

Conversation Guide: Supporting People who use Substances (PWUS)

If possible and where appropriate, include a Person with Lived/Living Experience (PWLLE) in your discussions



Welcoming

How should our team greet a patient in a friendly and non-stigmatizing way?

- Acknowledge and introduce yourself: "Hello there, my name is _____. How are you today?"
- Ask for permission before inquiring about substance use
- Be discreet; treat this as a confidential conversation
- See if they have any immediate needs (i.e. drug testing)
- **DO NOT:** Out the client's substance use



Substance Use & Withdrawal

How should we respond when a patient reports symptoms of withdrawal?

- Thank the client for confiding in your team
- Ask them what supports they may need in that moment
- Encourage them to continue reaching out for support
- Review documentation; collaborate with the MRP
- **DO NOT:** Dismiss the information



Offering Supplies

How should our team provide harm reduction supplies and Take Home Naloxone (THN) kits to PWUS?

- Have supplies out and readily accessible
- When supplies are requested, acknowledge the request and provide them: "Of course, take what you need..."
- Offer additional harm reduction resources
- **DO NOT:** Withhold supplies



Suspected Drug Poisoning

Someone is down in the stairwell and we're concerned they're overdosing. How do we respond?

- Calmly and clearly ask, "Hi there, is everything okay?"
- Explain your actions: "I'm concerned you may be overdosing. I'm going to provide breaths and call a code/911"
- Complete Patient Safety & Learning System (PSLS) report
- Review training on overdose response
- **DO NOT:** Pass by or dismiss the situation



Medication Administration

A patient has been assessed for and/or requested substance use treatment. How do we respond?

- Thank that patient for confiding in your team
- Ask for permission before inquiring further
- Where possible, consult with an addictions specialist
- Review the appropriate protocol to initiate treatment
- **DO NOT:** Dismiss this important health care need



Safer Discharge Planning

A patient states they would like to self-initiate discharge. How do we respond?

- Inquire (in a sincere manner) what needs are going unmet
- Try and address immediate concerns i.e. food, withdrawal
- **NOTE:** People are welcome to come and go within agreed upon timeframes (try and be flexible)
- Make sure there is a follow-up plan prior to discharge
- **DO NOT:** Minimize their concerns, document as AMA

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