

Do's and don'ts

AOD client engagement and participation activities

Insight Training and Education Unit
 Metro North Mental Health – Alcohol and Drug Service
 Metro North Hospital and Health Service
 Floor 4, 270 Roma St, Brisbane QLD 4000
 Phone: 07 3837 5655

You can increase chances of success by considering some of the key things to do and avoid doing throughout your chosen client engagement and participation activity. You may wish to add your own thoughts to information below.

Do:

- Invite several clients.
- Invite peer-based drug user organisations to recruit representatives (e.g. AIVL, QuIHN, QuIVAA).
- Invite people who no longer use drugs.
- Hold a meeting or consultation in a low-key setting.
- Provide payment for participation and provide monetary payment wherever possible – most people are paid to attend meetings. Client contributions should be remunerated and/or at least reimbursed.
- Meet clients at a time and place that is easiest for them.
- Listen to answers and take them seriously.
- Show flexibility with meeting styles and times.
- Ask clients what they need.
- Acknowledge your own feelings and that unfamiliarity with the process may make you uncomfortable.
- Assign clients to be on a committee and / or board.
- Consider client informed training for you and other committee members specific to the issue of AOD client involvement.
- Ensure service and client confidentiality.
- Incorporate client participation into service activities at the earliest opportunity.

Avoid:

- Inviting just one client.
- Hand-picking the same client you know you are comfortable with.
- Always inviting people who no longer use – it's okay to invite people who used to use as they have significant contributions to offer, but they are not the same perspective of people who currently use drugs.
- Inviting people who no longer use drugs instead of inviting active users.
- Holding meetings in a government building if there are alternatives.
- Assuming that clients will just spend payment on drugs.
- Holding a meeting a days or times when you know clients may not attend.
- Identifying what individual participants say in meetings or group proceedings.
- Asking a question just because it is politically correct or involving clients is the 'right thing to do'.
- Holding a meeting just the way you are used to doing it if there is a better way to do it.
- Being afraid to ask.
- Assuming that clients are the problem and the only ones who need to learn.
- Running your committee or board meetings without acknowledging that it may be the first time for clients in this setting.
- Thinking clients may not need additional information or access to support.
- Inviting clients at the last minute.
- Thinking that clients cannot do more (e.g. work for your service in a paid position)