



## **The Effect of Various Reinforcement Schedules on the Persistence of Compliant**

**University of Iowa Children's Hospital  
Center for Disabilities and Development and Child Health Specialty Clinics**

**David Wacker, PhD  
Associate Director of Research**

### **Purpose of the Research**

Negative reinforcement (i.e., escape from or avoidance of instructions) has been identified as one of the leading variables responsible for the maintenance of destructive behavior exhibited by individuals with developmental disabilities. Several treatments have been developed to reduce destructive behavior maintained by negative reinforcement. These treatment programs are all similar in that the response-reinforcer relationship responsible for maintaining destructive behavior is disrupted (i.e., extinction is in place). However, they differ with respect to how reinforcers are programmed for delivery. Results of the study will have implication for how to best design treatments for destructive behaviors exhibited by individuals with developmental disabilities.

### **Study Procedures**

Escape extinction does not program reinforcement delivery. This study will compare noncontingent reinforcement, or noncontingent escape (NCE) specifies the delivery of breaks on a time-based schedule. The breaks are delivered regardless of the individuals behaviors

This study will compare whether an increase in compliance is more durable (i.e., persists longer) occurs when compliance is targeted by the intervention (DNRA-C) than compliance that occurs when compliance is not targeted by the intervention (i.e., NCE and DNRO).

Differential negative reinforcement of other behavior (DNRO) specifies the delivery of reinforcers contingent on pre-specified time periods in the absence of destructive behavior. And, differential negative reinforcement of alternative behavior/compliance (DNRA-C) specifies the delivery of reinforcers contingent on compliance with instruction in the absence of destructive behavior.