

Making your Clinic More Youth-Friendly



What exactly does being youth-friendly mean?

It **means** reducing barriers for young people to access the services that your clinic offers, and making services and information culturally competent, confidential and accurate. It means engaging youth in decision-making that affects them. Being youth-friendly means this and so much more.

Here are three essential characteristics of a youth-friendly clinic and 10 tips for how to improve within each of them:

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Provider Characteristics:

- 1) Train staff on Medicaid coverage and other public insurance options for youth.
- 2) Hire front-desk staff and phone receptionists who are friendly to youth and reflect the populations served.
- 3) Train all staff who interact with youth on adolescent health, development issues, and cultural competency.
- 4) Keep adolescents' sensitive health care issues in strict confidence between the adolescent and the provider.
- 5) Ensure all staff has clear understanding of state laws on informed consent and confidentiality (contraceptive services, STI testing and treatment, HIV testing and treatment, substance abuse treatment, mental health care)
- 6) If a parent also comes to the clinic, make sure to have counseling time alone with the adolescent.
- 7) Treat every youth as a whole person and involve them in their own health management.
- 8) Explain reasoning behind testing and procedures done during visit.
- 9) Avoid heterosexist assumptions with all youth and be respectful to LGBTQ youth.
- 10) Show teens you understand and appreciate that they are taking a step in the right direction by being at the clinic.

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Facility Characteristics:

- 1) Clinic should be warm, inviting and comfortable.
- 2) Make sure all the posters, pamphlets and magazines are age, cultural and gender appropriate.
- 3) If possible, have reading materials that are interesting to youth.
- 4) Make sure that all youth are included in posters or tv commercials.
- 5) Allow staff to wear “street clothes” to more accurately reflect patient population.
- 6) Clinics should be open when young people can confidently attend, such as after school or work.
- 7) Offer flexible hours for adolescents- evenings and/or weekends for both appointments and walk-ins.
- 8) Make it easy for youth to schedule appointments by reducing the wait time/ hold time and ensuring that everyone that contacts the system receives a response.
- 9) Your clinic should be located in a convenient and safe environment and also be accessible by public transportation e.g. bus or light rail.
- 10) Offer transportation vouchers or bus tokens to youth who need them.



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Program Design Characteristics:

- 1) One stop shop model should include sexual and reproductive health counseling, contraception counseling, STI/HIV counseling, diagnosis and treatment, nutritional services, abuse counseling, prenatal and postpartum care and counseling.
- 2) If it is necessary to refer youth to other locations for service, ensure that the referral agencies are youth-friendly and able to help.
- 3) Provide detailed description to youth about their confidentiality.
- 4) Ensure that doors fully close and that you cannot hear conversations from the hallway.
- 5) Ensure that you don't have staff discussing patient information aloud (on the phone or to each other)
- 6) Establish non-discrimination policies for your clinic that are clear, include points on sex, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression, religion, age, country of origin, etc.
- 7) Do not let cost be a barrier to youth accessing your clinic and services by, for example, creating a fee schedule so that costs are free or affordable (sliding scale) or offering flexible payment options.
- 8) Community relations, marketing and advertising are necessary to let youth, parents and teachers know that your clinic exists, where it is and what services you provide.
- 9) Have youth participate in the design and implementation of youth-friendly services. Ways to include youth:
 - Youth advisory boards
 - Peer counseling
 - Assisting with administrative tasks
 - Assisting with evaluations
- 10) Make youth feel comfortable discussing health issues by providing peer counselors or peer educators.
- 11) Administer satisfaction surveys periodically and work to improve unsatisfactory services that are identified