

CONDUCTING A YOUTH-FRIENDLY CONSULTATION

Steps in Youth Friendly Consultation

- Spend time engaging the young person – establish rapport and build a trusting relationship
- Invite the young person to see you alone
- Reassure the young person about confidentiality
- Use communication appropriate to the developmental stage of the young person
- Respond to the adolescent's concerns with empathy – for example, if the young person seems uncomfortable or anxious about being there:
"I understand that you might be feeling nervous about coming to see me today. Are there any questions you'd like to ask about what's going to happen today?"
- Be sensitive to and respect cultural norms when seeing young people from NESB or other cultural backgrounds
- Be non-judgmental without condoning risky behaviour
- Consult with the young person on the development of a management plan
- Decide with the young person which issues to discuss with parents/guardians
- Address parents' concerns and involve them where possible

See the Young Person Alone

- Many adolescents will be accompanied by a parent. In order to establish rapport, it is recommended to see the young person alone at some stage of the consultation
- The decision to see the young person alone will depend on:
 - the age and developmental stage of the young person
 - whether it is culturally appropriate
 - the nature of the presenting problem
 - the degree to which parental involvement is indicated as part of the management plan

Defining Confidentiality

- Explain the terms of confidentiality to the young person at the outset of the consultation:
Example:
"Anything we discuss will be kept confidential. That means I will not repeat anything you tell me to anyone else, unless I think it would help you and you give me permission to do so."
- Explain to the young person, however, that there are three main exceptions to maintaining confidentiality – situations where it may be necessary to break confidentiality for the young person's safety:
 - If the adolescent is threatening to harm or kill themselves
 - If someone else is threatening or harming them (e.g. physical/sexual abuse)
 - If the young person is at risk of harming someone else

Communicating with Adolescents

- Be yourself while maintaining a professional manner
- Adopt a straightforward and honest approach:
 - use plain language
 - avoid medical terminology and adolescent jargon
- Be sensitive to the young person's cultural background, values and norms
- Respond to non-verbal as well as verbal cues
- Use an interactive and participatory style of communication:
 - give feedback and let them know what you are thinking
 - foster the young person's participation by asking for their ideas about their health problems and what to do about them
 - involve them in the decision-making and management process
 - encourage them to ask questions
- Ask permission before exploring sensitive issues
 - “Is it okay if I ask you some personal questions?”
- Explain the process of what you are doing and why – especially any examination procedures

Assess the Young Person's Developmental Stage

- Be sensitive to the physical, cognitive, emotional and psychosocial changes the young person may be going through
- Assess the developmental stage of the young person – are they at the '*early, middle, or late*' stage of adolescence?
- This provides an insight into the developmental tasks and issues the young person is dealing with and determines the language and communication style that you use

Strategies for Engaging the Difficult Adolescent

- If the young person is resistant, silent or angry – respond to their situation with empathy, rather than get involved in a struggle for co-operation
- Attempt to build rapport and encourage the young person to open up by validating their feelings and experience

Example:

“You seem pretty upset about being here. I understand that it must be difficult to have to talk about yourself to someone you don't know. But I sense you're also feeling pretty down about some things in your life right now. Sometimes it can help to talk about these things with someone else.”