

Notes from Psychiatric Inpatient Sensitivity Training with Mickie Hoffman from Bronx Lebanon Inpatient - February 13, 2013.

In attendance:

Actors: Dan Domingues, Channie Waites, Mark Emerson, Ashley Robinson, Saluda Camp, Dax Valdes

Buddies: Sue McCabe, Denesha Taylor

Staff: Jackie Miller, Rachel Cappy

Overall takeaways:

- During the show don't forget: you are in charge and call the shots.
- Feel empowered to ask staff to pay attention. That is why they are there-it's their job.
- It's always your right to stop the show if necessary.

Physical interactions with patients:

- In the event a child demonstrates violent behavior toward you key words to remember are AVOID and RUN. Do whatever you need to put a physical barrier in between you and the child. A facility staff member will intervene as soon as they are able but your initial reaction should be to get yourself out of harm's way as quickly as possible.
- In order to avoid frightening or intimidating a child who may be dealing with trauma from past abuse initiate touch in a positive or "safe moment" such as when they are dressing up at the beginning of a show.
- Physical teasing between kids (poking, hitting, kicking a chair) is a big deal and taken seriously by the staff. The sites emphasize early intervention with their staff. If you see teasing going on, even at the smallest level, address it right away or bring it to the attention of a staff member immediately. Stop it before it can escalate to something larger.

Verbal interactions with patients:

- Patients will use strangers to purge information. This is usually the impetus for sharing personal or inappropriate information.
- Negative attention feels better than no attention at all. Some ideas on how to respond when a child shares inappropriate information with you either during or before/after a show:
 - "Ignore the negative and support the positive"; if it feels effective to ignore or deflect the comment and move on, do.
 - Work the comment in to the show and diffuse it using humor.

- If the severity of the comment merits stopping the show you should. You always have the option and right to stop a show and ask a staff member to intervene. If necessary, ask for the child to be removed from the room.
- Remember that **nothing** a patient says to you is ever personal. Guests are an easy target.
- When making small talk with a child in an inpatient facility try to steer clear of current or recent events like holidays, birthdays, or vacations. Chances are the child has been in the facility during the occasion. Conversely, you could try asking "How was Thanksgiving at (insert name of site)?"