

Youth Engagement in the Emergency Room

A Youth Created Tip Sheet for
Emergency Room Staff



Build Self-Worth: Relationship Collaboration

- Interact with youth/young adult on eye level (e.g., if they are sitting, you sit)
- Ask for preferred language and if interpreter is wanted
- When meeting youth/young adult, introduce yourself and explain your role
- Explain in detail every step of the process, and ask if youth/young adult has any questions
- Use person-first and strength-based language*
- Minimize making youth/young adult tell their story to multiple people especially if related to trauma
- Explain the why and details of what you are doing, especially if you are going to have physical contact (blood draws, blood pressure, etc.)
- Allow youth/young adult to take breaks from difficult conversations, if needed. (e.g., youth is escalated or shuts down, offer to come back to conversation later)
- Ask youth/young adult how staff can best support them if they become escalated during visit. Inform staff of this information
- Use language that can be easily understood by youth/young adult, avoid abbreviations or acronyms
- Keep a calm demeanor
- Train all staff in de-escalation skills to avoid restraint/seclusion, when possible
- Be aware of your internal biases
- Interact with respect when youth/young adult is in a distressed state

“When the Doctor asked me what I needed, I felt like what I had to say mattered.” (Young adult)

Restore Power: Youth/Young Adult Rights

- Give choices whenever possible
- Ask and use preferred names and pronouns
- Ask youth/young adult if they have preferred gender of provider and honor, if possible
- Honor requests to change nurse/doctor/etc., if possible

- Ask if youth/young adult has any cultural or religious preferences regarding their care
- Ask if youth/young adult would like to have support people of choice in the room
- Offer basic needs (food, beverages, bathroom, blankets)
- If a strip search is necessary allow person to choose gender of assisting staff and give as much privacy as possible, allow support people in room if wanted. Give systematic information on process as it is happening
- Allow person to wear clothing of their choice unless it presents a safety issue
- Before discharge, give relevant paperwork to youth/young adult

Create Safe Context: Transparency and Engagement of Youth/Young Adult

- Be transparent at first contact about confidentiality and mandatory reporting requirements, give youth/young adult info on what will/won't be shared with guardian or other people
- Offer information on any medication before administering, and give youth/young adult a choice, if possible
- Provide information on complaint/grievance procedure, and allow confidential completion and submission
- Engage the youth/young adult as much as possible (Show interest and listen to them)
- If short staffed, inform youth/young adult about wait times, and where they are on waitlist
- Allow youth/young adult to disclose necessary information at their pace
- If there is a long wait in the waiting room, have staff check in on youth/young adult
- Have warm décor (e.g. colored walls, nature photos on walls, pillows)
- Have fidget toys and provide activities (e.g., playing cards, coloring books)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: This resource was created by Oregon Trauma Advocates Coalition (OTAC), a youth-led advisory council. This resource is suggested for use by Emergency Rooms to improve youth engagement in services. The recommendations in this resource were developed by youth/young adults with lived experience. It is expected that organizations will modify these recommendations to fit their needs and population. (TIO, 2017)



For more information, visit traumainformedoregon.org or call 503-725-9618

1. <https://www.healthcaretoolbox.org/latest-news/26-provider-perspectives/353-does-trauma-informed-care-have-a-place-in-the-emergency-department.html>
2. Corbin, T., Rich, John, Bloom, S. et al. (2011). Developing a Trauma-Informed, Emergency Department-Based Intervention for Victims of Urban Violence. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*.
3. Youth Experiences of Preventive Care: Summary Report of Youth Listening Sessions. Oregon Health Authority. (2016) https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/Documents/Youth_Listening_Sessions_Report.pdf
4. * Mental Health America, Person-Center Language. <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/person-centered-language>