

# Best Practice Core Elements for Working with Emerging Adults

**Are You Following Best Practices for Working with Emerging Adults? Keep Reading to Find Out!**

What opportunities do you offer as groups?

## Provide Group Options

- WOWTalk Cafes
- Social events
- Support groups, e.g. Survivors of Suicide Attempt
- Psychosocial groups

How flexible are your service delivery options and communication strategies?

Many agencies serve all individuals in a streamlined fashion: during the same hours of operation, using the same protocols for being contacted and for contacting people served. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, consider how you can better meet the needs of emerging adults, who may be juggling school and work and almost never make or accept actual phone calls. You might consider:

## Be Flexible:

- Telehealth, if they are crunched for time to travel to an office or just prefer the safety of the screen
- In-home services, if they lack transportation or struggle to leave home for other reasons
- Community-based services, if they do not have privacy at home and struggle to get to an office
- Embedding specialists (vocational/educational support; peers; therapist; etc.) on the team, to make coordination easier
- Modifying the days/times you offer appointments that better accommodate work/school commitments

How do you know you have hired the “right fit” staff? Who provides services is just as important as what services you offer. When you have an all-star team, it can mean the difference to a young person. A “right fit” team member might just help move a young person from ambivalence to truly getting help. Some things to look for in potential team member:

## Hire the “Right Fit” Staff

- Truly enjoys working with this age group
- Reflects the diverse identities of people served (near-age whenever possible; race, ethnicity, LGBTQ, religion, etc.)
- Peers/people with similar lived experience – and try to hire at least 2 for a built-in support system for peers
- Approaches this population with a lens of radical acceptance, a skill that fully acknowledges someone's reality to relieve their suffering.

Do you know and meet emerging adults' priorities first?

## Start with Their Motivations

- Employment/Education
- Transportation
- Identity issues
- Relationship
- Sexual health
- Life Skills

How do you invest in outreach? Outreach prior to enrolling in services is critical to earning and keeping trust. Things to keep in mind:

### Invest in Outreach

- Done well, outreach takes a lot of time
- Prioritize outreach not for the end game of enrollment but to build rapport and trust. When emerging adults feel you are pushing an agenda, they may sometimes pull away. When they like you and feel your genuine concern, they will see you and your agency as credible and trustworthy.
- Money spent on outreach can pay dividends in people getting and staying connected to care

How do you involve natural supports? Adolescence and young adulthood are times of separating from family/carers – and helping them navigate the transition using the important people in their lives can have a huge impact on their well-being. Try to:

### Work with Their Support System

- Routinize working with an emerging adult and their carers/other supports after they turn 18. Just because they are legally an adult does not mean their carers are automatically out of their lives. This is especially important for first episode psychosis instances, where a carer may be critical in supporting their recovery.
- Help establish healthy boundaries for enmeshed family systems and link carers to their own supports when appropriate.
- Utilize Family Support Providers (FSP) so that carers can talk with someone else who has experienced caring for a child with a similar issue.

How inviting are your spaces?

### Space Matters

Avoid overly juvenile spaces or very clinical-feeling spaces

