not This: As a privilege on Level 2, the youth may buy computer time for 75 points.

- **The criteria for the reward should be realistic.** A common mistake is to offer an incentive for a task that is not within the youth’s ability to accomplish. Many youth have very low self-esteem, are easily discouraged, and give up early on difficult tasks. It is more effective to break large tasks down into manageable steps and offer incentives for each step in the right direction. The right incentive can be a powerful motivator—but only when it is achievable.

This: The youth can earn going to the movies with a friend on Saturday after 5 days of no overdue homework being reported on the school card (not necessarily consecutive).

Not This: The youth can earn going to the movies with a friend after one month of perfect school cards.

Level 1 Privileges

Name:

PRIVILEGE	DESCRIPTION	POINT COST
BASICS	Radio in your room and 9:30 bedtime	50
LATER BEDTIME	Later bedtime on non-school days and weekends with permission	50
TV	TV after chores and read and study with permission	25
OTHER	Foster parents may choose approved electronics, music, etc.	50

Level 2 Privileges

Name:

PRIVILEGE	DESCRIPTION	POINT COST
BASICS	Use of telephone for 15 minutes daily, radio in your room. 9:30 P.M. bedtime	350
TV	TV after homework and/or chore are completed	100
LATER BEDTIME	10:00 P.M. bedtime 11:00 P.M. bedtime on non-school days and holidays with permission	100
ACTIVITY TIME	With <u>prior planning, permission and approval</u> , you may plan to go skating, swimming, to a movie, school activity, etc. If you are late or not where you are supposed to be, you will lose 1 point per minute.	½ point per minute
EXTRA PHONE TIME	One 20-minute call (not long distance).	25

BONDS	You can buy one bond per week. You need 12 bonds to move to Level III.	50 points
ALLOWANCE	\$10.00 per week. All purchases must have receipts and you must show your money to your foster parents. Money spent at school in pop / candy machines must have Team Lead approval.	200
OTHER	Foster parents will choose if applicable	50

Level 3 Privileges	
Name:	
PRIVILEGE	DESCRIPTION
BASICS	Use of telephone for 15 minutes daily, radio in your room. 9:30 P.M. bedtime
TV	TV after homework and/or chore are completed
LATER BEDTIME	10:00 P.M. bedtime 11:00 P.M. bedtime on non-school days and holidays with permission
ACTIVITY TIME	With <u>prior planning, permission and approval</u> , you may plan to go skating, swimming, to a movie, school activity, etc. If you are late or not where you are supposed to be, you will lose 1 point per minute.
EXTRA PHONE TIME	One 20-minute call (not long distance)
ALLOWANCE	\$15.00 per week when on level all week. \$7.50 if on Level 1 once in the week and no allowance if on Level 1 more than once in the week. All purchases must have receipts and you must show your money to your foster parents. Money spent at school in pop / candy machines must have Program Supervisor approval.

Determining Point Values

Learning to use the point system economy effectively may be difficult at first, but with coaching from the Team Leader, foster parents quickly catch on and learn how to get the most out of the system. The basic premise is that full point values are awarded for a satisfactory or an acceptable (but not necessarily exceptional) job and partial points are awarded for less than satisfactory behavior or completing only part of a job. Likewise, extra bonus points can be awarded when the youth acts in an especially positive way, handles a difficult situation well, or goes above and beyond the call of duty when completing a task.

For the point system economy to work, it must be both **realistic and balanced**. A good balance would be when:

- More points are given than withheld for behaviors of the same magnitude, and
- There is a discernable difference in point values according to the magnitude of the behaviors.

A common pitfall is to take away too many points for unsatisfactory behavior relative to the number of extra points given for positive behavior. For example, taking away 10 points for getting up a couple of minutes late wouldn't be in line with only giving 2 extra points for saying something nice to a family member. In most cases, both would be relatively minor behaviors; a better balance would be achieved by using similar point values. It may be helpful for foster parents to consider the following questions when they are learning to assign point values.

- How difficult is this task or behavior for this particular youth? Has the youth demonstrated this skill before?
- How important is it for this youth to succeed with this particular behavior?
- Does the youth have a good chance of being successful?
- Does the point value reflect the importance of this behavior?

Jake's foster parents give him feedback about his messy room. After hearing the feedback Jake said, "It's my room, I like it that way!" and walked to his room. When the foster parent goes over the points with Jake in the evening, she takes 5 points for backtalk and 5 points for attitude and maturity, and gives him 5 bonus points for going to his room quietly.

Giving points for his positive behavior sends the message that the foster parent will notice what he is doing well.

Sahalie has not been getting her school card signed regularly every day. We know she can complete this task; she is able to do this most days. This is important because it is an expectation of the program that she get her school card signed. It is an important piece of monitoring her success in school. She has a good chance of being successful. We may want to give her bonus points for 5 signed school cards to further motivate her to have her school card signed every day.

The answers to these questions may help foster parents determine appropriate point values. For example, if a particular youth has a consistent problem with behavior at school and losing points every day for it, on a day that the youth comes home with a satisfactory report from school, it would be a good idea to award some extra bonus points for that effort.

For many new foster parents it can take some time and coaching before they get the hang of noticing what is going well and giving points for appropriate behavior. They may have a natural tendency to focus on the problems and want to “fix” them. While it is important to work on problem behaviors, too much focus on problems presents little opportunity for youth to feel successful and develop prosocial skills. When the system is working well, youth feel successful even when they don't earn all of the possible points. For that to happen, foster parents need to become skilled at directing their attention to what is going well at the same time that they are using points to impact negative behavior. Ideally, youth should be able to lose 10 to 20 points a day without having their privileges seriously curtailed. In addition, sophisticated use of the behavior plan removes foster parents from the position of lecturing youth about their behavior—the points speak for themselves. The points allow foster parents to talk to youth about what they do well, and to use the points to deal with problem behavior.

“The Art of Giving and Taking Points” (below) can be given to the foster parents as a guide.

The Art of Giving and Taking Points

You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.

Rationale for the Points:

Most of the time, points should be taken away at the time of the misbehavior. Foster parents should communicate the point loss in a neutral and even compassionate way. They should have the attitude that everyone makes mistakes from time to time and the youth should expect to lose a few points now and then. If a youth swears or talks back, for example, the foster parents should very calmly and matter-of-factly state that a couple of points will be deducted. No other discussion needs to take place. The youth may want an explanation or try to negotiate or argue about the point loss, but foster parents should learn to avoid engaging in discussions or explanations about why it is necessary to deduct points. It is unlikely that the youth's behavior is going to be impacted by lectures or discussions, and there is potential for the conversation to become emotional. The goal is to provide information to the youth about his day and his behavior. Foster parents can both give points for positive behaviors and take points for negative behaviors. They should focus more on what the youth is doing well, and at the same time give feedback on areas to improve. Foster parents should take points in a way that is matter of fact.

Learning to give and take points effectively is not simple. In addition to striking a balance with the values of points, foster parents need to become skilled in the manner in which they administer the system. Once foster parents become skilled at actually noticing appropriate behavior and awarding points accordingly, the art of giving extra points is relatively straightforward and youth feel successful when their accomplishments are acknowledged. Learning to take away points in an effective manner can be more complicated.

Youth can be told that if they think the consequence is unfair, it can be discussed at another time. Foster parents should be coached to avoid becoming distracted by their youth's attempts to engage them in discussion when taking points away. These skills should be role-played with the foster parents.

For the system to be effective, foster parents are expected to maintain control over their own emotions and respond to the youth's behavior in a systematic manner. This can be very difficult for some parents, and may require extensive coaching from the Team Lead. Some common obstacles for parents are described below.

For parents who tend to avoid conflict, their natural reaction to minor misbehavior is to overlook it.

- By overlooking minor behaviors, it becomes likely the youth will behave that way again and again. At some point, foster parents may become overly annoyed at these repeated behaviors and react inconsistently by taking away too many points. Foster parents need to be taught to avoid their natural tendency to overlook the little things and take points away for minor infractions. It is highly

effective to take a few points for behaviors when they are small in order to prevent these behaviors from becoming more serious.

Some parents are very invested in their youth's success to the point where they personalize the youth's misbehavior. They may think, "How could he do this to me?"

- Foster parents who take the youth's failures personally will need help from other foster parents and the Team Leader to see things more objectively. Youth with behavioral and mental health problems are likely to exhibit behavior problems regardless of the relationships they have established with caring adults.

When parents are irritable it may be tempting and even more satisfying to yell or lecture about a problem instead of calmly taking points away.

- Yelling or lecturing is likely to provoke the same angry response from the youth and has the potential to escalate the situation and set the youth back in terms of using appropriate social skills to solve problems. Taking points for behaviors when they are small goes a long way in preventing foster parents from becoming irritated over repeated incidences of minor problem behavior.

Pitfalls such as these will throw the behavior plan off balance and interfere with effectiveness. During the initial training and ongoing support of foster parents, considerable attention should be paid to enhancing their skill level in this area.

The Daily Review

Each evening, the foster parent and youth should spend 5 to 10 minutes reviewing the point card for the day. This typically occurs after dinner and about an hour before bedtime. The focus of this brief review should be to provide encouragement either by focusing on positive aspects of the youth's day, or by strategizing ways to avoid losing points the next day.



A good way for foster parents to conceptualize this review is as a "sandwich." Start by noticing something that went well that day, quickly note what needs to improve, and end with more encouragement.

Foster parents will also need to be coached about how this review can be conducted without discussing the fairness, logic, or accuracy of the points as they are recorded. Youth should decide what privileges to buy with the points they've earned. It can be difficult with a family's busy schedule to make time each evening for this review. It is important that the review happens each evening and not be put off until morning. If the youth has had a bad day, reviewing it in the morning at the start of a new day is discouraging. It is better to wrap things up each evening and start each day fresh.

Emily is on Level 1

Foster Parent: *"Emily, let's spend a few minutes going over your points for the day."*

Emily: *"OK."*

Foster Parent: *"You did a great job of getting up on time and getting everything done, and I gave you bonus points because I know getting up on time is hard for you. You lost some points for overdue homework, and did a great job with your chore and helping with dinner. You earned 134 points. Tell me what privileges you would like to buy for tomorrow."*

The Feedback Sandwich

Positive comments about their day:
You had a perfect school card.

Feedback about something they can work to improve:
It's important that you are up on time, you lost 2 points for that today.

Encouragement and praise for positive behavior:
You were helpful with dinner and did your chore without being asked, keep up the good work!



Following this section are examples of the cards used to tally up the day's points for Emily. In the left hand column is the number of points that she earned for satisfactory completion of the task. To the right of the list of behaviors foster parents indicate how many extra points they are giving or how many points they are taking away and write the adjusted total in the far right column. Foster parents should make a note about what they are giving extra points for or why they are taking points away. This will help the rest of the treatment team customize the treatment plan.

Daily Tracking Level 1 Points & Privileges

Name:

Date:

S M T W T H F S

Privilege	Point Cost	Points Used
BASICS	50	
LATER BEDTIME	50	
TV	25	
OTHER	50	
Total points earned today		
Total cost of privileges for tomorrow		-
Banked points		

Weekly Tracking Level 2 Points & Privileges

Name:

Week of:

Date		On L2 Points total	
Total points on Level 2			
Point Cost	Privilege	Points Used	
350	Basics		
100	TV		
100	Later Bedtime		
½ pt per min	Activity Time		
25	Extra Phone Time		
50	Bond		
50	Other		
200	Allowance		
Total L2 points			
Total cost of privileges		-	
Any leftover points			

Weekly Tracking Level 3 Points & Privileges

Name:

Today's Date:

Day of Week	Date	Total Points	Level
S M T W T H F S			
S M T W T H F S			
S M T W T H F S			
S M T W T H F S			
S M T W T H F S			
S M T W T H F S			
S M T W T H F S			
This week's allowance earned			\$

Level Drop

Youth on Levels 2 and 3 can be dropped to Level 1 for the *following* day when their points drop below 100 points on Level 2, or 120 on Level 3, for any given day.

On the Level 1 day:

- The youth is allowed only Level 1 basics.
- The youth has to earn at least 100 points to be reinstated to Level 2 or 120 points to be reinstated to Level 3 the following day.
- The points earned during Level 1 *do not* count toward the week's total for buying privileges that next week.

Below is an example of how a demotion would work for a youth on Level 2.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Total
Points earned	100	100	100	50	100	100	100	<i>550</i>
Level	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	

On Thursday the youth was on Level 1. Because Thursday's points were earned while the youth was on Level 1, these cannot be added into the total the youth uses to buy Level 2 privileges. Therefore, the total points earned for the week equal 550.

Non-School Day Level 1

Name: _____

Date: _____

S M T W T H F S

POINTS	THINGS TO DO TO EARN POINTS	BONUS	TAKEN	TOTAL
10	BED ON TIME (last night)			
10	UP ON TIME			
10	READY IN MORNING			
10	MORNING CLEANUP			
20	READ AND STUDY			
10	CHORE			
15 A.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
15 P.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
2-10	VOLUNTEERING			
5-10	EXTRA CHORE			

TOTAL: _____

COMMENTS:

School Day Level 2

Name: _____

Date: _____

S M T W T H F S

POINTS	THINGS TO DO TO EARN POINTS	BONUS	TAKEN	TOTAL
10	BED ON TIME (last night)			
10	UP ON TIME			
10	READY IN MORNING			
10	MORNING CLEANUP			
5	GO TO SCHOOL			
1/Class	CARRY SCHOOL CARD			
2/Class	BEHAVIOR IN CLASS			
10	SCHOOL CARD BONUS			
20	READ AND STUDY			
10	CHORE			
15 A.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
15 P.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
2-10	VOLUNTEERING			
5-50	EXTRA CHORE			

TOTAL: _____

COMMENTS:

Non-School Day Level 2

Name: _____

Date: _____

S M T W T H F S

POINTS	THINGS TO DO TO EARN POINTS	BONUS	TAKEN	TOTAL
10	BED ON TIME (last night)			
10	UP ON TIME			
10	READY IN MORNING			
10	MORNING CLEANUP			
20	READ AND STUDY			
10	CHORE			
15 A.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
15 P.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
2-10	VOLUNTEERING			
5-50	EXTRA CHORE			

TOTAL: _____

COMMENTS:

School Day Level 3

Name: _____

Date: _____

S M T W T H F S

POINTS	THINGS TO DO TO EARN POINTS	BONUS	TAKEN	TOTAL
10	BED ON TIME (last night)			
10	UP ON TIME			
10	READY IN MORNING			
10	MORNING CLEANUP			
5	GO TO SCHOOL			
1/Class	CARRY SCHOOL CARD			
2/Class	BEHAVIOR IN CLASS			
10	SCHOOL CARD BONUS			
20	READ AND STUDY			
10	CHORE			
15 A.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
15 P.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
2-10	VOLUNTEERING			
5-50	EXTRA CHORE			

TOTAL: _____

COMMENTS:

Non-School Day Level 3

Name: _____

Date: _____

S M T W T H F S

POINTS	THINGS TO DO TO EARN POINTS	BONUS	TAKEN	TOTAL
10	BED ON TIME (last night)			
10	UP ON TIME			
10	READY IN MORNING			
10	MORNING CLEANUP			
20	READ AND STUDY			
10	CHORE			
15 A.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
15 P.M.	ATTITUDE/MATURITY			
2-10	VOLUNTEERING			
5-50	EXTRA CHORE			

TOTAL: _____

COMMENTS:

Using Additional Incentives

To increase the effectiveness of the youth's TFCO program, sometimes additional methods of reinforcement are used. In these instances a youth may be working hard to reach particular treatment goals and would benefit from something to boost motivation.

When you are adding an incentive to a TFCO youth's behavior plan, think SMART.

S mall Steps	What are the steps involved?
M easurable	What does it look like when it is done?
A chievable	Is the youth able to do it? Is it realistic?
R eward	What reward will be motivating?
T ime	When does it need to be done?

Examples of Good Incentive Plans

Youth 1:

\$1 per day for every day a youth returns the school card.

Youth 2:

A pair of movie tickets when the youth completes 4 job applications.

Youth 3:

A new pair of jeans after 5 non-consecutive days of getting up on time.

Youth 4:

3 new songs for their MP3 player after coming home on time 3 non-consecutive days.

Examples of Incentives in TFCO

Time with Adult

- Playing 15 minute game with foster parent
- Having a story read
- Taking a walk
- Going to a movie
- Going out for ice cream
- Going to park
- Baking or cooking with the adult
- Going shopping
- Make a craft project together

Other privileges

- Choosing a special TV program
- Having shared bedroom to self for one hour a day
- Having the bathroom first in the morning (for an amount of time)
- Permission to go to special event (party, dance)
- Choosing from prize bag
- Going swimming
- Having a friend come over
- Craft project
- Look at a book in bed before lights out
- Ride bike
- Push the grocery cart
- Go fishing or hiking
- Go to friend's house to play
- Lottery: kids earn tickets that can be used for larger prizes
- Scavenger hunt

IN THE HOME

- TV game
- Choosing a special TV program
- Taking bottles back to store and keeping or splitting the refund
- Using mom's makeup
- Using parent's tool

COSTS MONEY

- Rent/download a video
- Video game
- Grab bag of small items all wrapped up

Taken out to a movie
Get a comic book
Parents and child out for ice cream
Go swimming or go to wave pool
Earn articles of clothing for self
Shopping with foster parent
Earn money (allowance)
Read nature books
Go ice-skating or roller-skating

FOOD

Dried fruit as a snack
Making popcorn in the evening
Choosing dinner one night
Getting to take special lunch to school
Homemade cookies, cake, pie, etc.
Going out for pizza with family
Gum
Choosing dessert for evening meal
Baking or helping cook meal with foster parents

Using the Behavior Plan During Unusual Circumstances

There will be times when the youth's routines are disrupted to the point where it is not possible to earn points in all categories listed on the chart. For example, if the youth was sick in bed, it wouldn't be reasonable to expect work chores or volunteering for extra tasks to be done, and consequently no points would be earned for those items. It also isn't reasonable to demote the youth because of a low-point day. At times like this, foster parents should be encouraged to find another way for the youth to earn the minimum number of points. Perhaps, foster parents could award extra points for being such a good patient, or for taking medication on schedule, etc.

Another example of a schedule change that impacts the youth's ability to earn points as listed on his chart would be when the family is on an outing or vacation. The youth would not have an opportunity to earn the minimum number of points in the usual way, so foster parents should offer an alternative. Perhaps the youth could earn points that day for helping to set up for camping, or for pushing a younger cousin on the swing, or any number of prosocial behaviors. The point is to make sure that the youth is not penalized in the behavior plan during times when there are fewer opportunities to meet the daily expectations. Foster parents can either pre-arrange a different set of expectations for the day or watch for occasions to award points throughout the day. Foster parents should also watch for opportunities to use the schedules from the standard point system to create structure in these unusual circumstances (e.g., read and study might still earn the youth points even on a long car ride).

Using the School Cards

The TFCO program strives to impact youth behavior in all social settings, so the behavior plan is extended into the school setting. On the daily point sheet are items related to the youth's day at school and use of the school card. An example of the school card is presented at the end of this section. Using the school card is considered a rule and is not negotiable. It can be difficult to implement an individualized behavior management system such as this in school settings. It does require some additional attention on the part of the teachers, but there are a number of steps that can be taken to minimize the additional burden and facilitate a smooth daily operation.

Before attending school the first day, the youth should be thoroughly briefed on the procedure for giving the school card to the teachers. It is a good idea to have the foster parents walk through the steps with the youth and role-play if necessary.

- To save the teacher time, the student should have the assignment written on the card before presenting the card to the teacher.
- At the end of the class period, present the card to the teacher.
- Wait for the teacher to check and complete the card.
- Thank the teacher and move on to the next class.

At first, it may be embarrassing for youth to ask teachers to fill out the school card. Foster parents should acknowledge that it is difficult to do this every day and remind youth that they earn points for their efforts. They should be empathetic but not waver on the use of the school card. In the beginning, it is a good idea for foster parents to contact teachers to see if there are problems with the way the card is being used. If necessary, youth can be referred to their skills coaches for practice in responding to peer questions.

It is helpful to explain to the teacher why the information is being collected and how it is being used (i.e., on the point chart every day). Teachers sometimes have unrealistic expectations and doubt the usefulness of the school card system. For example, a student may have had severe and long-standing school problems in one or more major areas (i.e., attendance, behavior, academic achievement). Immediate goals for this student may be to get the youth to attend class regularly, be there on time, and behave reasonably well. Once these goals are realized, the focus can shift to academic achievement. A teacher who has no awareness of the severity of a youth's past problems may have much higher expectations and become discouraged by not seeing more progress. Within appropriate confidentiality limits, the Team Lead may need to share some specific information about a youth's problems in order to motivate a teacher to use the system. Initially, it may be difficult to get teachers to cooperate with filling out the card. If this is a problem, the Team Lead should contact the teacher early on and not leave it to the youth and the teacher to resolve. Obviously, if reports of a problem are coming solely from youth, teachers should be approached cautiously as they may not be aware of a problem with the school card. Prior to the youth using the school card, the Team Lead and/or the foster parent has worked with the school to explain the use of the school card.

School cards should be monitored regularly for falsified information. This is easily done by contacting the counselor or a few teachers to verify information. Foster parents should explain to youth that they are required by the program to check on the school card. Knowing that someone will be checking may help youth resist the temptation to forge signatures or otherwise provide false information. Youth should lose points for not getting all of the required signatures, and foster parents should contact the school to see if youth have missed all or part of the class. The youth should not receive *any* points for the 'behavior in class' item on the chart unless the teacher has circled **good** on the school card. The Team Lead should implement significant consequences for falsifying information and for non-attendance or disruptive behavior (i.e., work chores, demotion to a lower level, or restriction of privileges), and likewise, significant privileges or rewards should be given for exceptional progress.

SCHOOL CARD						
Class	Today's Assignment	Assignment Turned In	*Overdue Homework	Tardy	Behavior Good/Poor	Initial
1.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	
2.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	
3.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	
4.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	
5.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	
6.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	
7.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	
8.		Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Good/Poor	

***Please identify overdue homework assignments on the back of this form.**

Work Card

Name:	Date:	
Please circle one response per line		
Was she/he on time?	Yes	No
Did she/he respond to directions?	Yes	No
Did she/he complete assigned tasks?	Yes	No
Did she/he get along with co-workers?	Yes	No
General work attitude:	Good	Poor
Supervisor Signature _____		

Volunteer Card

Name:	Date:	
Please circle one response per line		
Was she/he on time?	Yes	No
Did she/he respond to directions?	Yes	No
Did she/he complete assigned tasks?	Yes	No
Did she/he get along with co-workers?	Yes	No
General work attitude:	Good	Poor
Supervisor Signature _____		

Camp Card

Name:

Date:

Please circle one response per line

Was she/he on time?

Yes

No

Did she/he respond to directions?

Yes

No

Was she/he on task?

Yes

No

Was she/he courteous/respectful?

Yes

No

Was she/he responsible?

Yes

No

General attitude:

Good

Poor

Staff Signature _____

