



Frequently Asked Questions – Check-In, Check-Out

This document provides 15 common questions and responses regarding Check-On, Check-Out implementation.

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FAQ LIST

1. What if a student does not check in in the morning?
2. What if a student does not check out in the afternoon?
3. How do students check out and still get to the bus on time?
4. What if a student is consistently not checking in or checking out?
5. What if several students are not checking in and checking out?
6. What if students who do not need CICO want to be on it in order to earn reinforcers and receive adult attention?
7. Since CICO is an intervention for students at risk, should students already identified as having a disability be included in the intervention?
8. How many students can one CICO Coordinator support? Can there be more than one CICO Coordinator?
9. What if the student loses his or her Daily Progress Report?
10. What happens when a student gets a discipline referral in an unstructured setting and it is not reflected on the Daily Progress Report?
11. How do check-in and check-out occur with multiple students? How does each student get one-on-one attention?
12. What if staff are not implementing CICO correctly?
13. How do we know if teachers are giving constructive feedback at appropriate times?
14. What if parents or caregivers are not following through or use CICO as a punitive system?
15. What if a student is consistently participating in CICO and his or her behavior gets worse?



RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What if a student does not check in in the morning?

One of the first questions schools ask is what to do if students are not checking in on a regular basis. Part of the duties of the CICO coordinator will be to determine if students on CICO are absent or have merely forgotten to check in in the morning. If a student has simply forgotten to check in, the CICO coordinator delivers the DPR to the student and prompts him or her to try to remember to check in the next day. Although the CICO coordinator should not make a habit of delivering DPRs to students, if a student forgets to get the form, he or she should not miss out on opportunities for feedback and to meet his or her daily point goal. After all, this is a system to increase positive feedback and success of students at risk for severe problem behavior. Other suggestions for students who do not check in include re-teaching the check in process (e.g. where to check in, what time to check in) and/or pairing the student with a “check-in buddy” who will help him or her remember to check in.

2. What if a student does not check out in the afternoon?

To begin with, the student receives a “0” if he or she does not check out. Recording multiple zeros into the database allows team members to identify when check out is a problem. If students are allowed to bring their DPR back the next school day and receive points without having checked out the previous day, it will be unclear to the behavior team which students are checking out on a regular basis versus students who are not.

In terms of troubleshooting check-out, one of the first steps should be to ask the student why he or she is not checking out. Sometimes it is because he or she forgets and other times it is because there are bus/transportation issues. Many of these issues can be simply resolved by reminding the student that check-out is a necessary part of participation. Teachers can also play a role in reminding students to check out by prompting them toward the end of the school day (e.g., “Kiran, remember to check out when the bell rings.”). This prompting from teachers should be faded over time so that students can become independent in participating in CICO. For younger students, the prompting may need to occur for a longer period of time. We have found that placing sticky notes on the student’s desk is another good way to prompt check-out.

3. How do students check out and still get to the bus on time?

In some schools, we have found that check-out is not possible after school due to bussing or other transportation issues (e.g., after-school care transportation). In these instances, when designing CICO to fit your school, the last 10 to 15 minutes of the



school day must be available to students in CICO for check-out. You will need to get agreement from all the staff for this type of scheduling change. In addition, we have found that staff are concerned about students with behavior problems roaming the halls prior to the end of the school day. Students on CICO can be given passes to leave class that are easily recognizable (e.g., a brightly colored, laminated pass that can be reused each day) by other staff who may encounter them in the hallways. Some elementary school settings have broken check-out into two short time periods at the end of the school day. The upper elementary (e.g., grades 3-6) students check out from 3:10 p.m. to 3:20 p.m., while the lower elementary (e.g., grades K-2) students check out from 3:20 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. This has led to fewer students roaming the halls before the end of the school day.

4. What if a student is consistently not checking in or checking out?

The CICO coordinator should sit down with the student and determine what barriers are preventing him or her from checking in or out. For example, one student we worked with was not checking out after school because he would miss his bus if he did. To resolve this issue the CICO coordinator spoke with this sixth-period teacher, and she agreed that the student could leave 5 minutes early from class to check out at the end of the day.

Some students may say, “I forgot to check in or check out.” There are several solutions that can be tried. Enlist the help of the student’s friends or siblings to remind him or her to check in and check out. Simple statements such as, “Hey, can you do me a favor? Can you help your buddy, Sean, remember to check in in the mornings?” by the CICO coordinator often work. It is a good idea to reinforce the buddy you have enlisted for helping the student on CICO. Another suggestion is to go to the student’s last class and escort him or her to check-out for several days in a week to provide the student with practice with this behavior. Remember, some of the students are on CICO due to poor organization skills and may need extra practice learning a new routine.

Some students may not check out because they have had a bad day and have not met their daily point goal. In these cases, there should be an incentive for checking out, even if the student has not met his or her goal. For example, the raffle system mentioned earlier, in which students received a CICO raffle ticket just for checking in or checking out, is effective. The raffle can be held once a week and only students on CICO were eligible. The more times a student checked in and checked out, the more tickets he or she had, thus, the more chances to win. Raffle prizes were small and inexpensive, consisting mainly of small treats, pencils, or small toys.

When troubleshooting why student are not consistently checking in and out, it is important to determine whether the student has “bought in” to the program and is voluntarily participating. There have been times when a parent wants the student on



CICO, but the student resists by not following through with the program requirements. Remember this is a voluntary, positive support system. Efforts should be made to find reinforcers that are meaningful for students who have not bought into the program. One student we worked with was having difficulty meeting the requirements of CICO, but was interested in earning a baseball hat, rather than receiving daily rewards. An individual contract was developed for this student so that after a certain number of weeks of meeting his goal, he would be able to earn the hat. There will be times when students refuse to participate no matter what adaptations are made; for these students more individualized, intensive assessment and intervention are likely necessary.

The location of where students check in and check out is critical. It needs to be a place students can access easily, as well as one that is separated from the loud disruption of common areas such as hallways and cafeterias. In some schools where we have seen inconsistency in students checking in and out, either the location was inconvenient (i.e. not centrally located) or there had not been a permanent place set up for the process. For example, one of the schools we worked in chose the library as a check-in/check-out location. This location usually worked well, but was not available at times when parent groups met in the library after school, which disrupted the check-out process.

Although the check-in/check-out location needs to be in a quiet area, it does help if it is located near a common area so that the CICO coordinator can scan the area to look for students who have not checked in. It is important to build independence in the process of participating in CICO, but it also helps to provide prompts to students who may need them. In middle schools, in particular, students are heavily invested in peer interaction. It may take some prompting to help break them away from their peers to check in.

5. What if several students are not checking in and checking out?

If several students are not checking in and out, the implementation of the whole intervention needs to be examined. One question that should be answered is, “Has the school given CICO a high profile?” Elsewhere in this book, we describe how to give CICO a high profile and ensure that it is a positive intervention. Without that boost, CICO may be seen as just another educational innovation that will pass with time. In one of the schools we worked with, the staff were not well trained on how to implement the intervention. There was disagreement as to which students should be placed on CICO, and issues were raised about existing programs that interfered or overlapped with CICO. In that school, there were some staff who were “sabotaging” the intervention. That is, since the staff members were not in agreement with how CICO should be implemented and with whom, they did not put much effort into the intervention and were not providing students with regular feedback. Staff commitment prior to implementation is critical to achieving success with this system of support.



Another question to consider is, “Is the CICO coordinator a person whom students enjoy and look forward to interacting with?” In some of the schools in which we have worked, the CICO coordinator is chosen based on time availability, rather than on his or her personality “fit” with the students. Although educators often go into the business of working in schools in part because they enjoy working with children, there are usually certain teachers or paraprofessionals that the students really resonate with, enjoy being around, and for whom they will work hard. In one of the middle schools we worked in, the CICO coordinator had an art of joking with students to improve their moods or reduce tension. These students could not wait to interact with her on a daily basis, and she was often sought out for problem solving with other staff around student issues.

In another school we worked in, the CICO coordinator was a paraprofessional who was placed in the position out of default; she was available before and after school. Although she was very effective in supporting teachers, she did not really want the job as CICO coordinator, and this came through in her interactions with students. She was often curt with them, more negative than positive, and had a hard time managing the numbers of students who were checking in and out daily. She would complain in front of students that she did not like CICO. It is easy to see why, over time, students would not want to engage in the CICO intervention in this situation.

6. What if students who do not need CICO want to be on it in order to earn reinforcers and receive adult attention?

Schools across the country have asked this questions. We see this trend in elementary schools more often than in middle or high school settings. Younger students tend to seek out adult attention more than older students. As kids get older, peer attention becomes more important than adult attention.

In terms of solving this issue, several things can be done during the setup of CICO to reduce the likelihood that it will be comes a problem. We often hear, from students and staff, that it is not “fair” for students with behavior problems to receive extra attention and reinforcement. First, staff members need to understand and believe that being “fair” does not mean doing the same thing with each student, but rather giving each student what he or she needs to be successful.

Often times, staff members have a harder time accepting the extra attention received by CICO students than do non-CICO students. Students are used to seeing other students pulled out for services (e.g., special education services, speech and language therapy, counseling) and getting additional attention/instruction for their identified needs. CICO is similar to these supplementary services in that we are providing services to students who need them, rather than providing a supplementary intervention to all students.



It is important to assess whether or not your schoolwide Tier 1 reinforcement system is working well and if students who are engaging in appropriate behavior the majority of the time are getting acknowledged consistently for their behavior. Some of the schools we work in keep track of the number of positives (i.e., tokens or tickets) that are given out by school personnel as a way to ensure that all students in the school are receiving reinforcement.

The next step is to ensure that check-in and check-out occurs in a nonpublic location so that the extra attention and reinforcement are not as salient to other students. We have found that if other students, particularly younger students, see the check-in and check-out process they are more likely to want to be involved. Students who are on CICO should be taught not to flaunt and antagonize other children with the reinforcers that they have earned. For example, if students earn a tangible reinforcer, they should be taught to put it in their backpacks and not take it out until they are away from the other students in the school.

Another way to reduce the desire for students to be on the intervention is to limit the distribution of reinforcers that are tangible items, such as candy, food, and toys. The goal of the intervention is for students to receive more feedback and reinforcement for appropriate behavior. This reinforcement does not need to be in the form of something tangible. Having students earn activities and time with preferred adults or other peers will also help reduce the desire by other students to be on the intervention. Finally, if certain students are heavily invested in being on CICO, perhaps they can serve as helpers during check-in and check-out. That way, they can receive the extra adult attention, but also not have to engage in the full intervention.

7. Since CICO is an intervention for students at risk, should students already identified as having a disability be included in the intervention?

Yes, if they are appropriate candidates for CICO. The CICO intervention is designed to support students who are at risk, but are not currently engaging in severe problem behavior. Many students who have learning or communication disabilities may just be beginning to engage in problem behavior. These students are perfect candidates for CICO, as the goal is to prevent students from entering a higher risk group. The main issue when assessing the appropriateness of students with disabilities for CICO is to gather a quick assessment of the function of the student's problem behavior. Many students with learning disabilities may be acting out because the work is too difficult, so it is important to determine if the material is being taught at the student's instructional level.

Students with emotional and behavior disabilities likely require more intensive intervention than CICO can provide. These students have individualized IEP goals for behavior. Since CICO is administered similarly across students, it does not support the



individualized requirement of the IEP. Students with more severe disabilities (e.g. serious cognitive delays) can benefit from the program, but may need additional support to successfully participate on CICO. For more information about adapting CICO for students with severe disabilities, see Hawken and O'Neill (2006).

8. How many students can one CICO Coordinator support? Can there be more than one CICO Coordinator?

Our experience tells us that for elementary school students, one CICO coordinator can support 15 to 20 students at a time. For middle and high school settings, up to 30 students can be supported by one CICO coordinator. The number of students that can be supported depends *greatly* on the skills of the CICO coordinator to manage groups of students. Some CICO coordinators become frazzled with too many students in a room, whereas others are comfortable check in in multiple students at a time. What has happened frequently in our schools is that students will need to be taught the check-in/check-out process, as well as what to do when they are waiting to check in and out. One school we worked in had a line of tape on the floor to indicate where students were supposed to stand while waiting to check in or out.

An additional factor in determining how many students can be supported depends on whether check-in and check-out can occur at staggered times. For example, if the school allows check-in 20 to 30 minutes prior to school, this allows students to stagger the check-in process. If check-in is only 10 minutes prior to school, it will be more difficult to have as many students on the program.

We are often asked, “What if we have more than 30 students who need CICO?” There are several answers to this question. First of all, CICO should be only one type of Tier 2 intervention that is implemented in your school. There should be a menu of other Tier 2 interventions to support students who are at risk. If, however, the staff feel that more students can benefit from the intervention, it would be wise to have more than one CICO coordinator.

We have also seen the need for more than one CICO coordinator if a school building is rather large or houses multiple floors. Some schools will have a CICO coordinator per wing of the school or per floor. We have also been asked whether one person can do check-in, and a second person can lead check-out. As long as the assigned person is consistent across days (e.g., students check in with Ms. Singh every morning and check out with Mr. Myer every afternoon), this tends to work fine. Also, it is critical that these two CICO coordinators communicate regularly about how the students are doing, and predetermine who will complete tasks, such as entering data into the computer on a regular basis. It does not work if every day there are different people leading check-in/check-out, for example, if on Monday it is one staff member, on Tuesday a different



person, and so on. One goal of CICO is to build a positive connection with an adult. This is difficult to do if the adult is always changing from day to day.

9. What if the student loses his or her Daily Progress Report (DPR)?

One of the responsibilities for the student on CICO includes carrying the DPR from class to class, teacher to teacher, or, in the case of elementary school students, from setting to setting. We recommend teaching the students to get another DPR as soon as they realize they have lost it. That way, although they may have lost some points toward their goal by losing the DPR, they have not lost their points for the entire day. They can receive feedback on their new DPR and continue to receive positive feedback throughout the day. For younger students, some may need the DPR to be placed on a clipboard so that it is less likely to get lost during transitions. In some schools we have worked in, classroom teachers keep extra copies of the DPRs, in case a student loses one.

Students may also “lose” DPR cards if they find that being on CICO is not helpful or rewarding. For such students, troubleshoot ways to improve the program. Often this involves asking the student what types of rewards they are interested in working for. Some students may “lose” their DPR if they have had a bad day and are afraid to bring the DPR home to their parents. As sad as it maybe, there have been parents who punish students severely for having a “bad day” at school. In these situation, we have either encouraged the parents to use the program positively, or we have had students not take their cards home as part of the program. We cannot overemphasize that CICO needs to be a positive program, on the students enjoy participating in. If the student gets into even more trouble by being on CICO, he or she is going to be unlikely to participate.

10. What happens when a student gets a discipline referral in an unstructured setting and it is not reflected on the Daily Progress Report?

CICO targets student behavior in the classroom throughout the day. Often, however, students on CICO receive a referral on the playground, in the hallway, or in the lunchroom, and this is not reflected on the DPR. On a few occasions, students get into a fight at recess, but do well enough in the classroom to earn enough points to get a reward at the end of the day. In such an instance, teachers become upset. They feel the student did not deserve to earn a reward because of the major infraction. Schools we have worked with have chosen different ways to address this issue. Some schools will deduct an automatic 20 points from the DPR for any discipline referral. This means that unless the student has had an otherwise perfect day, he or she is not likely to meet the daily point goal. Other schools do not want to institute a response cost (i.e., removal of points) for discipline referrals. Instead, these schools do not allow student to



earn a reward on a day a discipline referral is obtained or to exchange points for a larger reward. Whatever system of consequences is put into place, there must be good communication between school staff and the CICO coordinator when students receive discipline referrals, so that this situation is always handled consistently.

11. How do check-in and check-out occur with multiple students? How does each student get one-on-one attention?

The purpose of check-in and check-out is to provide a positive link to an adult other than the student's teacher. Check-in and check-out are not counseling sessions, but rather quick, positive, and brief interactions that provide students with prompts about things to work on. If a student is having a difficult time (e.g., just got into a fight or is crying), the CICO coordinator can ask the student to have a seat and spend more time with him or her after the check-in process is complete for all students. In some circumstance, it is more appropriate to ask for help from the counselor, school psychologist, or principal if the student is seriously distressed.

How well multiple students are handled at a time depends greatly on the skills of the CICO coordinator. All of the materials for the students and for the check-in and check-out process should be well organized and easily accessible to the CICO coordinator. In addition, many elements of check-in can be completed by the student. For example, students can write their own names on their Daily Progress Reports each morning. During check-out, students can calculate their own percentage of points. Students on CICO receive brief, one-on-one adult attention, not only in the morning and afternoon, but from their classroom teacher(s) throughout the day. Also, the CICO coordinator is typically a member of the school staff and therefore sees the students throughout the day to provide additional attention. For example, in some of our schools the CICO coordinator also supervises the lunchroom and chats with the students on CICO at that time as well.

12. What if staff are not implementing CICO correctly?

All staff should receive inservice training on the purpose of CICO, the positive nature of the program, and how to provide feedback to students. At times, teachers will write negative comments on the Daily Progress Report. Some teachers may misuse it as a tool to punish students by writing down all of the inappropriate behaviors in which students engaged. Some teachers may need individual training and follow-up to reemphasize the positive nature of the program and to provide prompts for positive feedback. Many schools we have worked with have a line for teacher feedback on the DPR that prompts them to write positive rather than negative comments. For example, one school we worked with had a schoolwide positive reinforcement system in which students would receive "Wow!" tickets for following schoolwide expectations. In this



school, the word “Wow!” was written next to the line for additional teacher feedback on the DPR. This provided teachers with a visual reminder to provide positive feedback and was consistent with the schoolwide acknowledgement system.

One way to keep the system positive and teachers invested in it is to make sure they are receiving feedback, at least quarterly, on how students on CICO are doing. One thing that happens frequently in schools is that the teacher helps in the data collection process (e.g., filling out discipline referral forms for students engaging in severe or dangerous behavior or completing the DPR), but never sees a summary of the data or how the data are used to make decisions in schools. Staff should be updated on how many students are served on CICO, how many are meeting their goals on a regular basis, and other outcomes data associated with CICO improvements (e.g., student improvements in grades and test scores).

A school may also want to reward staff on a frequent basis for their participation in CICO. For example, staff are required to initial DPRs for students participating in CICO and are asked to write positive comments when appropriate. Teacher names could be randomly selected from the student DPRs at monthly staff meetings to earn small prizes. Alternatively, prizes could be given for the most creative or encouraging comments written on student DPRs. Students on CICO could also nominate staff members whom they felt helped them be successful on CICO. These individuals could be recognized at a faculty meeting, assembly, or in the school newsletter.

13. How do we know if teachers are giving constructive feedback at appropriate times?

The only way to know if teachers are giving feedback *at appropriate times* is to observe teachers in their classrooms. In many schools we work in, principals observe instruction on a regular basis and are examining the teacher’s ability to manage behavior during this observation. It is during this time that principals will provide feedback to teachers on how CICO is being implemented. Since this type of observation is less likely to happen on a regular basis due to the time and costs associated, there are other ways to check the constructiveness of teacher feedback.

One important sign is that the teacher is circling each individual number on the DPR at each period, rather than circling all numbers at the end of the day. When we examine DPRs, it is easy to spot which teachers have waited until the end of the day to score the student. Alternatively, you can directly ask the student how often she is receiving feedback. In some of our schools, the CICO coordinator is a paraprofessional who works with students in multiple school settings. This person can do spot-check observations of how the intervention is being implemented. In fact, some schools have developed a system that involves a person observing the teacher during the first few days of CICO implementation to make sure feedback is occurring at regular intervals.



This is difficult for a paraprofessional to do but often a counselor or school psychologist can serve this function.

14. What if parents or caregivers are not following through or use CICO as a punitive system?

One of the strengths of CICO is the increased connection between home and school. Parents and caregivers are given daily feedback on how their child is doing in school. In some cases, we have had difficulty getting parents to follow through with reviewing the Daily Progress Report nightly and providing positive feedback to the student. In these cases, we may call or meet with the parents to emphasize the importance of their participation. Many of the schools that we work with have parents, school staff, and students sign a “CICO contract” agreeing to the responsibilities of participating in CICO. This provides parents with clear expectations for the program and can be referred to to remind parents of their responsibilities.

An interesting finding from our research is that the parent element of CICO tends to be the weakest element when examining fidelity of CICO implementation. Results from Hawken and Horner (2003) indicate that four of the critical features of CICO (i.e., students checking in, regular teacher feedback, students checking out, and daily DPR data used for decision making) were implemented with an average of 87% fidelity across students. Parental feedback (i.e., signature on the DPR) was provided during only 67% of the fidelity implementation checks. It should be noted, however, that many of the students were successful on CICO and were meeting daily point goals despite lack of parental participation. This finding has been replicated across several studies (e.g., Hawken, 2006; Hawken et al., 2007). Parental feedback is encouraged, but not necessary for student success on CICO. There are many students who could benefit from CICO who come from chaotic home environments. These students should be given equal opportunity to benefit from CICO even if their parents are unable to participate. (Note: Parents should always give permission for the student to participate in CICO).

There are unfortunate circumstances we have come across in schools in which students participating in CICO are punished for having “bad days.” A bad day may mean that the student has not met his or her goal for that day. Some parents may have implemented harsh punishments when the DPR was brought home and the student had not done as well as expected. School staff typically hear about this from the student, or the student stops wanting to participate in CICO. In these instances, schools have set up “surrogate parents” at the school who serve as the additional person who provides feedback, praise, and comments on the DPR. The surrogate parent could be a teacher (other than the student’s regular teacher), custodian, paraprofessional, or volunteer who is in the school daily, or some other adult who can commit 5 minutes each day to



reviewing the student's DPR and providing positive feedback. The issue of harsh punishment will need to be addressed with the parent and would probably be best handled by having either the counselor, principal, or vice principal meet with the parent.

15. What if a student is consistently participating in CICO and his or her behavior gets worse?

It is expected that within about 2 weeks, students' behavior should improve on CICO. For students who are receiving support to improve academic outcomes, it may take longer to notice changes in grades, but there should be an increase in organization, homework completion, and the like. Students whose behavior gets worse may need a more intensive, individualized intervention. Additional assessment data can be taken using functional behavioral assessment procedures. It is likely that classroom observations will be included when gathering information. Once information is gathered, it is used to develop an individualized behavior support plan. For more information on functional behavioral assessment and behavior support planning, refer to Crone and Horner (2003).

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