

IMPLEMENTATION OF Individual Donor Assessment

Individual Donor Assessment Conversation Training: Key Messages

Messages of Welcome and Commitment

Engaging donors starts even before they enter the blood collection facility. These messages of welcome are especially crucial when it comes to new donors, and especially those from equity-deserving groups who may not have been eligible to donate historically. Use these messages as appropriate to welcome donors and reinforce the blood community's commitment to a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for all.

- We are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and access. We're continuing to make the blood donation process more inclusive while continuing to protect the safety of the blood supply.
- Blood centers are safe and inclusive spaces. Inappropriate language and/or behavior will not be tolerated.
- We are grateful to donors and prospective donors of all ages and backgrounds and welcome them to our centers.
- FDA recently published a guidance recommending individual donor assessment screening criteria for all donors, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Best Practices for Welcoming Donors Inclusively

- Avoid misgendering; don't assume the person's gender based on their name or appearance.
- Use gender-neutral language: avoid terms like "Miss," "Sir," or "Ladies and Gentlemen."
- Instead, use language like "Hi there," "Hey everyone" or "Excuse me, folks."
- If you make a mistake, apologize briefly, or say, "Thanks for correcting me," and then move on using the correct terms.
- Avoid getting defensive; staying calm and respectful is the best way to defuse the situation.

Self-awareness and Bias

- Slow down to combat unconscious bias.
- Surface unconscious biases by observing your thoughts, feelings and emotions.
- Maintain a neutral tone, posture and expression when responding.
- Counteract bias over the long term: Listen, learn and reflect.

Sharing Pronouns

- It's ok to ask about pronouns. You can say something like "Hi, my name is _____ and I use the pronouns _____. How would you like me to address you?"
- Early identification and proper pronoun usage have been recognized as a prudent first step to establishing effective communication and trust with transgender and nonbinary individuals.
- Consider adding pronouns to your nametag and email signature.

Responding to Upset or Angry Donors

Donors may get upset for various reasons. They may be frustrated at the slow pace of change and angry that they have been unable to donate previously, they may feel uncomfortable or offended by the individual donor assessment screening questions or they may get angry upon being deferred.

In all cases, the model for responding is Thanks, Acknowledge, Inform.

THANK	ACKNOWLEDGE	INFORM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for voicing your concerns/questions/frustrations. • We appreciate all feedback to help us improve what we're doing. • We really appreciate your patience with this process. • Thank you so much for coming in today. We really appreciate it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that you are very upset/frustrated/angry. That's totally understandable. • I'm sorry that this experience has been so difficult/painful/frustrating for you. • I can understand why you are upset, and I am sorry you feel this way. • I know this questionnaire is long and asks lots of sensitive questions. I'm sorry about that. • It's completely natural to feel uncomfortable/nervous/etc. • We truly understand that being turned away from donating blood can leave any donor with a sense of frustration and disappointment. • We recognize that eligibility criteria for men who have sex with men and transgender and nonbinary donors is a particularly sensitive issue affecting many who have experienced longstanding marginalization and stigma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The blood community is working diligently toward greater inclusivity for donors while maintaining a safe and adequate supply of blood products for the patients we serve. • We are continuing to take steps to modify our practices and policies and cultivate a donor base and workforce that more fully and equitably reflects our diverse population. • We do have policies in place to prevent HIV transmission. We are confident in our policies that are evidence informed and their ability to ensure a safe blood supply.

A Word About Apologies

- If you make a mistake and offend someone you need to apologize, listen, acknowledge and move on. We are human and we will make mistakes.
- Apologies need not be long, drawn-out or emotional. Excessive apologizing can create additional discomfort and should be avoided.
- You can apologize for the impact on the person without apologizing for actions out of your control or intent.
- For example, you may not have a choice about deferring a donor, but you can apologize for the impact regardless: “I’m so sorry you won’t be able to donate today. I understand how frustrating this must be.”

Responding to Non-inclusive/Discriminatory Comments

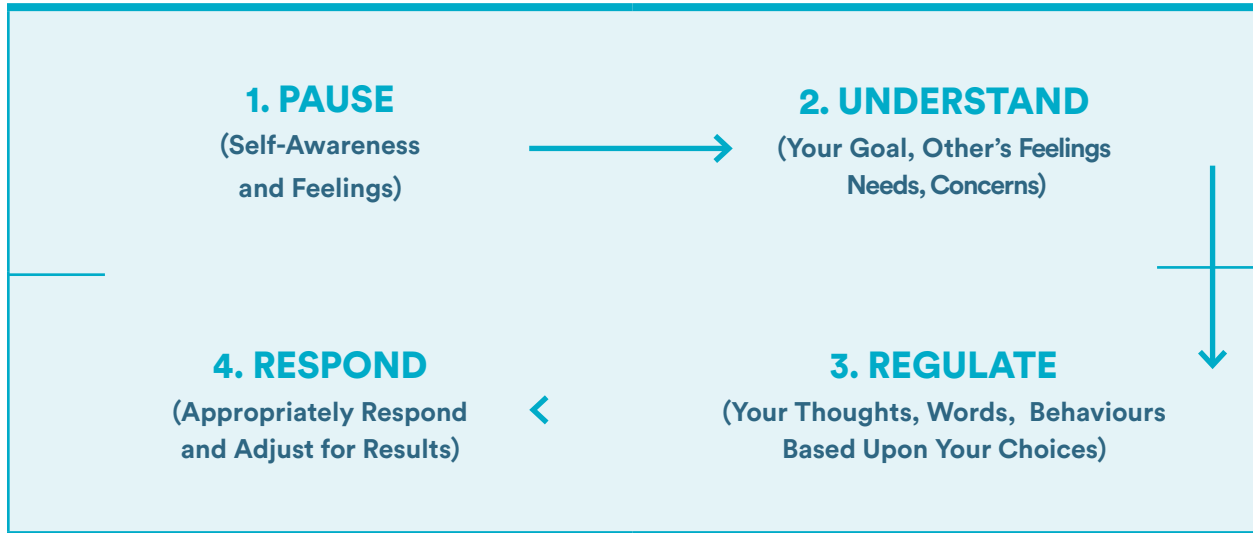
- Intervene when you witness offensive behavior or language.
- Stress that our centres are safe and inclusive spaces: all donors are welcome.
- Emphasize that inappropriate language and/or behaviors will not be tolerated.
- Provide facts to counteract misinformation.
- Your psychological safety is important. If you feel that you cannot engage in a way that maintains psychological safety for yourself in situations like this, it is okay to ask for help from a supervisor or another colleague. This is especially important for employees who are LGBTQ+ or from other equity-deserving groups.
- For colleagues who are not LGBTQ+ or another equity deserving group, it is a strong gesture of allyship to assist a colleague with the above by using inclusive language when engaging with a donor using the steps above.

Managing Your Emotions: Best Practices

You have a challenging role as the public face of a blood center and the main point of contact for donors. It’s normal and natural for you to feel nervous, uncomfortable, frustrated or any other emotion, and it’s important that you take steps to manage these emotions, for your own benefit as well as for donors.

- In moments of tension and emotion, remember the P-U-R-R Model: take a moment to pause, check in with yourself and your thoughts, words and behaviors and respond calmly and mindfully to the situation.
- Avoid word choices that provoke defensive reactions.
- Use nonjudgmental, sex-positive language: i.e., “sexual practices” not “risky behavior”
- Stay away from imperatives like “calm down.” No one responds well to being told what to do or not do when they’re upset.
- Pay attention to your non-verbals: keep your posture relaxed, voice calm and low, face neutral.
- Avoid getting upset; wait to respond until you are calm.

P-U-R-R
(Pause-Understand-Regulate-Respond)



AABB partnered with Canadian Blood Services in the development of these materials.

Additional information and resources on individual donor assessment is available at aabb.org/ida.