

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH INTOXICATION

Whilst most young people at entertainment events or in entertainment precincts either do not consume alcohol or other drugs or only do so at moderate levels – a proportion may drink or take other substances that cause them to become intoxicated and vulnerable to harm. Here are some things to consider if your role involves supporting a young person who is intoxicated.

Identifying if a young person may need support

Whilst most young people can manage the intoxicating effects of alcohol and/or other drugs, there are a number of signs that may suggest that an individual may be more vulnerable and require special assistance. These may include:

- an overpowering smell of alcohol or chemical fumes
- excessive sweating
- grinding of teeth and jaws
- excessively dilated or constricted pupils
- inability to focus
- slurred speech
- impaired short-term memory, or tendency to repeat one's self over and over
- rapid behaviour swings (e.g. from crying to laughter, or introversion to extroversion)
- high levels of distress or anxiety
- excessive swaying or inability to walk
- disorientation, including not knowing one's location, who they are with or where they are going etc.
- unconsciousness (i.e. cannot be roused)
- not aware of one's own injury (e.g. bleeding)

NB: Just because someone is displaying one or more of these behaviours does not automatically mean that they require assistance. However, it is a signal that you should assess their level of vulnerability and check in to see how they are feeling or if they want some help. Furthermore, there may be other signs or symptoms suggesting that someone requires assistance that has not been included in this list.

How to respond

- Always introduce yourself to the young person and ask their name. State that it is your role to help them if they need it. It is important that they understand who you are and what you do, as well as any limits to your role.
- Speak clearly and explain what you are going to do before you do it.
- Avoid judgmental language e.g. "You've had too much to drink", "Aren't you cold dressed in that?" "What were you thinking?" Better still – avoid judgment!
- Keep in mind alcohol and other drugs may change the way people think and behave.
- Do not make physical contact unless this is necessary for health care.
- Never chase or restrain a person.
- Ensure the safety of yourself, your team and the young person.
- Some young people will refuse assistance. Some young people may prefer assistance from another member of your team, another service, or not at all. Respect their choices. If you believe they are at risk and they do not want your help, consult with your team and supervisor for instructions.
- All your actions should reflect your service's safe and welcoming environment.



If a young person is upset

- Offer them the chance to sit and receive support if necessary.
- Offer to locate or contact friends or family for support.

If a young person is injured

- Follow your service's first aid / emergency procedures.

If a young person is not responsive

- Call emergency services on 000 and ask for "ambulance".
- Place them in the recovery position and radio for assistance. Make sure their airway is clear.
- Consider ways to preserve their privacy and dignity until help arrives.

Remember

Always be conscious of your environment and the people around you. Try to prevent passersby from getting involved. Where possible, enlist the support of friends of the intoxicated individual, whilst also making sure that they don't do anything that may increase the likelihood of harm.

Remember

Some events can period generate a great deal of public and media interest, especially in situations where young people may not look their best. If the media is interested in a young person you are assisting, wherever possible, protect the young person's privacy and dignity and avoid engaging the media in discussion.

Remember

Individuals who are intoxicated can sometimes be easily influenced, either by you or others around them. Be conscious of your power to influence and do not assume that someone cannot make good decisions simply because they are intoxicated.

Remember

Draw on the strengths and diversity of your team, and always report to your service coordinator any issues within your team where you feel behaviour is inappropriate.

Finally

A young person may not remember what you said or did, but will always remember how you made them feel. Always treat young people with respect. Make sure that everything you do helps to maintain the young person's dignity as much as possible. Try to work as a team, and support each other as you work.

And finally, have fun!