

Tips for Dealing with **INTOXICATION**



Most young people either do not consume alcohol or other drugs or only do so at moderate levels. However, 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 THE YOUNG PERSON YOU MAY NEED TO ASSIST

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

HOW TO RESPOND

Please note, responses may vary depending on the setting (e.g out in public or in a home environment).

- If you don't already know the young person, always introduce yourself and ask their name. If you are working at an event or are in a situation where it is your role to help, state this and offer support 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, other young people that may be in your care and the young person.
- 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.
- 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.

If a young person is upset

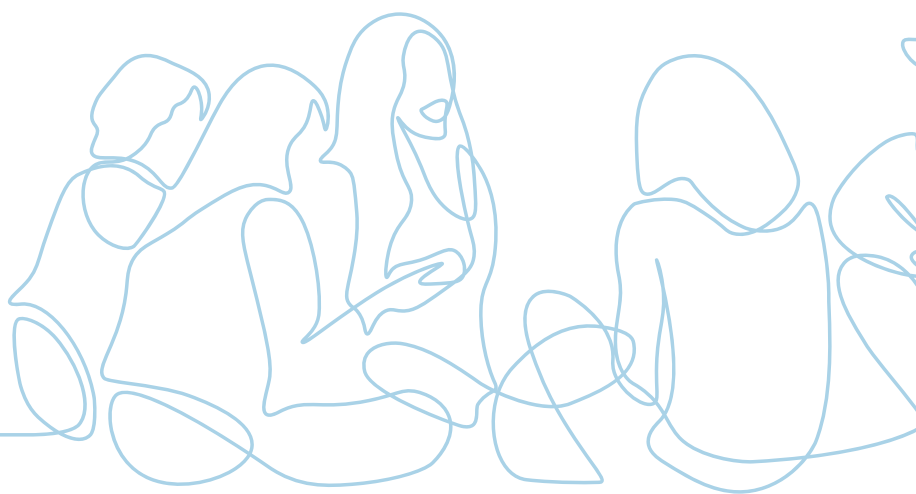
- Offer them the chance to sit and receive support if necessary.
- Offer to locate or contact friends or family for support.

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 individual, whilst also making sure that they don't do anything that may increase the likelihood of harm.

Some situations can generate a great deal of interest, especially in situations where young people may not look their best. Protect the young person's privacy and dignity from media or onlookers who may want to discuss or film the situation.

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.

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.