



ECHO Idaho: Counseling Techniques for Substance Use Disorder CASE RECOMMENDATION FORM

Presenter Credential: LCSW

Summary: This adolescent male resides in a secure juvenile treatment facility after a history of instability, repeated placements, and exposure to significant community violence, gang-involved family systems, and intergenerational incarceration. He presents with complex trauma, PTSD symptoms, emotional and behavioral dysregulation, and limited substance experimentation largely rooted in environmental exposure. While medically stable with no known conditions, he shows minimal intrinsic motivation for counseling and prioritizes maintaining peer status, often using his strong natural leadership skills in negative ways within the program's Positive Peer Culture (PPC) model. His strengths include influence among peers and resilience shaped by survival in high-risk environments, though these traits currently reinforce maladaptive norms tied to gang culture. Treatment goals focus on fostering engagement, addressing trauma, and redirecting leadership toward pro-social behaviors, while his social context, lack of family stability, and cultural normalization of gang activity pose significant barriers. Key questions include effective strategies for redirecting negative leadership, engaging youth resistant to counseling, supporting disengagement from gang-related identities, and maintaining group safety and treatment integrity within PPC in the face of manipulation and resistance.

Recommendations:

1. Strengthen Prosocial Engagement in PPC (Positive Peer Culture)

- Continue avoiding leveling systems, your current equal-status peer structure aligns well with PPC principles and supports mutual accountability.
- Encourage structured reflection by asking youth to explore *what function* their rule-breaking or criminal behavior has served in the past. Helping them identify the protective or adaptive purpose of these behaviors opens the door to discussing prosocial alternatives.
- Use the PPC framework to connect prosocial actions with real, tangible benefits (e.g., safety, trust, influence, stability). Help the youth articulate how prosocial leadership could support the values they already hold.

2. Address Gang-Related Identity, Loyalty, and Family Norms

- Directly explore themes of loyalty, respect, and family expectations, core values in gang-involved families, and help youth consider how these values could be honored in non-destructive ways.
- Normalize conversations about the "glorification" of gang life and introduce alternative narratives through guest speakers who are formerly gang-involved. These stories can create moments of cognitive dissonance and real impact.

3. Enhance Group Culture and Safety

- Regularly reinforce group norms, at the start of programming and each time new members enter, to maintain a consistent culture and prevent manipulation of the PPC model.
- Maintain a predictable structure for how norms are discussed, revisited, and repaired when broken. This consistency is especially important for youth with trauma histories.

4. Expand Prosocial Opportunities Beyond PPC

- Connect youth to age-appropriate recovery or resiliency groups where they can experience positive belonging outside of a gang-influenced peer culture.
- Provide examples of relatable young adults who have transitioned away from harmful environments, reinforcing that identity change is possible and respected.

Consider presenting follow-up for this patient case or any other patient cases at a future ECHO Clinic session.

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