

## Introduction

This Spark introduces your team to elements of an adolescent-centered environment and outlines key staff and provider behaviors that are essential to providing youth-friendly care. It is meant to begin the process of becoming a more welcoming environment to young people, to suggest possible avenues for improvement, and to trigger discussions about a range of issues related to providing patient-centered care for young people.

## Objectives

By the end of this Spark training, participants will be able to:

1. Identify youth-friendly behaviors
2. Identify characteristics of youth-friendly organizations

## Supplies

Prepare these supplies prior to facilitating this Spark.

- Laptop
- Projector
- Speakers
- Video: give yourself time before the Spark to test the video and sound.
- Copies of the *Being Youth-Friendly Spark Handout* for all participants
- Writing utensils for all participants

## Additional Resources

If you or your colleagues would like to learn more about this Spark topic, take a look at these additional resources.

- A collection of youth-friendly (and printable) infographics, posters, and other materials for clinical settings can be found on the [AHI website](#).

## Citation

If you plan to modify this resource, please cite or credit as: Being Youth Friendly for Behavioral Health. Spark Training developed by the Adolescent Health Initiative at Michigan Medicine; February 2021; Ann Arbor, MI.

**Key of Icons**

= Slide change    = Estimated duration of topic    = Script for facilitator    = Note for facilitator

**Intro/Hook** (5 minutes)

**1 – TITLE SLIDE**

Today we’re going to do a 15-minute mini-training, also called a Spark, to look at ways we can best meet the needs of the youth we serve. This Spark is on Being Youth-Friendly.

Introduce yourself/yourselfes.

**2 –FIND SOMEONE WHO...**

Pass out handouts.

To help us think back to our own experiences as youth, we’re going to do a quick activity. Turn to the people around you and find someone who agrees with or completes the task on your handout. After they complete the task, fill in their name on your handout. Talk to as many of your coworkers as you can over the next few minutes.

Give people a couple of minutes for people to fill out their sheets.

Let’s take a moment to share some answers. Please raise your hand if:

1. You would rather hold a baby than talk to a teen.
2. You can recall a recent positive interaction with a teenager
3. You can name 2 things that are hard about being a teen

The purpose of this activity was to help us think back to our own experiences as young people, and to remind ourselves that it might take special effort for us to meet their needs as we provide patient-centered care, from the front desk, to the exam room, to check out.

**Key Concepts** (5 minutes)

**3 – TEENS SPEAK**

Let’s hear from teens directly in this three-minute video about how they want to be involved in their health care. The teens in the video are from the Adolescent Health Initiative’s Teen Advisory Council. As you watch, keep these questions in mind: What might happen when youth don’t feel comfortable accessing services? What might happen when they do feel comfortable? While this video addresses primary care settings, think about what priorities might be similar for youth in behavioral health environments.

Click link on the slide to play video, or use: <https://youtu.be/vAu5ad827I8>.

 4 – TEENS SPEAK

 Discussion: Thinking about the video and the perspectives of youth, what might happen when they **don't** feel comfortable with their health care experience?

 Consider sharing a brief story from your own experience working with teens.

 5 – TEENS SPEAK

 Discussion: Thinking about the video and the perspectives of youth, what might happen when they **do** feel comfortable with their health care experience?

 Consider sharing a brief story from your own experience working with teens.

 6 – THE DEVELOPING TEEN BRAIN

 While teens are in this transitional stage of life, we know from research that teen brains are at a critical point of development. The part of the brain that controls executive functioning – which includes judgment and cause and effect – is on its way to being fully developed until their mid-20s. Teen decision-making can feel questionable from an adult's perspective, so it's helpful to remember that their choices are developmentally appropriate, and we have the obligation to meet them where they're at.

 7 – RISK-TAKING

 A fitting example of how teen brain development is unique to this age has to do with risk-taking. People of all ages take risks, but it's at its peak during adolescence, and can result in youth participating in both health-promoting and health-impeding behaviors. There are emotional risks, social risks, and physical risks that all help adolescents to shape their identity.

 8 – RISK BEHAVIORS

 The CDC reports that 3 of the 4 leading causes of death for adolescents are motor vehicle crashes, firearm-related injury, and suicide. This presents opportunities for prevention, screening, and understanding risk and protective factors that could improve the health outcomes for adolescents.

Remembering that their behaviors are developmentally appropriate, we have to ask ourselves: what can we, as adults, do to support them in health-promoting decision-making along the way?

## Application (5 minutes)

 9 – YOUTH-FRIENDLY BEHAVIORS

 One of our main goals with becoming more youth-friendly is to look at how we interact with young people and help them feel welcome here. There are a lot of ways that health centers who

provide behavioral health services can be welcoming to young people, and we have 8 of these behaviors listed on the bottom of your teen years activity sheet. For the next few minutes, we will review a couple of scenarios, and discuss which youth-friendly behavior that scenario relates to. There is no right answer, and for some there could be multiple answers.

## 10 – YOUTH-FRIENDLY BEHAVIORS

 “I feel like my counselor was annoyed that I showed up 5 minutes late to my appointment. The bus was late, but I didn’t think it would be a huge problem. It made things awkward after that.”

 [Answer: #4. Accommodates needs of individual adolescent patients (tardiness, bringing a friend along, etc.)]

## 11 – YOUTH-FRIENDLY BEHAVIORS

 “My mom talks to her, she talks to my mom. I just sit there and listen for most of the session.”

This is a quote from Luis at age 13 and is another example of a not-so-adolescent-friendly interaction. Which one does this relate to?

 Answer: #3. Listens to and objectively considers what young people have to say.

## 12 – YOUTH-FRIENDLY BEHAVIORS

 The following story is from Ray at age 23. “When I explained to the staff 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. Usually I feel doomed, and she kind of gave me hope. I’ve gone to other places, and they weren’t so positive about it and they made it a big deal that I didn’t have insurance. This time, when I was given options and I didn’t feel hopeless, it was a good experience.” Which youth-friendly behavior is this an example of?

[Answer: #6. Patiently helps youth navigate referrals and any other systems that may be challenging.]

 Answer: #6. Patiently helps youth navigate referrals and any other systems that may be challenging.

## 13 – YOUTH-FRIENDLY BEHAVIORS

 “You have to explain that nothing bad is going to happen if I’m honest.” What do you think Ciara is referring to when they say “nothing bad is going to happen?” Which youth-friendly behavior does this relate to?

 Answer: #1. Discusses with youth what information they share will be kept private.

 14 – THANK YOU!

 To keep this conversation going over the next month, I will share Sparklers, or case scenarios, that relate to being youth-friendly. I'll post the Sparklers around the office in places that you all can easily see them. When you see a Sparkler, take a moment to read the scenario and think through the questions listed on the page. Thank you for your participation!

 [Print and post Sparklers in areas your staff can see \(e.g., lunchroom\).](#)