

PATIENT VOICES NETWORK: ENGAGING YOUNG ADULTS

In order to reflect the diverse population of our province, it's important that health care partners involve a wide range of ages and viewpoints in health care planning and discussions.

Engaging younger volunteers requires special planning to ensure you are successful. The most common barriers include a lack of time and concerns they do not have enough experience to contribute.

To help support the engagement of young patient partners, we've put together this resource full of tips, tricks and key considerations to keep in mind when recruiting and building relationships with a younger audience.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOUNG VOLUNTEERS?

Motivation to participate often comes from alignment with personal and professional goals, as well as a flexible framework.

Through engagement opportunities, young volunteers are given the chance to:

- Learn about the health care system and new directives
- Ensure the interests of young adults are represented in the future of health care
- Build a network with potential future health care providers
- Gain volunteer experience and build skills that can be added to resumes
- Grow personally and professionally

COMMUNICATION TIPS:

- Ask about the best way to communicate. Email may not always be the most convenient channel. Is texting an option?
- Younger people use cell phones, which may have limited voice plans – especially during the day. Suggest they check their phone plans to see if toll free calling is included free of charge.
- Consider other forms of communication to reach younger volunteers, such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Ensure that any social media activity is aligned with your organization's social media policy.
- Plan periodic check-ins to make sure younger patient partners feel that their voices are being heard. These could also be done by a staff member.
- Keep in mind that volunteering in this capacity may be intimidating for young adults. It may take some time for them to get used to the new environment and become comfortable enough to share their opinions.
- At group meetings they may feel hesitant to speak up if several team members are talking in tandem. Consider adopting a "roll call" to ensure everyone has a designated turn to speak.
- Make sure they feel connected and valued. Suggest a face-to-face meeting at the start of the project, help them understand why they are being engaged, and be clear on the end goal of the opportunity.
- Be especially sensitive to the language that is used throughout the opportunity. Is there too much medical jargon?
- Check in regularly. Ask if young patient partners are experiencing any barriers to participation.



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MEETING LOGISTICS:

- Daytime meetings may not be possible due to work and school schedules; consider meetings in the evenings or on weekends.
- If meeting times are not flexible, can you change the method of participation? Consider arranging a phone call to discuss what is on the agenda in order to get their feedback prior to the event. Alternatively, you could share minutes after the meeting to ensure patient partners can still contribute after the meeting has taken place.
- If meetings are held in the evenings, choose locations that provide safe access, include parking, and coordinate with evening transit schedules.
- When choosing public locations for your meetings, consider schools, community centres or other locations that will be familiar to the population you are hoping to engage.

Other Considerations:

TIPS FOR YOUNG ADULTS:

- Review whether there are participants under the age of 18 – you will likely need their parents' consent.
- Youth typically are more comfortable participating with a friend vs. coming alone.

TIPS FOR UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE STUDENTS:

- Schedules and commitments are continually changing. Each semester, availability will change and exam schedules are often beyond a student's control.
- Students may be especially interested in opportunities that help further their educational and career goals.
- Be mindful of expenses. Be diligent about covering costs in advance, as some students may not have the financial stability to wait up to six weeks for reimbursement. They also may not be comfortable speaking up if this is the case. If possible, offer free meals and snacks at meetings and events.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN RECRUITING YOUNG PARENTS:

- Do you need to choose a meeting location which provides childcare?
- Can you cover childcare expenses?



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