

## Youth at Risk of Behavioral Dysregulation in the Emergency & Crisis Setting

**Behavioral dysregulation** refers to a pattern of difficulties in controlling or managing one's behaviors in a way that is safe and appropriate, often resulting in impulsivity, aggression, or emotional outbursts. This can be related to physical health factors, developmental factors, psychiatric factors, psychosocial factors, substance use, or a combination of these factors. Youth with a history of trauma may be particularly at risk.

## Establish Environmental Safety

- Ensure the environment is safe and free of any potential weapons or items that could be distressing for the patient
- Introduce items that may promote patient safety, including a TV, tablet, music, sensory toys, or safe preferred items
- Implement the appropriate level of observation given the patient's medical and mental health needs
- Notify appropriate members of the care team of the patient's potential risk for behavioral dysregulation; this may include the providers involved, the bedside RN, the charge RN, social work, security, or other supportive staff
- Parents or support people may be helpful in identifying objects and techniques that have historically helped

## Determine Etiologies of Dysregulation

- [Pediatric Psychopharmacology Clinical Decision Flowchart for Acute Behavioral Escalation Management](#) for assessment of potential etiologies contributing to the risk of behavioral dysregulation and to identify tailored ways to support the patient and family

## Non-Pharmacological Management Using Trauma-Informed and Developmentally-Tailored Care

- [ECSC Behavioral Plan of Care to Address Youth Behavioral Dysregulation](#)
- [ECSC Daily Schedule to Address Youth Behavioral Dysregulation](#) for patient routine
- [ECSC Crisis and Coping Workbook for Youth and Families](#)

## Pharmacological Management

- [ECSC Psychopharmacology Reference Card to Address Youth Behavioral Dysregulation](#) for medication and dosage information

## MC3 Psychiatric Consultation

Request a consultation with an MC3 psychiatrist for guidance on:

- Assessment and diagnostic clarification
- Medication recommendations
- Behavioral interventions for patients
- Complex mental health disposition or resource referrals

Submit an MC3 psychiatric consultation request by visiting [MC3Michigan.org/request-consultation-emergencydept](https://MC3Michigan.org/request-consultation-emergencydept) or scan the QR code.



*This resource has been adapted from the following source:* Hoffmann, J. A., Pergjika, A., Konicek, C. E., & Reynolds, S. L. (2021). Pharmacologic Management of Acute Agitation in Youth in the Emergency Department. *Pediatric emergency care*, 37(8), 417–422. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PEC.0000000000002510>