# Tip Sheet for Professionals

## DIFFERENTIAL REINFORCEMENT …

- Is a focused evidence-based practice for children and youth on the spectrum from 0-22 years old that can be implemented in multiple settings.
- Can be used by teachers and team members (paraprofessionals, speech pathologists, parents) in school, community, and home environments.



## WHY USE WITH LEARNERS ON THE SPECTRUM?

- Differential reinforcement decreases interfering behaviors
- Differential reinforcement reinforcers learners for not engaging in the interfering behavior (DRO), spending less time engaged in the interfering behavior (DRL), and/or spending time engaged in more appropriate behavior choices (DRA/DRI).

**TIPS:**

- Collect data on the interfering behavior and establish performance criteria.
- Choose a differential reinforcement procedure appropriate for both the learner and the behavior.
- Reinforce the learner consistently, following the schedule of reinforcement.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES:

The evidence-base for Differential Reinforcement supports its use to address the following outcomes, according to age range, in the table below:

| Age | Academic | Adaptive | Behavior | Communication | Joint Attention | Motor | Play | School Readiness | Social |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0-2** | | Yes | Yes | Yes | | | | | |
| **3-5** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **6-11** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **12-14** | | | Yes | Yes | | Yes | | Yes | Yes |
| **15-18** | | Yes | Yes | | | | | | |
| **19-22** | | | Yes | | | | | | |

## STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING:

1. **PLAN**
   - Conduct a functional behavior assessment
   - Select a differential reinforcement strategy: DRA, DRI, DRL, or DRO
   - If applicable, select an alternative behavior (DRA) or incompatible behavior (DRI)
   - Collect baseline data
   - Identify reinforcers
   - Determine schedule of reinforcement
   - Prepare materials

2. **USE**
   - Meet with the learner
   - Follow reinforcement schedule
   - Generalize selected DR strategy to other settings and times

3. **MONITOR**
   - Collect and analyze data on target behaviors
   - Adjust reinforcement schedule based on performance criteria
   - Determine next steps based on learner progress



**Differential Reinforcement**
**DR**

This sheet was designed as a supplemental resource to provide basic information about Differential Reinforcement for professionals working with learners on the spectrum.

For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/.