

Behavioral Strategies for Minors

Protection of Minors on Campus



For more information, contact:
[Center for Personal Development and
Counseling Services](#)
Fayetteville State University

Mental Health Awareness

There may be participants in your program who may experience mental health symptoms but have not yet been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

The average delay between onset of mental health symptoms to receiving intervention is 8 to 10 years.

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24.

On the next slide, you will see a list of behavioral changes which are warning signs that a child or teen is potentially in distress.

Behavioral Strategies

Goal 1: Help youth learn how to manage their own behavior.

Goal 2: Identify strategies that staff can utilize when assisting youth with managing behavior.

Research shows that certain strategies tend to work best when attempting to manage behaviors.

Listed below are some of these strategies:

- ❖ Give positive recognition and model good behavior.
- ❖ Discuss rules and expectations about behavior early on.

- Be aware of what's happening around you in order to proactively intervene before a situation escalates.
- Give warnings in order to give youth a chance to correct their behavior.
- Relax before responding.
- Be respectful while addressing the behaviors.
- Discuss specifically why the behavior was wrong.
- Calmly discuss appropriate ways to behave.
- Do not get entangled in arguments/ power struggles.

If you realize that you have been drawn into a power struggle, use strategies to disengage. Examples of disengaging strategies are lowering your voice while using a more business-like tone or move away from the youth.

- **Listen actively.** Active listening demonstrates a sincere desire to understanding concerns and respecting their point of view. An example active listening statement would be: "Let me be sure that I understand you correctly....".
- **Allow a "Cool Down" break.** Cool down breaks should be available to all, not only youth with anger-control issues. Offer to talk the situation over once they have calmed down. Select an area to be the designated cool down spot. An example would be: "I want to talk with you about what is upsetting you; but first you need to calm down. Take five minutes in the cool down area and then come over so we can talk".
- **Ask open-ended questions.** If faced with a confrontational youth and the trigger for this type of response is unknown, ask neutral, open-ended questions to collect more information before responding. Use "who, what, where, when and how" questions to more fully understand the situation. An example question would be: "What do you think made you angry when you were talking with"?

- **Avoid asking "why" questions.** Why questions can imply that you are blaming them. Instead utilize open-ended questions to gather additional information about the situation.
- **Emphasize the positive in your request.** When your request has a positive "spin", you are less likely to trigger a power struggle and more likely to gain compliance. Avoid using negative phrasing like: "If you don't sit down, then I can't help you. Instead use a positive statement such as: "I will be over to help you once you sit down".
- **Give praise that is specific & does not embarrass.** Defiant youth respond well to adult praise but only when it is sincere, specific and does not embarrass them. Examples would be: writing a note of praise, praising them in a private conversation, calling their parent to praise them.
- **Give frequent positive attention.** Try to give positive attention to problem youth at least three times more frequently than you reprimand them for negative behavior. Heavy dosing of positive attention can greatly improve your relationship.

Response Plan

Develop a response plan for more aggressive behaviors.

- Identify the criteria for 'aggressive behaviors' in advance of your program beginning as well as any corresponding consequences to the aggressive behavior.
- Increase awareness about common behaviors and symptoms associated with youth mental health
- Contact your supervisor
- Contact parents

For more information on common behaviors and symptoms related to child and adolescent mental health, visit the following websites: the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at www.aacap.org or The National Institute of Mental Health at www.nimh.nih.gov.

Keep in Mind

Best outcomes are achieved when you

- Remain calm and maintain a professional perspective.
- Follow pre-planned intervention strategies for misbehavior.
- Act with consistency and fairness when intervening.

References

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