

Youth-Friendly Behaviors

Accurately discusses and applies **confidentiality**/consent laws with all adolescent patients.

Adolescent patients say that **confidentiality** is one of the most important factors in their health care.

“So my primary health care provider knows my mom really well. We come in and they talk for a few minutes, and I’m like, ‘Yo, I need birth control.’ It ends up being this really weird atmosphere where I’m not sure if she’s going to tell my mother something I told her because they’re friends.”

– C.J., age 16



The primary causes of illness and death in adolescents are from high risk behaviors including substance use, sexual activity, dating violence, and depression/suicide.

One study showed that 58% of high school students have health concerns they want to keep private from their parents.

The most common reason adolescent girls identify for missing a necessary health service is that they do not want their parents to know.

Health care providers “have to explain that nothing bad is going to happen if you’re honest.”

– D.C., age 17

Studies have shown that a lack of confidential care does not delay or discourage adolescents from engaging in high risk behavior. In fact, adolescents who don’t receive health care due to confidentiality concerns are more likely to engage in risky behaviors and report psychological stress.

**Quotes are from the Adolescent Health Initiative’s 2014 Teen Advisory Council.*

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Patiently **helps** adolescents **navigate** referrals and any other **systems** that may be challenging.

“My story is about when I was, like, 20, and I had the not-so-good insurance. So pretty much, I’m very talkative, and I try to be personable with people. I went to a doctor’s appointment, I’m talking to the staff, the nurses – I’m cold, they’re cold, we’re laughing, and they get to the ‘Oh, do you still have your old insurance coverage?’ and I’m like ‘No, not anymore, **my mom lost her job.**’ And they were like ‘OH.’ So the entire energy shifted, and it was just like well, okay, we’re still going to take you back [to see the doctor], and I went because I was lethargic and feeling weak, and I needed to be tested for Lupus, and the doctor comes and the same thing happened. At first, it was really conversational and nice, because I did my research, so I think it was refreshing for her to have a patient that knew so much. But when it came time to get referred to a specialist, and she was like ‘Oh, you’re not with that insurance company anymore. Oh.’ And then **the entire energy and the tone changed.**



So, the interesting thing was, later I had an experience at another clinic, and when I explained to the nurse practitioner that I didn’t have insurance, she was like, ‘Oh, there’s this program, and there’s this resource, you can get help here, or you can go this route,’ and it was just like Wow, no one ever told me that. Otherwise, I felt doomed, and she kind of gave me hope. I’ve gone to other physicians at really nice clinics, and same thing, they were just positive about it, like ‘That’s no big deal, we can work with that, and there’s options.’ **Whenever I was given options and I didn’t feel hopeless, it was a good experience.**”

– Ray, age 23

**Quote from “Testimonials” by the Adolescent Health Initiative’s Teen Advisory Council, 2014.*

Youth-Friendly Behaviors

Uses sensitivity and maintains neutral language and body language with adolescents, **withholding judgment** related to sensitive subjects, such as sexual health, substance use, interpersonal violence, gender and personal expression, and mental health.

“If a teenager has sex, don’t brand them. I mean they aren’t a bad person after that, so why not give them access to safer ways to have sex? It [sex] is going to be happening anyway.”



“It would be a priority of my life to find someone that can answer my questions about my health, and if you can’t answer my questions, find somebody that can and relay that back to me. And I have to be able to trust that you are giving me correct information and I won’t be judged for the things that I say or the things that I tell you.”

“At an appointment, the doctor came in right when my mom called to tell me where my family had decided to put my grandfather’s ashes. When I tried to answer the phone, the doctor was like ‘No, put your phone away.’ I was like, ‘Excuse me?’ And my phone rang again. And I was like ‘this is my mom on the phone.’ And she was like ‘I don’t care, put away your phone.’ And I was like, ‘I don’t like her, never again.’”

Uses sensitivity and maintains neutral language and body language with adolescents, **withholding judgment** related to sensitive subjects, such as sexual health, substance use, interpersonal violence, sexual orientation, gender and personal expression, and mental health.

“I feel like adults dehumanize teens. I feel like once a teenager hits puberty is when the thoughts of sex come into your mind. Adults had the same thoughts when they were 16 – why can’t we have those thoughts?”



“If you see a train coming, you don’t stand there and wait for it to hit you. And if teen pregnancy has been happening since time began, and you know it is going to happen still, then why not do something to derail that train? We just stand there and go ‘No no no morals morals stop stop.’ It is not going to stop this way.”

“I am gender non-conforming, and I got referred to this doctor when I was like, 13, because I wanted to talk about it, so, I went to this doctor who was supposedly an expert in his field, of kids who don’t conform to gender norms, like, particularly adolescents. And I go to him, and I’m like ‘Here’s what’s going on, don’t really feel like a girl, not sure what’s up,’ and he tells me I have gender identity disorder, which is an obsolete term, it’s not used anymore, it’s not respectful, it’s really not what you say to a scared kid who comes in for some help. Then, my mother’s like ‘How can we help, how can we support our kid, like, what can we do?’ And he’s like ‘She’ll grow out of it. This is when kids change their minds about this.’ You know, I was just blown away by his lack of sensitivity, and I did not feel like telling him anything that was important to me.”

*Quotes from “Testimonials” by the Adolescent Health Initiative’s Teen Advisory Council, 2014.