



DEMONSTRATING SAFE, PROFESSIONAL, & ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Demonstrating Safe, Professional, and Ethical Behavior requires that Young Adult Peer Mentors adhere to practices that promote integrity and dignity while working with young adults. Safe practices include caring for physical and emotional health and safety for both YAPM and young adults. Demonstrating professional behavior centers around communication, accountability, and learning opportunities. Rigorous attention to professional boundaries and the rights and self-determination of others show ethical behavior.

Best practices for using lived experience as professional YAPMs include:

- » Contributing to and abiding by young adults' risk prevention and safety plans, and promptly communicating about emerging concerns, as part of a team;
- » Taking precautions to guard young adults and YAPM safety in potentially risky situations, homes, neighborhoods, and groups;
- » Attending to concerns about personal safety, including emotional health;
- » Seeking opportunities for professional learning;
- » Keeping realistic work commitments;
- » Fully considering the purpose and intent of all self-disclosure with YAs;
- » Balancing the expectations for teamwork with the laws regarding confidentiality at all times (when to share, when not to share);
- » Always disclosing any prior relationship with a referred young adult;
- » Resisting opportunities to "take sides" or engage in negative characterizations of others; and
- » Ensuring that peer support relationships are transparent and not confused with other possible relationships, such as friendship or romantic interest.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

IDEAL PRACTICE

Learns content of and how to implement any current risk and safety plan for responding to YA's behavioral health concerns, including triggers to unsafe behavior, prevention and coping strategies used effectively by YA, and the range of available supports.

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

- * Learns risk/safety plan content but not implementation.
- * Neglects to recommend or use plan when YA is in crisis.
- * Neglects to get contact information for supports as prevention or in crisis.
- * Jumps to crisis services before trying intermediate steps with helpers identified in safety plan.
- * Does not keep up to date with changes in safety plan over time.

INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE

- * Never asks about or uses safety plan.
- * Does not discuss or negatively judges triggers or coping skills.
- * Encourages triggering behaviors.

Communicates with YA, supervisor, and care team (as relevant) all concerns about risks of any kind that may affect YA.

- * Communicates about YA without engaging YA in recognizing risks and sharing information.
- * Communicates with supervisor but not care team or care team but not supervisor.
- * Discusses concerns once but without continuing discussion.
- * Makes judgment calls without involving others.
- * Communicates late or without any urgency, even when warranted.

- * Does not communicate concerns to anyone.
- * Communicates concerns to others without telling YA.
- * Dismisses or ignores safety concerns.
- * Adds to safety concerns by exerting undue influence (threats, unwarranted promises, etc.) over YA.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

IDEAL PRACTICE

Recommends and models common-sense precautions to increase YA's ability to recognize and avoid risks to personal safety at home, in neighborhood, and in group settings.

Ends session if YA is under influence of alcohol or impaired by any substance, whether or not it is prescribed.

Immediately seeks consultation when in doubt about safety concerns of any kind.

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

- * Recommends precautions but does not model them (acts in a "do as I say not as I do" way).
- * Makes partial or superficial effort to get to know YAs neighborhood or environment.
- * Recommends/models precautions that are not culturally or developmentally appropriate to YA.

- * Acknowledges YA is under the influence but continues the session.
- * Does not recognize signs of drug/alcohol use.
- * Ends session without saying why and/or without following up later with YA.

- * Seeks consultation with supervisor but not immediately.
- * Relies overly on supervisor to understand what is risky.

INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE

- * Discloses past risky behavior without connecting the story to how dangerous it was.
- * Shares past risks as boasts.
- * Makes no safety recommendations.
- * Engages in risky behaviors in front of or with YA.
- * Shames YA about past or present risky behavior.

- * Allows YA to use substances in session.
- * Uses substances with the YA.
- * Conducts sessions with YA while YAPM is under the influence of a substance.
- * Fails to report YA substance use to team.

- * Does not report incident to supervisor.
- * Makes judgments without any consultation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IDEAL PRACTICE

Keeps current with emerging knowledge relevant to young adult behavioral health and openly shares this knowledge with YA and others, as needed.

Seeks opportunities to learn from mistakes or gaps in knowledge pertaining to behavioral health conditions, treatment options, community resources, peer support, and other relevant topics.

Admits to YA when YAPM doesn't know something and seeks resources for accurate information.

Organizes routines and schedules to maximize accountability in meeting with YAs.

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

- * Shares information without fact-checking or sourcing.
- * Keeps current but without sharing.

- * Gets defensive about mistakes or gaps instead of recognizing opportunities.
- * Gathers general information but not information individualized for each YA.

- * Acknowledges gaps in knowledge but without follow-through to find out.
- * Finds resources for YA instead of with them.

- * Acknowledges and communicates about unexpected changes in schedule.
- * Plans meetings inconsistently with YA.

INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE

- * Ignores current or new information.
- * Shares opinions without basis.
- * Deliberately shares inaccurate information.

- * Hides errors or gaps in knowledge.
- * Refuses constructive feedback.

- * Gives incorrect information deliberately.
- * Pretends to know when unaware.

- * Has no schedule nor routine, or frequently engages in careless scheduling (e.g., double booking).
- * Misses scheduled meetings unnecessarily and/or without communication.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

IDEAL PRACTICE

Applies lived experience to a range of situations in which it can be helpful to YA and describes relevant lived experience in ways that are developmentally appropriate to YA while protecting the emotional well-being of both YA and YAPM.

Shares stories of resiliency, with purpose and intent, with focus on hope and recovery.

Always considers who benefits from disclosure and ensures that disclosures are primarily for the benefit of the YA.

Acknowledges and celebrates “mutuality” of benefits of working as a YAPM, as appropriate.

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

- * Uses lived experience that is beneficial for the YA but triggering to the YAPM.
- * Under-shares lived experience.
- * Shares unrelated experience.

Shares resiliency stories without adapting to the individual YA and/or current situation.

- * Unclear of purpose of self-disclosure.
- * Under-shares even when sharing would benefit YA.

- * Acknowledges mutuality superficially.
- * Conveys no sense of celebration about mutuality.
- * Uses clinical jargon that distances YAPM from YA and the mutual-benefit idea.

INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE

- * Shares inappropriate lived experience.
- * Talks about lived experience in a way that triggers the YA.
- * Uses lived experience that discourages the YA.
- * Shares lived experience that is developmentally inappropriate for the YA.
- * Overshares with too much detail.

- * Shares stories that don't validate YA and don't offer hope.
- * Shares in ways that are belittling, shaming, “one-upping,” judging, or invalidating.

- * Discloses for YAPM benefit.
- * Shares for the sake of sharing.
- * Shares without considering effect on YA.

- * Treats the YA like they are a child, not a contributor.
- * Actively steps away from mutuality, acts superior or patronizing.
- * Overplays mutuality to seem like a friend rather than a professional and team member.

CONFIDENTIALITY

IDEAL PRACTICE

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE

As noted in all elements and required by TM programs and law, respects the privacy and confidentiality of personal health-related information about the YA they support.

- * Discusses confidentiality with YA but without clarity about when and why information must be shared.
- * Occasionally slips up and discusses health information in places where it can be overheard.
- * Struggles with confidentiality in public (e.g., running into someone YAPM or YA knows).

- * Carelessly discloses information to family or others known to YA.
- * Ignores HIPAA requirements for spoken, written, and/or electronic information.

Meets individually with YA to preserve privacy, unless there is clear purpose and specific permission from supervisor (and caregiver, as relevant) allowing more than one enrolled YA in a meeting.

Joins helpful group activities with YA without a plan for how to keep the YAPM role confidential.

- * Shows no regard for confidentiality.
- * Meets with multiple YAs at the same time with no acceptable reason (e.g., to fit YAPM schedule or convenience).

Understands and prepares for the possibility that sharing YAPM lived experience with one person has the potential to result in unintentional sharing with many others (for example, YA may tell parent).

- * Discloses lived experience without plan for how to address questions from others who may hear the information second-hand.
- * Overshares or glorifies lived experience in ways that leave YAPM vulnerable.

Shows no understanding of how YAPM's story may travel and/or be misrepresented.

RELATIONSHIPS

IDEAL PRACTICE

Advocates for the best interests of YA in any disputes between YA and care team, YA and family members, or YA and other supports, and works to promote compromise and understanding.

Never enters into dual relationships or commitments (such as multiple, different roles in same family) that conflict with the interests of the YA.

Never engages in sexual/intimate activities with any YA that YAPM is currently working with, has worked with in a professional role (per program restrictions), or who is under legal age of majority.

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

- * Advocates for YA 100% of the time without considering other perspectives.
- * Works for compromise without fully understanding all perspectives.
- * Argues instead of listening.
- * From time to time, gets drawn into taking sides in some disagreements.

- * Struggles to balance YA and caregiver relationships.
- * Communicates with supervisor about assignments that may overlap (e.g., two YAs in the same extended family).

- * Struggles to understand dynamics in certain situations (e.g., unsure if YA is flirting or if discussion becomes too personal).
- * Conveys negative responses rather than neutral deflection.
- * Tries to manage uncomfortably intimate situations without consulting supervisor.

INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE

- * Always takes sides with the care team (or family) against the YA.
- * Reacts based on YAPM biases.
- * Promotes personal agenda or interests.

Fails to disclose to supervisor and/or to YA about possible conflicting roles.

Engages in sexual or intimate activities with any YA in violation of program restrictions.

RELATIONSHIPS

IDEAL PRACTICE

Never engages in business, extends or receives loans, or accepts gifts of significant value (within cultural context) from YA.

States to YA at the start (and periodically as needed) and demonstrates in all interactions that YAPM is a professional role and not a friend relationship.

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

- * Struggles to understand what is and isn't okay in certain situations.
- * Conveys negative responses rather than neutral deflection.
- * Tries to manage situations without consulting supervisor.

- * States limits of YAPM relationship at start but gradually drifts into a friend role.
- * Communicates informally via social media outside of professional relationship without clarity about program policies.

INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE

- * Borrows, lends, or gives money or other valuables.
- * Accepts or gives extravagant gifts.

- * Has no discussion of professional role or boundaries.
- * Seeks out YA on social media.
- * Fails to disclose prior relationship with a YA at the time of assignment.