

Nebraska Youth-Friendly Clinic Recommendations



Introduction

Clinics should adopt youth-friendly clinic recommendations to meet the unique health needs of adolescents in a manner that makes young people feel comfortable, prepared, and inspired to make informed decisions about their health. The Nebraska Youth-Friendly Clinic Recommendations were created to meet Strategy A10b in the Adolescent Health Domain of the Nebraska state action plan for Title V of the Social Security Act; Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (Title V):

Using existing resources, the Adolescent Health Program will develop and test a Nebraska Youth-Friendly Clinical Environment toolkit for clinics in Nebraska. The toolkit will then be distributed, and evaluated for utilization and impact, possible adaptation and revision.

Multiple articles, toolkits, and fact sheets describing the key attributes that a youth-friendly clinic should possess have been published. The Nebraska Youth-Friendly Clinic Recommendations document consolidates consistently cited recommendations. We envision Nebraska clinics using this document to determine ways they can become more youth-friendly without having to perform an extensive review of the literature. Since several useful youth-friendly clinic tools already exist, the Adolescent Health Program created this consolidated document to provide clinics with implementation strategies they can use to operationalize the recommendations and examples of clinics that are currently implementing the recommendations. It should be noted that, due to the amount of literature available, the sources cited to create the Nebraska recommendations is not an exhaustive list.

The recommendations presented in this document were internally reviewed by Nebraska DHHS public health professionals that work on Title V projects and externally reviewed by youth-serving professionals employed at clinics in Nebraska. The feedback contributed by reviewers was incorporated into the document. Some implementation strategies do not have a direct citation because they are based on reviewers' expertise and experience.

Table Organization

Each table aligns with a defined theme or area of focus at a clinic. The "Our Recommendation" column lists the Adolescent Health Program's youth-friendly clinic recommendations. The "What Does Implementation Look Like?" column describes how a clinic can operationalize each recommendation.



Special thank you to Choice Family Health Care in Grand Island, NE and People's Family Health Services in North Platte, NE for contributing the example images in this document.

1. Physical Environment / Clinic Structure

Definition: The recommendations presented refer to the physical attributes within a clinic that appeal to adolescents and directly indicate that all adolescents are welcome. Further, policies and procedures that facilitate a clinic’s ability to best serve adolescents are included.

Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
<p>1A. Clinic is conveniently located and accessible to youth in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near public transportation. • Bike racks. • Bus passes. • Shuttle service. • Near businesses/public spaces frequented by adolescents. • Near schools. • Signage helps youth easily identify the clinic while still being neutral enough to prevent youth from being stigmatized for visiting the clinic. For example, a clinic would not want a sign that said “STD/STI” in big bold letters outside the clinic. • Offer telehealth / virtual care <p><i>* If a clinic determines that it is not conveniently located to youth, off-site or mobile services could be offered.</i></p>
<p>1B. Clinic environment is welcoming and appeals to youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinic should clearly welcome and support diverse youth (such as LGBTQIA+ youth, youth of all races and ethnicities, youth in foster care, and youth with disabilities). <div> </div> <p>Wall art displayed behind the front desk at Choice Family Health Care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display “Safe Space” signage in visible locations. • Comfortable Chairs. • Teen magazines. • Video game consoles. • WIFI – password should be clearly posted. • Wall art / Posters (may be created by local teens). • Decoration (less of a sterile looking environment). • Use of lamps or other non-florescent lighting in waiting rooms & other applicable areas. • Music (also used for auditory privacy). • Charging stations.

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Our Recommendation

1B. Clinic environment is welcoming and appeals to youth.

What does implementation look like?

- Paint colors - Should use a warm, comforting, modern color palette to make the clinic feel less sterile/uninviting.




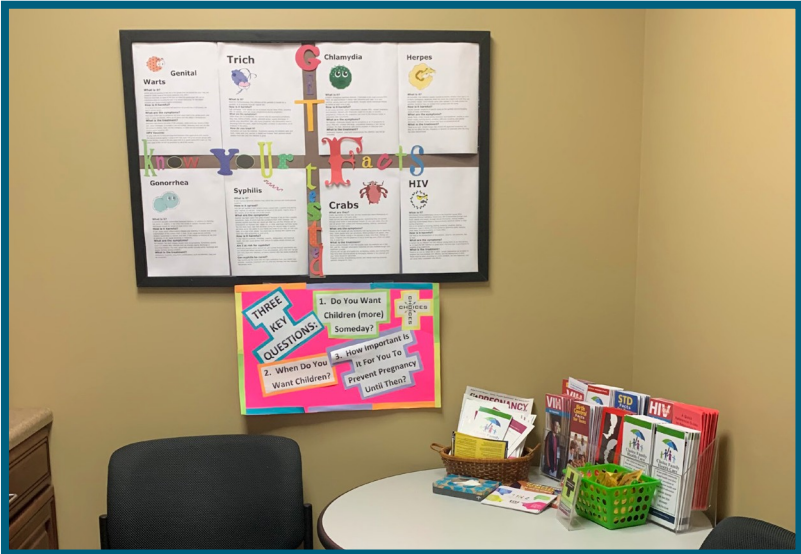
Choice Family Health Care updated their waiting room to be more youth friendly. Adolescents were surveyed to provide input on what paint color to use. The color blue was selected. Further research completed by staff found blue hues to be the most soothing.

- Décor should not create a space that feels too child-like or immature to youth.
- All staff hired should be friendly towards youth and reflect the population being served.
- Staff is allowed to wear “street clothes” when providing services to youth.



People's Family Health Services staff is allowed to wear “street clothes” to make people feel more comfortable while in the clinic.

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Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
<p>1B. Clinic environment is welcoming and appeals to youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff wears pronoun pins with their identified pronouns.  <p>People’s Family Health Services allow all staff to wear a pronoun button, if they choose.</p> <p><i>* Reminder that décor should be easy to clean & sanitize. For example, a beanbag chair would not be advised in a clinic setting.</i></p>
<p>1C. Patient forms are written in an easy to read format for youth who may be navigating the healthcare system independently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms are written to match the reading-level of the population being served. • Forms use inclusive language. • Options on the forms are inclusive, such as non-binary options for clients. This could include forms having “fill in the blank” options instead of “check the box” options. • Staff should be prepared to answer questions about the forms.
<p>1D. Posters, pamphlets, and other educational materials available are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and medically accurate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any materials produced and disseminated should clearly support diverse youth (such as LGBTQIA+ youth, youth of all races and ethnicities, youth in foster care, and youth with disabilities). • Posters should address common questions and concerns youth have about sexual and reproductive health.  <p>Choice Family Health Care’s education/testing room has posters and materials that address common questions, like STD/STIs and pregnancy intentions. All of their exam rooms have similar information and education materials.</p>

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Our Recommendation

1D. Posters, pamphlets, and other educational materials available are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and medically accurate.

What does implementation look like?



People's Family Health Services has a wall of free resource pamphlets and flyers in each exam room. This ensures patients have access to information. It also provides the medical provider with a quick reference to community resources, educational information and take home information.

- Materials available in the languages most spoken in the community.
- Materials written in a reading level that matches the literacy skills of the population served.
- Materials are available for youth to take.
- The identities represented on educational materials should reflect the population being served.

1E. Policy and procedures regarding clients' rights have been developed and are visibly posted throughout the clinic.

- Develop and post a non-discrimination policy so youth of all identities know they are welcome.
- A policy regarding confidentiality has been created and the confidentiality statement is prominently posted throughout the clinic.





Choice Family Health Care prominently posts their confidentiality policy for adolescent patients.

- Handouts are available that describe the posters in the clinic that further explain protections and limitations of confidentiality and minor consent. Information provided in a handout may include:
 - An overview of the insurance billing process and what information may show on an insurance's explanation of benefits.

Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
<p>1F. Adolescents have the ability to access multiple services during one visit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent clients may need to be scheduled for longer visits. • Let adolescent clients know which services are available so they know what they can request in a single visit. <div> </div> <p>Choice Family Health Care displays a standing banner that outlines the services adolescents can access.</p>
<p>1G. Clinic offers a separate waiting room and/or entrance for adolescent clients.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it may not be feasible for clinics to complete a construction effort to achieve this recommendation, a youth-only/youth-centered section could be an appropriate option for a waiting room • A youth-only/youth-centered waiting room and/or entrance may not appeal to all youth. A clinic will need to consider the population being served. If a clinic provides this option, it is important that adolescents still have the power to choose where they wait before their appointment, the door they use to enter the clinic, etc.
<p>1H. Spaces within the clinic provide visual and auditory privacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific areas within the clinic to assess visual and auditory privacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examination room. - Education/counseling areas. - Reception areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerable thought should be given to how reception areas are laid out and the processes by which adolescent patients check-in and submit their information. Clinics should consider the feasibility of providing patients some of the following options to create auditory privacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow patients to complete forms prior to their visit. - If a patient is uncomfortable talking to the front desk staff, provide them with the option of writing their reason for visit, name, and date of birth on a piece of paper to hand to the staff. <div> </div> <p>People's Family Health Services allow patients to complete a "soft check in" if they choose not to disclose their information aloud. This is an example of how "soft check in" works at the front desk. (The card does not include real patient information.)</p>

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Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
<p>1H. Spaces within the clinic provide visual and auditory privacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assign each patient a number, instead of their name, that will be used by staff to alert the patient it is time to go to the examination room for their appointment. • The following items create visual and auditory privacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Room dividers/Doors/Curtains by the exam table - White noise machine - Radio  <p>People's Family Health Services have a radio in each exam room to create white noise/a sound barrier.</p>
<p>1I. Clinic hours generally align with adolescents' availability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinic is open after school, nights, and weekends.
<p>1J. Services offered are low-cost or no-costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of services should accommodate youth without insurance or youth who are not able to utilize a parent/guardian's insurance plan. • If possible, policies should state that youth would not be denied services for their inability to pay.
<p>1K. Youth can easily access information regarding clinic hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If reproductive health services are offered on certain days, this should be clearly posted.  <p>The front door to the People's Family Health Services clinic clearly shows the hours of operation and days reproductive health services are available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours posted outside of the clinic and online. • The hours when an appointment is needed and when walk-ins are welcome are clearly posted online. • Clearly post youth-only hours outside of the clinic and online. • Clearly post estimated wait times in the waiting room and online.
<p>1L. Youth can easily schedule or walk in for an appointment.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(continued)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth have the ability to make an appointment online and via text message. • Youth will not experience a long wait time when scheduling an appointment. • Clinic offers walk-in appointments during "youth-only" hours.

Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
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1L. Youth can easily schedule or walk in for an appointment.

- Provide clarification if only certain services are available during walk-in appointments. Inform youth that they have the ability to schedule an appointment if a service they want is unavailable during their walk-in appointment.
- Clearly state what information youth should bring with them or have available at an appointment (e.g. Photo ID, SSN, insurance information, etc.). Clinics should consider how to communicate that personal documentation is requested, but not required to access services. Privacy concerns and/or ability to provide such documentation will not inhibit their ability to make an appointment or access high-quality care.



This is People's Family Health Services appointment card. The appointment card reminds patients to bring their photo ID, insurance card and proof of income. Staff communicate to young people that these items are not required for an appointment.

1M. Youth are given straightforward information about the cost of services.



- Staff should be able to clearly communicate a sliding fee scale, who is eligible for low cost/no cost services, etc.



In their exam room, People's Family Health Services has a poster providing information about fee expectations and the sliding fee scale.

- Provide a list of services and associated costs in an accessible format (e.g. internet, pamphlet in clinic).¹

¹Appelson, J., & Garrido, M. (2016). Youth-friendly services self-assessment tool. Healthy Teen Network. <https://www.healthyteennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/YF-Assessment-Guide-and-Tool.pdf>.

Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
<p>1N. Youth have seamless access to the contraceptive method of their choice, including free condoms during their visit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contraceptive services are delivered in accordance with the most up-to-date Quality Family Planning Recommendations (or similar best practice guidance). • Condoms should be available throughout the clinic, such as in the waiting room, bathrooms, clinic rooms, education rooms, etc. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>Left: People's Family Health Services has a condom basket at the front desk for anyone to take. Free condoms are also available in each exam room.</p> <p>Right: Choice Family Health Care has a condom basket in their waiting room. Condoms are packaged to be more discreet. Each package includes condoms, lubricant, and an STD educational card. Free condoms are also available in every bathroom, testing room, and patient exam room.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters and handouts that describe proper condom use should be available.
<p>10. Youth have direct access to clinic staff to answer their questions and/or concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a direct line to a provider, nurse, or health educator. Some youth may be uncomfortable trying to navigate a call center.

2. Staff Practices / Competencies

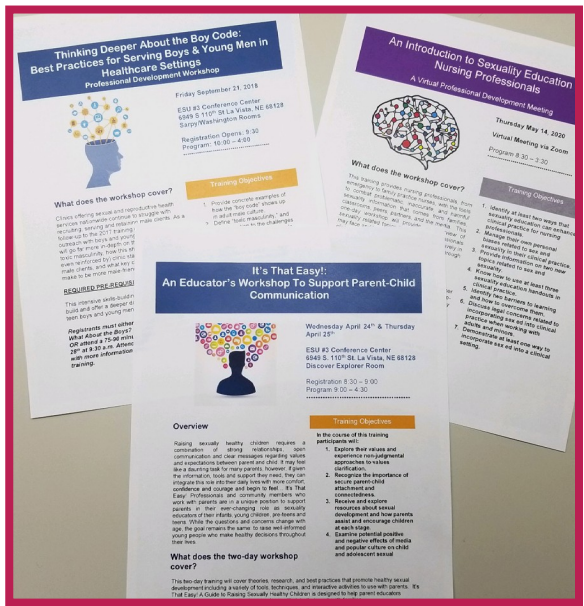
Definition: The recommendations presented refer to the specific knowledge, skills, and beliefs that staff should have to best serve adolescent clients.

Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
<p>2A. Staff have an understanding of the health needs of adolescents.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(continued)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific topics staff should be competent in discussing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abstinence - Puberty - Anatomy & Physiology - STDs/STIs & HIV/AIDS - Safer Sex Practices - Contraceptive Methods - Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity - Consent - Healthy Relationships - Human/Sex Trafficking/Coercion - Trauma-informed care - Behavioral health/Suicide prevention screening

Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
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2A. Staff have an understanding of the health needs of adolescents.

- Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) /Culturally competent care
- Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) screening and referrals to other needs services/resources
- Recognizing and know how to avoid using judgmental language, such as not using value-laden or ableist language
- Staff understand and can demonstrate the implementation of client-centered care approaches, such as Motivational Interviewing (MI).
- Staff should understand and use inclusive sexual history taking practices.
- Clinic leadership supports all staff having access to professional development opportunities, such as:
 - In-person trainings
 - Webinars
 - In-service trainings
 - Staff may dedicate time to review new resources and complete learning modules.



Past professional development trainings hosted by the Adolescent Health Program.

2B. Staff supports the clinic's mission and understands that adolescents are able to make informed decisions about their own health.

- Staff should be aware of their biases and implicit biases.
- Youth are actively involved in any decisions made about their health care during clinic visits.

2C. Staff have an understanding of federal and state laws/requirements on providing reproductive services to adolescents.

- Mandatory reporting.
- Confidentiality.
- Youth's ability to access services without parental consent.
- All staff are trained to be competent in clearly explaining protections, rights, and limitations in simple and straightforward terms to every adolescent client and their parent/guardian, if applicable.
- Specific limitations that staff may discuss –
 - Prescription pick-up from other pharmacies may require adolescents to provide identification, insurance coverage information, and/or parental consent.
 - Referral organizations may have different confidentiality policies and procedures.
 - Information that you would need to report if shared by the patient.

Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
<p>2D. Clinic staff knows how to effectively navigate parent, guardian, trusted adult or other trusted friend involvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent provided information on how to involve parents, guardians, trusted adults and other trusted friends in their care. <div> <p>TIPS ON TALKING WITH YOUR PARENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider starting with the parent or a trusted adult you're most comfortable with. • Choose a time when you're both relaxed. • If it's more comfortable, tell them about a "friend" and share your opinion. • Consider starting the conversation by asking them how they decided they were ready for sex. • If they get angry or upset, give them time to cool down and think about what they want to say. <p>Your parents might not agree with you and may try to change your mind. Hey, they're parents, they worry about you and care about your safety. This is your chance to be responsible with the decisions you make. Talking about tough subjects with your parent or trusted adult may bring you closer. If you want to discuss other ways to talk with your parents, call us.</p> <p>Talking to your parents about sex can be awkward. Avoiding the topic altogether can be even more awkward.</p> <p>Let's face it: nobody—absolutely nobody—wants to have the dreaded "talk" with their parents. But hey, they've been there and have years of experience. Talking with a parent or another trusted adult is a responsible step towards adulthood. For tips on how to talk to your parents about sex, call us.</p> <p><small>Nebraska Health Services Division This publication is supported by Grant #8 PPH04A076814-03-00 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service—Office of Population Affairs and Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health—Nebraska Reproductive Health</small></p> <p><small>DHHS</small></p> <p><small>PH-OTM-1 9/16</small></p> <p>Nebraska Reproductive Health <i>Helping build healthier families</i></p> </div> <p>A Talking With Parents handout created by the Reproductive Health Program in 2015.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent informed if clinic is required to communicate with a parent/guardian for any reason. • Parent/Guardian communication tools available. • Adolescent is provided time alone with the provider during the clinic visit.
<p>2E. Staff adhere to clinic confidentiality policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient information is only shared with staff that are providing care to the adolescent client. • Patient information is not discussed between staff in communal areas.
<p>2F. A referral system is in place to provide youth "warm hand-offs" to other youth-friendly organizations in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated list of referral organizations that welcome and support youth making informed decisions about their own health is maintained by clinic staff.
<p>2G. Staff have an understanding of public insurance options and healthcare subsidy programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific public insurance options and subsidy programs that staff should be competent in discussing and/or able to appropriately refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heritage Health Adult (Medicaid) - CHIP - State Pap Plus Program - Title X - FQHCs - Local Health Department's services - Local funding initiatives <p>* <i>Staff will need to determine what public health insurance options youth are eligible to apply for dependent upon their age.</i></p>
<p>2H. Staff are competent in clearly explaining services and treatment in simple and straightforward terms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth should understand the services and treatment they are receiving. • Consistent, health literate and plain language communication about services and treatments exists between departments. • Staff are prepared to dispel common myths and fears about services and treatments. Staff should also practice cultural humility and practice with awareness that common myths/fears may be based on lived experience and/or historical trauma.

3. Clinic Promotion, Outreach, & Follow-up

Definition: The recommendations presented refer to practices that should be adopted to enhance adolescent engagement in clinic services.

Our Recommendation

3A. Clinic promotion should be available in spaces and on platforms frequented by youth.

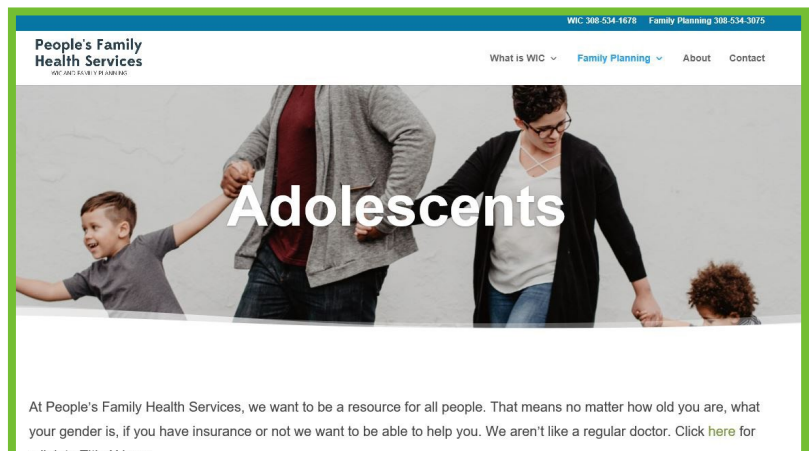
What does implementation look like?

- Health educators and outreach staff should be present at community events to provide education and clinic promotion.



Youth focused promotional materials distributed by Choice Family Health Care. Promotional items include phone chargers, ear buds, phone rings, pens and stress balls.

- Promotion should provide youth with a clear understanding of which services they have access to and where/when they can access them.
- Promotion can familiarize youth with what they can expect when visiting the clinic.
- Platforms to consider: Website, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.



People's Family Health Service's website has a page specifically for adolescents.

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Our Recommendation	What does implementation look like?
3A. Clinic promotion should be available in spaces and on platforms frequented by youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place ads during movie theatre previews, on music streaming services, and/or sponsored posts on social media platforms.
3B. Feedback from youth regarding their clinic experience is welcomed and encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clinic feedback survey is available to adolescents in different formats (e.g. online, in-person paper surveys, etc.). A suggestion box is present in the clinic. A clinic may form a youth advisory council to determine ways they can better serve adolescents. Conduct a youth focus group to receive insight on youth's experiences at your clinic.
3C. Youth have access to clinic and their medical information when the clinic is closed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automated messages. Patients receive text reminders about their upcoming appointment and/or when their next birth control refill is due. If it aligns with a clinic's policies and procedures, an adolescent could consent to giving a friend's number, so if the patient misses their appointment or refill the friend can be sent a reminder too. While it may not be feasible for all clinics, an online patient portal would provide youth 24/7 access to their medical information.

Resources

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