



Asset-Building Ideas for Health-Care Providers

While most of your interactions with patients are probably brief and episodic, you can make the most of those times by building assets for your young patients and for the children of your adult patients. You'll probably enjoy it, and adults and young people alike will leave your office feeling good about themselves, about you, and about your organization. You'll also be helping young people thrive and be well; the more assets they have, the more likely they are to lead healthy lifestyles and avoid risky behaviors. Here are some ideas for what health-care providers can do to build assets:

- ▶ **Pay attention whenever you see a child or teenager—whether they're in your care or not.** Take time to say hello. If you have a few moments, ask questions and express your interest in the person.
- ▶ **Turn your waiting room into an asset-building area.** Have toys and books for younger children, magazines for older children, and notebooks for teens and adults that include information about asset building. If your community has an asset-building initiative, include information about it in the notebook.
- ▶ **Collaborate with schools and youth-serving organizations** to provide health care/healthy lifestyle information to young people.
- ▶ **Support local asset-building efforts** with financial, human, or in-kind resources.
- ▶ **Learn the names of your patients.** Ask them what they prefer to be called, note that in their charts, and then use those names throughout your visits.
- ▶ **Learn the names of your employees' and coworkers' children.** Regularly ask about how their children are doing.
- ▶ **Look patients in the eyes when you talk with them.** If an adult patient has a child accompanying her or him, get down on the child's level and engage the child in a short conversation.
- ▶ **Share information about asset building with parents,** especially new parents.
- ▶ **Keep track of some personal information about each patient.** For example, if you learn that a young person loves soccer, make a note of it. When the patient returns, scan these notes and ask about how the soccer playing is going. Keeping track of personal details not only gives a better picture of someone's health, but it also helps you make a quick personal connection.
- ▶ **Be respectful of patients' time and other commitments.** If you're running behind, ask your staff to inform patients of the delay as soon as they arrive.
- ▶ **Build relationships with chronically ill patients or patients who need care often.** Learn their names and a little about them so you can engage in conversation without having to consult a chart.
- ▶ **Empower patients by telling them how you are going to examine them before you actually do so.** Ask them how they're feeling if you detect any hesitation on their part. For example, don't assume a patient is experienced or comfortable with giving blood.
- ▶ **If your organization has a community advisory group or board, include young people.**



- **If your organization has a mission statement, add a statement about a commitment to young people.**
- **Host an “asset-building day”** and invite young people (children of employees, students, participants in a neighborhood youth program) to visit your organization for a day.
- **Offer young people opportunities to learn** more about working in a health-care organization through volunteering.
- **Host a community event focused on health and health care.** One community hospital has annual “health challenges.” They give young people a tour, teach them some health-care basics, and let them help out with several tasks. The same community also holds a “health bee,” where young

people are asked questions about health care. Once kids are finished, they go across the street to a recreational facility where they can swim, play sports, and eat snacks provided by nutritionists.

- **Audit your human resources policies to be youth- and family-friendly** (such as flexible scheduling, time off to volunteer or take care of family, tax-deferred day-care payment options).
- **Consider how you can be an asset builder not only in the office but also after hours.** In what ways do you enjoy connecting with children and youth? What interactions and activities fit best with your schedule? What unique skills or interests can you share with a young person?