

Engagement Tips

Youth	Provider Do Not	Provider Do	Technique	Why is this important?
<p>“I hated living there. Staff didn’t listen and the food was locked up. I just had enough one day and left so I could see my friends and mom.”</p>	<p>“You did something really dangerous and bad things could have happened after you ran away.”</p>	<p>“Sounds like it was hard staying there and that it felt unfair to not be able to eat when you wanted to.”</p>	<p>Do not blame youth for making “poor decisions.</p>	<p>In the face of challenges and trauma, youth are making decisions in the best way they know how to get their needs met.</p>
<p>“Fuck you, you don’t want to help. You don’t listen and haven’t picked up any of my calls.”</p>	<p>“I do pick up your calls. Have you ever left a message? I won’t answer if there’s no message.”</p>	<p>“I hear you, it’s hard when you don’t feel listened to.”</p>	<p>Do not take young people’s behaviors personally.</p>	<p>Not wanting help is a natural part of youth’s trajectory of engagement. If we take their behaviors personally, it distracts us from providing support.</p>
<p>“I don’t want to talk to you.”</p>	<p>“I’m here to talk about why you aren’t going to school, where you have been living, and why you have been abusing marijuana.”</p>	<p>“That’s ok. I don’t want to force you to talk to me.”</p>	<p>Do not come in with an agenda</p>	<p>We gain trust by meeting a young person where they are at. Requiring participation may cause youth to disengage, as they have been or are feeling powerless in other aspects of their lives.</p>

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<p>“I’m having a hard time staying at home. I am fighting with my mom and there are lots of people in the house.”</p>	<p>“You can go to a shelter. There are two in San Francisco. Why wouldn’t you go you one?”</p>	<p>“There’s a lot going on at the house, it sounds. Is it feeling frustrating?”</p>	<p>Do not jump straight into action in the youth is not ready</p>	<p>Youth might not be ready to accept help. Reflecting back what we hear shows we are listening.</p>
<p>“I was at a hotel room with my friends because it was my birthday. I really can’t remember what happened last night. My friend’s older sister paid for the room and she bought us alcohol.”</p>	<p>“I thought you said you didn’t remember?”</p>	<p>“It’s hard to remember what’s going on sometimes, especially when there are lots of things going on around you.”</p>	<p>Do not doubt youth</p>	<p>Youth have experienced abuse-to doubt them is invalidating of their experiences and trauma. Due to trauma, youth may not have consistent stories that fit together.</p>
<p>“I’ve been staying with my friend instead of with my foster parent. There are less rules there.”</p>	<p>“How long were you gone for? You were gone for how long?”</p>	<p>“How’d it go with your friend?”</p>	<p>Ask one question at a time</p>	<p>Youth may get overwhelmed or confused if they are asked multiple questions. Being asked multiple questions may also feel like their experiences are not being taken seriously.</p>

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<p>“I don’t really want to talk about what happened with my boyfriend and the gun.”</p>	<p>“I need to get through these questions.”</p>	<p>“That’s ok, I don’t want to force you to speak if you don’t want to. Your information is your information and that’s important.”</p>	<p>If youth are quiet or unwilling to speak, give them space to not answer questions.</p>	<p>Youth may not be ready to fully share their experiences. Providers may also never “get to the bottom of the story,” which is not necessary for doing good clinical work.</p>
<p>“I’m not sure what I want to do. I feel like I have nowhere to go.”</p>	<p>“You need to go back to your mom’s house. It’s safe.”</p>	<p>“It can be really overwhelming to not know what to do. Let’s think about possibilities.”</p>	<p>Give youth options</p>	<p>A key part of working with youth is giving them space to make choices and not be forced into doing anything they are not comfortable with. Trafficker and exploiters have taken away their choices and agency. Allow space for youth to disagree with what you are offering and saying.</p>
<p>“I don’t know who all of these doctors are or why they are talking to me.”</p>	<p>“I’ll let you know later. I might have more information then.”</p>	<p>“Right now, I’m not 100% sure either, but I want to tell you what I do know. When I find out more, I’ll let you know.”</p>	<p>Be transparent</p>	<p>Without transparency, youth may feel tricked or lied to, leading to mistrust. If you don’t know yet, that’s ok.</p>

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<p>“I don’t want to go to the clinic. My friends told me that you gain weight on birth control.”</p>	<p>“You should definitely go on birth control.”</p>	<p>“It sounds like you aren’t interested in birth control right now. Are you interested in learning more about sexual health, even if you don’t go on birth control?”</p>	<p>Recognize their agency and capacity to make their own decisions, even if you disagree.</p>	<p>Youth are experts in their own experiences. The most meaningful and sustainable change happens on their own terms, especially because choice can be taken away from them by exploiters or systems.</p>
<p>“I just don’t know where to start. I haven’t been to school in a year.”</p>	<p>“You should start by going to school.”</p>	<p>“It can be intimidating to go after you’ve been out for some time. Would it work if I brought you to school to you could take a tour and meet some staff? After that, we can talk about if you want to go there and what you want to get out of school.”</p>	<p>Set short and long term goals</p>	<p>Young people’s lives have changed and may change very quickly. Setting unrealistic goals can set young people up to feel like they’ve failed. Provide opportunities for youth to feel successes.</p>