

**Let's take a journey with Damarion**

(they/them) as they visit a health center to get tested for sexually transmitted infections. This is their first visit to see a doctor about their sexual health. Damarion is nervous because they have not had positive experiences with health care providers in the past. After each interaction, you'll be asked to identify what aspects of the situation are trauma-informed. Check out page four for potential answers to the questions.

**INTERACTION 1: SECURITY GUARD**

When Damarion arrives at the health center, they notice a security guard positioned inside the front doors. When they approach, the security guard stands and asks Damarion if they can help them find where they are going. Damarion is flustered, can't remember the name of the doctor, and quickly pulls out their phone to find the information.

**What aspects of this interaction are or are not trauma-informed? What would you change about this interaction to make it more trauma-informed?**

**How are the principles of trauma-informed care reflected in your site's security, if applicable?**

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## INTERACTION 2: FRONT DESK

When Damarion approaches the check-in desk, they are greeted by the front desk staff with a smile. They notice that the staff member is also Black and that there is a rainbow flag on their lanyard. The staff member asks Damarion for their name and pronouns before asking for any other information. Damarion is relieved because it's stressful to have to correct people when they use the incorrect pronouns. The staff member also hands Damarion a set of forms to fill out prior to their visit. They explain that some of the screening questions ask about mental health, suicide, sexual health, and other potentially sensitive topics and to let them know if Damarion needs any additional support.

**What aspects of this interaction are or are not trauma-informed? What would you change about this interaction to make it more trauma-informed?**

**How are the principles of trauma-informed care reflected in your site's check-in/out policies and procedures?**

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## INTERACTION 3: WAITING ROOM

Below is a picture of the clinic's waiting room.



**What aspects of this space are or are not trauma-informed? What would you change about this space to make it more trauma-informed?**

**How are the principles of trauma-informed care reflected in your site's waiting room, if applicable?**

## INTERACTION 4: NURSE

A nurse comes and calls Damarion back to the exam room. Damarion starts to become anxious as they sit on the exam table. Noticing Damarion's discomfort, the nurse asks Damarion if there is anything they need to be comfortable. She offers them some water or to dim the lights a bit. Damarion asks to wait in the chair versus the exam table and if they can put their headphones in until the doctor arrives. The nurse says "of course!" and then takes Damarion's vitals and leaves.

**What aspects of this interaction**

**How are the principles of trauma-informed care reflected in your site's medical assistant/ nursing workflows and procedures?**

## INTERACTION 5: DOCTOR

About 30 minutes later, the doctor arrives. She immediately starts going through Damarion's medical history, screening tools, and recommending tests they should run. The doctor is obviously running behind schedule and is rushing through the appointment. Damarion is flustered. They try to communicate that they are afraid of needles, but the doctors tell them that it won't hurt and to close their



eyes. After 15 minutes, Damarion leaves feeling rushed, anxious, and a bit confused about what to expect as follow-up.

**What aspects of this interaction are or are not trauma-informed? What would you change about this interaction to make it more trauma-informed?**

**How are the principles of trauma-informed care reflected in your site’s patient care?**

## POTENTIAL RESPONSES

Below are some potential answers to **"What aspects of this interaction are or are not trauma-informed? What would you change about this interaction to make it more trauma-informed?"** for each of the interactions in this Sparkler.

### INTERACTION 1: SECURITY GUARD

Many adolescents, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color have historical and/or personal trauma with law enforcement. If you need to have security in place, consider having them dress in plain clothes. Ensure that they are not the first interaction a young person has when they enter the space. It may also be beneficial to train all security personnel in trauma-informed care and racial justice concepts, including implicit bias and systematic racism.

### INTERACTION 2: FRONT DESK

One of the key components (maybe there is a better word?) of a trauma-informed space is to support young people, and their many intersecting identities, in feeling welcome and comfortable. Health care settings can be inherently traumatic for youth with marginalized identities. The clinic demonstrated that Damarion’s identities would be respected and valued by asking and using their pronouns, having Pride flags visible, and by employing staff that share his various identities. They also provided a content warning to the screening tools before giving them to Damarion and offered additional support, if needed.

### INTERACTION 3: WAITING ROOM

The waiting room has check-in/out spaces that appear visually private, which is important for allowing youth privacy when sharing personal information. The space has size-inclusive seating, and the décor is not centered around young children. However, some may find the bright colors of the decor overwhelming. It might be helpful for the clinic to display art with images of youth who hold various identities and have information about local referral sources and national hotlines available in the waiting room for patients to access anonymously.

### INTERACTION 4: NURSE

As discussed earlier in this Spark, giving the patient as much control as possible is important when it comes to providing trauma-informed care. The nurse asked Damarion what they needed to be comfortable and accommodated to their preferences. One way the nurse could have been more trauma-informed is when taking Damarion's vitals, to have asked them for permission and explain step by step what they are doing. This ensures that Damarion has control over the situation.

### INTERACTION 5: DOCTOR

It is not always possible for doctors to be on time to appointments. A trauma-informed way to deal with these situations is to have a nurse or medical assistant check in with Damarion to let them know that the doctor is running late and ask if they need anything while waiting. When patients have a moderate to high level of medical anxiety, allowing them to discuss their concerns and helping them develop active coping techniques is critical. The doctor's feeling of being rushed didn't help with Damarion's anxiety. It would have been better for the doctor to walk through the screening tools with Damarion, ask clarifying questions, and validate their experiences and concerns. Damarion left the appointment feeling that not all their medical concerns were addressed, and they are unlikely to return, leaving them susceptible to poor health outcomes.