



# Office of Addiction Services and Supports

## Guidance for Adolescent and Young Adult-Serving Program Clinical and Non-Clinical Staff

### REMEMBER...

- Young people are in a different stage of development than adults and should not be treated the same way an adult client might be.
- Risk taking behaviors are prevalent in youth, as they have not fully developed their judgment and other cognitive brain functions.
  - Some substance using behaviors are considered normative for youth and young adults and can sometimes be overlooked.
  - Clinical staff and supervisors may need to use clinical judgment to determine significant behaviors that require intervention.
- Youth and young adults respond differently to treatment and require different types of interventions tailored to their level of functioning.
  - That may include other approaches to treatment in addition to traditional groups and meetings.
- Recovery can be fun! Youth and young adults respond well to treatment when they feel like they are getting something out of it.

### Program Directors and Supervisors should:

- have an understanding of the work their clinical staff are involved in. For youth, this includes the typical stages of development of a young person and the knowledge that young people also have different mental and physical needs.
- provide sufficient clinical supervision to clinical staff based on the NYS OASAS Scope of Practice [LINK]. Supervision should include clinician concerns, clinical relationships with clients, as well as administrative issues such as paperwork.
- make their expectations of their staff clear, consistent, and fair. This may include discussing with staff and allowing for input on program plans and implementation changes.
- allow for a safe space where clinicians and clients can trust that they will be listened to and their concerns be treated respectfully.



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## **Clinical Staff Should:**

- use Clinical Supervision as a tool for working with and understanding adolescents.
- meet young people where they are at in their treatment/recovery.
  - Adolescents and young adults may not see the problems developing in their lives from or made worse by their use of substances. This doesn't necessarily mean they are being resistant or uncooperative.
- be knowledgeable of the life issues being faced by an adolescent.
  - This can include, but is not limited to, social identity and other identity issues, school classes, grades, and attendance, family life, struggle for independence, new life changes, and ongoing hormonal changes.
- be reliable and responsive to youth and young adult needs without being judgmental.

## **Non-Clinical and Support Staff Should:**

- have a basic understanding of youth development.
- model appropriate boundaries and mannerisms.
- help to create a safe, comfortable, non-judgmental treatment experience.
  - This can include, but is not limited to, greeting a young person with a smile, calling them by name, and being attentive to youth needs as appropriate.