

Step-wise guide to the first session where the client is compelled to attend by another person; including a carer / family member or a worker from Youth Justice, Child Protection etc.

There will be variations in how practitioners in different service types structure initial contact and the early phase of work with a client under coercion. The stepwise process (outlined below) for conducting a first session and preparing for the initial phase of work with a young person who is forced to attend is most applicable for outreach workers or counselors working in clinical settings as these service types most commonly receive referrals of this kind.

1. Clarify roles and ground rules

- Welcome the young person and whoever is in attendance (includes the referring person) and invite them into a private space for a discussion
- Explain who you are and provide information on what your service offers and the range of ways you can assist
- Make all previous contact that you have had with the referring person overt, demonstrating that you are comfortable with being transparent and that there are no secret alliances
- Where the referral is from another worker, be clear that you work for a separate service and that you are not working for the referring organisation
- Be clear on the arrangements you have with the referring party on confidentiality and future communication and leave time for questions

2. Clarify referral details and invite input from the referring person and the young person

- Invite the referring person to explain why the referral is being made and their expectations of the treatment (this should include attendance at a minimum amount of sessions)
- Invite the young person to comment on what they have heard, including any points of clarification, and offer them a chance to talk about how they feel about being forced to attend
- When everything is clear, ask the referring person to leave and again invite comment from the young person

3. Give the young person control over how the specified number of sessions will be used

- Reiterate what you can help with and be very clear with the young person that you understand and respect that the decision to take up the offer of assistance is theirs
- Confirm that they understand that they are required by the referring party to attend for a stipulated number of sessions
- If they are not interested in taking up the offer of assistance, offer the young person a choice of activities that you are prepared to do with them during sessions. Ensure that

one of the choices is sitting in silence but that participation in some form of activity be it recreational, artistic or educational is offered.

4. Close the session by clarifying arrangements with everyone involved

- When the predetermined time with the young person has elapsed invite the referring person back to the place where the session started
- Invite the young person to share any details of the session with the referring person
- Confirm arrangements regarding confidentiality and future communication and leave time for questions
- Ensure that the times for all specified sessions are locked in and finish the session with a reference to meeting again at the arranged time

When the referring person is not present at the first session the same stepwise process can be followed with modification to step 2 and 4. In this case:

- Step 2 can be modified by the youth AOD practitioner to explain in plain language the reasons that the referring person gave for making the referral and their expectations of treatment (including attendance at a specified number of sessions).
- Step 4 can be modified by the youth AOD practitioner either calling the referring person with the young person present or undertaking to make contact with them to confirm arrangements for future sessions; making it clear with the young person that confidentially arrangements will be respected.

Please note that practitioners are accountable for any approach adopted in engaging a client. The use of activity should be endorsed the practitioner's organisation and comply with any relevant policies and procedures.