

Recognition Protocol

1. Initial observations
2. Review any information provided about the youth/family to determine eligibility for IL HEALS services. Eligibility for IL HEALS (must meet all criteria):
 - a. Age 25 or under
 - b. Living in Franklin, Gallatin, Saline, White or Williamson Counties
 - c. Experienced at least one current or past interpersonal adverse experience: Sexual assault, physical abuse, arson, burglary, child pornography, neglect, domestic or family violence, bullying, witness to community violence, human trafficking, Identity theft, Kidnapping, Hate crime, kidnapping (custodial), kidnapping (non-custodial), vehicular victimization, stalking/harassment, survivors of homicide victim, teen dating victimization
 - d. Observe for signs of victimization or trauma.
 - e. Remain curious and open to learning more, remembering that biases and assumptions are often wrong.
3. Approach the youth or family member:
 - a. Introduce yourself to the caregiver and youth by name and title. Explain your role and your reasons for talking with them.
 - b. Use “I statements.” For example, “I noticed...”; “I was asked to...”; “I am concerned...”
 - c. Explain that you/your agency gathers information on [adverse childhood experiences](#) from all the youth/families they work with to ensure that they are connected to the right resources, help, and support.
 - d. Ask if they would be comfortable answering a few questions for you to learn more about their experiences with trauma and/or victimization.
4. Initiating the conversation:
 - a. Consider what would make them feel most safe to share and be open with you. If possible, ask them if they would prefer a public or private location, where they would like to sit, whether they would like to speak with you alone or have someone else there, if they need a drink or fidget toy, etc...
 - b. Review confidentiality and limits of confidentiality, including mandatory reporting obligations. Use age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate language.
 - c. Before asking questions related to their victimization or trauma, it may be helpful to ask more neutral, rapport-building questions. Asking the youth or family members to tell you a bit about themselves, their strengths, their hobbies, or pets can help you to get to know them a bit before asking more specific questions about their experiences with victimization or trauma.
 - d. Ask open-ended questions, such as, “What brings you here today?”
 - e. Using age-appropriate, developmentally-appropriate language, ask the screener question: Has something bad, unpleasant, or traumatic happened to you recently or in the past?
 - i. If the child or family answers, “Yes” to the screening question:
 1. Tell them, “I am sorry this happened to you.” “Thank you for sharing this with me.”
 2. Administer the Screener.

3. See Connection Protocol.
 - ii. If the child or family answers, “No” to the screening questions or is not eligible for services through your program or agency:
 1. Thank the youth family for answering your questions and assure them that you will help to connect them to the best services to meet their needs.
 2. Follow the “Not Eligible for Services Protocol.”
5. During a disclosure:
- a. Listen non-judgmentally.
 - i. Check your biases.
 - ii. Remain curious and open to their opinions and viewpoints even if their statements contradict your beliefs, opinions, or values.
 - iii. Listen intensely by removing distractions and focusing on what they are saying and not what you are going to say or do next.
 - iv. Avoid interrupting while they are telling sharing their experience with you.
 - v. Repeat or rephrase what you think you heard them say. For example, “So, as I understand it...” or “Just to be sure I understand what you’re saying...” or “It sounds like...”
 - vi. Demonstrate that you are listening through verbal and non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, head nodding, body language, and comments, such as, “Take your time; I’m listening.”
 - vii. Offer to take breaks if it seems the youth/family member seems tired or distressed.
 - viii. Show empathy. It’s okay to react to show that you understand the impact their experience has had on them. However, remain calm and do not allow your emotions to add to their distress. Do not react more strongly than they have.
 - ix. Validate their feelings. For example, “It sounds like you are feeling betrayed/sad/angry/confused...” or “I can understand why you’d be upset about that...”
 - x. Allow them to direct the conversation. Ask follow-up questions related to what they have shared, not based on your own curiosity or what you may want to know. For example, “Is there anything else you’d like to tell me?” “What else do you remember?”
 - xi. If there are additional questions you need to ask, explain the purpose of the questions. For example, “There are a few questions I have that will help me understand the best way to help you and your family.”
 - b. Concluding the screening:
 - i. See Connection Protocol.
 - ii. Assure the child that what has happened to them is not their fault and that there are people who can help them.
 - iii. Ask if the youth/family has any questions for you.
 - iv. Explain what will happen next and ask if there is anything you can do to help.
 - v. Provide your contact information and referral information, as appropriate.

Adapted from the following resources

https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/reports/firstrep/bgavoc.html

IL HEALS Action Plan

Youth Mental Health First Aid