INTRODUCTION

Researchers in the field of drug abuse have found that individuals often turn to drugs in an effort to cope with the anxieties and tensions of daily life (Ploscowe, 1966). While this is not the only reason that people abuse drugs, many authors view anxiety as one of the critical factors present in initiating and maintaining a drug dependent pattern of behavior (Kraft, 1969; Sutker, 1971; Wikler, 1971).

This paper examines test anxiety, the particular form of anxiety which is a source of concern to many students (Suinn, 1969). The purpose is to illustrate how a behavioral approach can be practically and effectively applied to the treatment of test anxiety in a vocational rehabilitation program for drug abuse clients. A case history is presented as a model for counselors who want to develop the option of using a behavioral approach in cases where client progress toward meaningful vocational goals is blocked or severely limited by test anxiety.

Test anxiety had been treated effectively in college student populations with a variety of behavioral techniques. Among these are approaches which attempt to condition overt behavioral responses that are antagonistic to anxiety, such as the standard forms of progressive relaxation (Bedell, 1976), systematic desensitization (Freeling and Shemberg, 1970), and negative practice (O'Brien, 1976). At least four variations of progressive relaxation have appeared in the recent literature on test anxiety: cue controlled (Russell and...
Sipich, 1974), metronome conditioned (Delprato and Dedraker, 1976), applied (Chang-Liang and Denney, 1976), and in vivo (Deffenbacher, 1976). Three non-standard forms of systematic desensitization have also appeared recently: self-control (Spiegler, 1976), automated (Friedman and Dies, 1975), and group (Calef, 1974). Other behavioral techniques have been directed toward the modification of cognitive events. Among these are cognitive restructuring (Hahnloser, 1974; Meichenbaum, 1972), attentional training (Little and Jackson, 1974), covert positive reinforcement (Bajte1smit and Gershman, 1976), modeling with role-playing (Malee, Park and Watkins, 1976), rational-emotive therapy (Oliver, 1975), and thought-stopping with covert assertion (Rimm, 1973). These techniques represent part of the rapidly expanding armamentarium of behavioral approaches available for the treatment of test anxiety.

It is not within the scope of this paper to provide a summary of each of these techniques, since they are all described in the literature of behavior therapy. Instead, the authors will describe how appropriate interventions are selected from this repertoire and applied within a vocational setting to help test-anxious students. The work described in this paper occurred at the Vocational Opportunities Center (V.O.C.), of the West Philadelphia Community Mental Health Consortium's Drug Abuse Rehabilitation Program.

THE SETTING

The incidence of test anxiety among students enrolled in drug abuse vocational rehabilitation programs is currently unknown. In a recent survey of one-half the students currently attending V.O.C., the authors found that the mean score on the Suinn Test Anxiety Behavioral Scale was 131.55 (N=23; S.D.=39.68), suggesting that a level of test anxiety exists in this population which is comparable to the college freshman populations surveyed by Suinn (1969). This is not really surprising, since many students report that considerable anxiety had to be overcome just for them to enter a vocational training program after several years of drug abuse and the street life.

It is important for any vocational rehabilitation program to be designed around the needs of its clients. At V.O.C., it became apparent soon after the program began that one reason many clients had difficulty competing in the job market was because they lacked a high school diploma (Weiner, Schut and Miller, 1977). In response to this need, classes were started for individual tutoring, Adult Basic Education, and G.E.D. (General Equivalency Diploma) preparation. For some students, this type of academically oriented preparation has been sufficient to prepare them for the G.E.D. examination administered by the Board of Education. Others, however, report extremely high levels of anxiety when the actual test date approaches. They