

# Understanding & Treating Selective Mutism (SM)

## Earning Rewards

**Contingency management systems** allow children to receive tangible rewards for their brave behavior and should be used alongside other positive social and verbal reinforcement methods (e.g., enthusiasm, labeled praise).

In order to effectively motivate and reinforce the child, it is important that there is **consistency**, **predictability**, and **follow through** within the system.

- **Consistency:** consistently monitor and label the behavior that will be rewarded
- **Predictability:** make sure it is clear to everyone involved how the child will earn rewards and in what way he or she will be rewarded
- **Follow through:** provide the reward as soon as possible and only if the reward is earned (i.e., when the desired behavior [or agreed upon approximation] is demonstrated)



**Bravery Charts** can be used to monitor and reinforce a child's brave, approach-oriented behavior. One way these charts are used includes a tiered-approach to contingency management, such that:

1. The child receives a check on his or her chart each time he or she demonstrates a brave behavior (e.g., audible speech)
2. Once the child has filled up the chart, he or she receives a token and the chart is wiped blank, so that the child can continue earning checks
3. At the end of the bravery practice (e.g., a session), the child trades in his or her tokens for a reward

*Note:* if the child does not seem reinforced by this system (e.g., checks and tokens), it is important to find an alternative that is positively reinforcing and motivating for the child (e.g., stickers, gummies/small candies)

**The child's contingency management system should evolve over time to reflect the child's progress**, such that as the child demonstrates success meeting his or her goals, rewards are subsequently earned for meeting increasingly challenging goals.