

Title: Tips to Engage Youth after an Overdose

Focus: Youth and young adults that have experienced an overdose

Audience: Professionals that engage and support youth and their experiences with substance use and overdose (social workers, POST workers, etc.)

Background context: This document summarizes suggestions for professionals engaging with youth or young adults. This follows the youth overdose prevention panel discussion held on June 24th with Dr. Sarah Bagley as the host/facilitator.

Panelists:

- Sarah M. Bagley, MD, MSc – Boston Medical Center, Boston University
- Heather Eaton – Drug Story Theater
- Liza Almanzar – PCORI Youth Community Advisory Board Member
- Abita Raj, MD - Addiction Psychiatrist at UMass Memorial
- Julie Scherer – LICSW at CATALYST, Boston Medical Center

Key Concepts

- Not all youth or young adults who use substances and overdose have an opioid use disorder

Building trust

- Engage trusted social networks, including friends and family identified by youth
- Adults are often authority figures
 - Establish trusting relationships through building rapport and mutual respect
- Language
 - Use relatable language that is easy to understand
 - Example: “I have a list of resources and helpful information that I can walk you through”
 - Avoid language like: “If the court decides to issue either a summons or a warrant of apprehension you be involuntarily committed.”
 - Avoid language that may be perceived as punitive, accusatory, or stigmatizing
 - Example: “How are you doing today? Do you mind sharing what happen during your recent overdose?”
 - Avoid language like: “You are too young to use” or “You should know better than to use [Substance name]”
- Learn and be responsive to youth’s history and experiences when providing care, specifically their:
 - Cultural background
 - Past trauma (Past traumatic experiences with social services)

- Experiences in care settings
- Socio-economic status
- Listen actively
 - Listen to their needs in that moment
 - A “resolution” is not always needed in the moment

Facilitating access to care

- Reach youth where they are:
 - See youth in person when possible
 - Facilitate transportation to resources
 - Communicate via texting, rather than relying on phone calls or emails
 - Promote program and public health messaging on social media
 - Utilize private direct messaging
 - Avoid including personal info on public posts
- Discuss all possible care options to build trust and empower decision making
- Educate youth about mandated treatment and reporting
 - Mandated Reporting
 - In Massachusetts, ***state employees, physicians, police, guidance counselors, etc.*** are required to notify public safety when they believe there is an imminent threat or danger (mandated reporters)
 - Youth may be wary of disclosing information to mandated reporters
 - Clarify with youth whether you are a mandated reporter
 - Clarify with the youth what is “confidential” and must be reported.
 - Visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/who-are-mandated-reporters> for more information on mandated reporting
 - Mandated Treatment (Section 35 in Massachusetts)
 - Section 35 is a legal program where people who use substances and are a danger to themselves or others can be civilly committed by the courts after a petition by family, friends, care providers or police to go to treatment for up to 90 days
 - Mandated treatment (section 35 in MA) is to only be considered as a last resort, but there are alternatives (For more information and alternatives to Section 35 in MA, visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/section-35-the-process>)