

Angela Diaz: Hi, my name is Angela Diaz, and I would like to talk with you about why it's so important to have another lesson in young adult friend culture in your healthcare systems. When people hear the word culture, they usually think about place of origin, language, and things like that. But after working around the globe with youth, with young people, I really have come to understand that there's a culture of other lessons. And the lives that they live today are very complex and there's tremendous stress in many of their lives.

Angela Diaz: So we really need to understand and appreciate that when we work with them and we need to help them feel comfortable, we need for them to feel that we are not judging them, that we're there really to try to help them, that we are in this together in whatever it is that they want to achieve, we are trying to facilitate that process in the context of their development.

Angela Diaz: So it's very important to understand the culture of adolescents. The research also shows that when you provide services in a way that is teen-friendly, that increases the use by young people of your services. They come, much more likely to come, when you provide teen-friendly services. The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center is a learning organization, we are never static. We are around for 50 years and we are always evolving, always changing based on the needs of young people or what they tell us, or what is happening in the environment that affects them.

Angela Diaz: For example, when we began, we were not working with transgender. We had kids who were gay, lesbian, bisexual, question in youth, but now that there are many young people, they have come out saying now because they are transgender, so now we have a program about transgender youth. So we have to learn how to work with them. We have to learn about their needs. We have to learn how to work with their parents. And then now we really have tremendous expertise in that area.

Angela Diaz: The young people make our program. We are about them, but the other very important piece is the staff. So we can teach them the content and how to work with the young people, but they really have to be passionate. They have to understand that population, that we are there to serve them. That is really, really key. The other thing that I think is important for young people is to sit and self-reflect it in the staff. So we try to really have a very diverse staff, not just in term of race, ethnicity, language, but also we have staff who are gay, who are lesbians, who are transgender. We have staff with disabilities. We have staff that really almost any young person coming to us can see themselves in that person.

Angela Diaz: And the reason that I think is so important is because a young person can look at themselves in that staff and see possibilities for them. It's not just about the connection and getting the services, but they see, "I can be a social worker. I can be a doctor. I can be a health educator," because a person that looks just like them is. And sometimes they had not had those life experiences before.

Angela Diaz: At the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, we have like 17 different disciplines. You know, as a physician, among adolescent medicine person, I'm not able to meet all of their needs. We need all these people with differing expertise to work together as a team and it's not enough just to have multiple disciplines. The services have to be delivered interdisciplinary. People have to work together around the young person. And even when we do the treatment plan, we bring all the different disciplines and then we work together. And for certain group of young people that we know have very complex needs, the staff may regularly and discuss the cases and do treatment plan together. It's really, really important to do that.

Angela Diaz: Since we provide services from age 10 to 24, around age 22 or so, we start working with young people about transition. We tell them that when they turn 24, they will age out of our services and that they will need to go to an adult system hopefully in medical home. So at age 22 we start working with them to prepare them for that transition. And as we get closer, we make sure for example, if they need a physical, they gather their physical. If they need an IUD, they get their IUD. If they need immunization, we just make sure they get everything that they need and then we help them connect to young adult system.

Angela Diaz: And often they want to keep coming back, but we encourage them to stay there. And we just don't say, "You need to, you're aged out," we actually find places and connect them to those places, help them make the appointment to make it easier for them and give everything to them in writing or so just to facilitate that transition because it's not so easy to transition for young people.