

Comprehensive youth-friendly services

“Young people face many barriers to using sexual and reproductive health services, for example, laws and policies may restrict young people’s access to affordable services and correct information, or they may feel embarrassed at being seen at clinics or, simply, they do not have information that such services exist.”

– **Elina, Finland¹**

Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services are those that attract young people, respond to their needs, and retain young clients for continuing care. Youth-friendly services are based on a comprehensive understanding of what young people in a given society or community want, and on respect for the realities of their diverse sexual and reproductive lives. The aim is to provide all young people with services they trust and which they feel are intended for them.

All clients of sexual and reproductive health services have the right to information about the benefits and availability of services and to access these services, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, religious or political beliefs, ethnicity or disability. They have a right to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, disease and violence and to decide freely whether and how to control their fertility and other aspects of their sexual health. Service providers should treat all young people with dignity and respect, assure confidentiality, offer a comfortable and relaxed environment and provide services for as long as needed.

Optimum youth-friendly services offer an integrated range of different services, or a good referral system to high-quality specialist services, and should include:

- sexuality information
- counselling
- family planning
- pregnancy testing
- safe abortion
- testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV and
- services for those who experience emotional or physical (domestic) violence, rape, gender-based violence, trafficking or female genital mutilation.

Providing a referral system to specialist services

It is important that health service providers establish partnerships and referral systems to ensure that young people receive all the services they require.

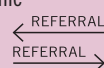
→ GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

IRELAND

A referral system between two health clinics was set up as part of the Coordinating STI and Family Planning Services project. The GUIDE clinic based at St James Hospital and the Everywoman clinic of the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA), which is the IPPF Member Association, can refer clients to each other for complementary services. If, for example, young people go to the GUIDE clinic for emergency contraception, which the clinic is not able to provide, they are referred to the Everywoman clinic. Similarly, IFPA clients who cannot afford the €150 charge for STI testing are referred to the GUIDE clinic for free testing.

GUIDE

Hospital-based young people’s clinic
Free STI/HIV testing
No emergency contraception



IFPA

Everywoman clinic
STI testing €150
Emergency contraception
Free oral contraception

If a young person requests emergency contraception at IFPA, they automatically receive counselling and information on other risks related to unprotected sex and are encouraged to undertake STI screening. IFPA may provide free oral contraception for a year, depending on the client’s personal situation, for example if they have no insurance or medical card. Young people can also receive a free screening if they are on their parents’ medical card and do not wish to use it for reasons of confidentiality.

Youth-friendly services can be provided in a variety of settings, ranging from a clinic reserved exclusively for young people, to adding ‘adolescents-only’ hours at existing facilities, providing emergency hotlines, or offering services in places where young people congregate, such as schools, youth centres, sporting events or work sites. For community and/or outreach workers, this might mean including sexual and reproductive health discussion or counselling during their outreach activities and home visits to young people. When sexual and reproductive health services are provided within a larger healthcare facility, young people should be able to reach them without drawing attention to themselves, for example through a separate and discreet entrance/exit from the main clinic entrance.

¹ Juntunen, E. (2004) Youth Friendly Services: Why do young people need special services? *Entre Nous* No.58 pp.24
www.euro.who.int/document/ens/en58.pdf

Convenient and dedicated opening hours for young people

Sexual and reproductive health services for young people should be easy to reach, closely situated to where they congregate, or easily accessible by public transport. It should be made clear – both in promotional and informational materials and in the health centre itself – where to go and who to see. Services should be available at times when young people can attend (i.e. before and after school or work), and there should also be drop-in times when young clients can receive services without an appointment. In clinics that cannot offer special hours for adolescents only, then a ‘fast-track’ system can be used so that young people do not have to wait.

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SWEDEN

The clinic run by Riksförbundet för Sexuell Upplysning (RFSU), IPPF's Member Association in Sweden, is the largest youth clinic in Sweden. It is one of the few places where people with problems related to sexuality, including people with disabilities and victims of sexual violence, can seek advice and treatment. The clinic offers designated hours for young people and free services covering contraception counselling and STI prevention, and sexual counselling and psychotherapy. The staff include a physician, midwives, nurses, and psychotherapists. For more information, see: www.rfsu.se

NORWAY

The Klinikk for Seksuell Opplysning (KSO) is a youth clinic in Norway funded by the City of Oslo and the Norwegian Government. The KSO clinic opens five days per week, and until 9 pm four days per week, making its services particularly accessible to young people. Young people under 25 are able to receive contraception, testing for STIs and pregnancy, and other support for sexual health and related problems, free of charge. It is especially important that services are free to those under 16, because this group is not covered under the government health policy to receive contraceptives. In 2006, nearly 9000 young people used the clinic's services.

For more information, see www.unghelse.no – a youth-oriented website – and www.seksuellopplysning.no

SPAIN

Federación de Planificación Familiar de España (FPFE), the IPPF Member Association in Spain, runs three Youth-Friendly Centres, which have been offering a Sexuality and Contraception Healthcare Youth Programme since 1990. Young people under the age of 29 can receive assistance based on respect and non-discrimination, confidentiality and anonymity, and a comprehensive and immediate service without waiting. The centres are open every day at various hours, including Saturday and Sunday mornings in Madrid and Barcelona, making it especially convenient for young people. They offer sexual health information and counselling online, via telephone and face to face, and provide medical services such as HIV and STI testing, contraception including hormonal contraception, IUD and emergency contraception, psychological support and gynaecological examinations. Pricing is on a sliding scale, with young

people receiving most services free of charge. The gynaecological services that require a fee are considerably cheaper than in the private sector.

For more information, see: www.fpfe.org/guiasexjoven

Ensuring training and support for service providers

The needs of service providers must also be addressed, to make clients' rights a reality. All service providers require training to ensure they have the knowledge and skills they need to perform all the tasks required of them and should receive regular guidance, support and encouragement to reinforce their commitment and competence. Additionally, they need the appropriate physical facilities, organization and supplies to provide services according to high-quality standards.²

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UK

Subsidized by the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, the UK Family Planning Association (UK fpa), the IPPF Member Association in the UK, offers Promoting Choice Training for midwives, health professionals and non-health professionals with the aim of enabling effective communication in a non-judgmental and inclusive way with teenage parents, and supporting them in preventing unplanned pregnancies and protecting their sexual health. Participants are shown how to recognize the factors that lead to unintended pregnancies, and to identify opportunities to care for their sexual health. They can learn how to discuss the pros and cons of appropriate methods of contraception and how to support young people in making informed choices and securing further contraceptive services.

For more information, see: www.fpa.org.uk/training/training_links/detail.cfm?contentid=748

ESTONIA

The Estonian Sexual Health Association (ESHA), IPPF Member Association, opened its first Youth Counselling Centre (YCC) in 1991 to encourage responsible sexual behaviour by young people under 25, and to minimize the number of unwanted pregnancies and STIs. Today there are 18 AMOR YCCs all over Estonia, which received 27,763 visitors in 2006. All services are free of charge and include contraceptive and sexual counselling, STI/HIV testing, pre- and post-abortion counselling, counselling for rape victims, and sexuality education lectures, mainly for school pupils. Free condoms are also given out.

ESHA provides all YCC staff with basic training in working with young people, covering issues such as sexuality, sexuality education, STIs, HIV and gynaecological examination. Ongoing training aims to enable staff to explore their attitudes and to discuss their experiences working with young people, which is an essential part of their professional development and service quality.

² IPPF (2006) Quality of Care Training Manuals. London: IPPF
www.ippf.org/en/Resources/Medical/Quality+of+Care+training+manuals.htm

FINLAND

Open-Door Youth Service (ODYS) is a programme run in Helsinki by Väestöliitto, the IPPF Member Association in Finland. ODYS carries out a variety of activities for young people, including a clinic, advice services, training for professionals and publishing sexuality education materials. The clinic's services are free of charge and include: providing information on adolescent development, intimate relationships, contraception and sexuality for girls under 18 and boys under 20; personal consultations with doctors and nurses for STI testing; and referrals to other organizations and to abortion services if needed. Adolescents can also get advice, information and answers to their own questions via the internet or by telephone two hours a day. The project provides a functional model for other organizations. Its staff participates in developing sexuality education, supporting parents of young people, and training teachers, school nurses, and professionals working with young people. The clinic received 646 visitors in 2006.

For more information, see:

www.vaestoliitto.fi/in_english/young_people

and distributes information materials and condoms. It also offers e-mail and telephone consultations, and the network of centres has a hotline to provide answers to HIV and AIDS and SRHR questions. Informational leaflets and radio advertisements encourage young people to visit the centre, in addition to a network of school health professionals and psychologists. In the first half of 2007, the centres provided 800 tests and VCT consultations.



VCT clinic run by
BFPA, Bulgaria

Providing comprehensive services for STIs and HIV

Young people need to have access to comprehensive STI and HIV services that include prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and harm reduction. Services should be integrated with other health services and made available at a wide variety of settings at the primary healthcare level. The settings may include youth-friendly clinics and centres, school clinics, counselling centres, general practitioners, and family planning clinics. Integrating STI and HIV services with sexual and reproductive health services will help to reduce the stigma associated with HIV and AIDS, especially among young people. To be effective, STI and HIV prevention for young people should be evidence-based, grounded in human rights, age-specific and gender responsive, linked with treatment and care, and should help build life skills to enable young people to reduce their vulnerability.

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IPPF Member Associations offering HIV and STI testing services for young people:³

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| • Belgium | • Bulgaria | • Cyprus |
| • Denmark | • Estonia | • Finland |
| • France | • Ireland | • Poland |
| • Portugal (HIV only, not STIs) | • Spain | • Sweden |

BULGARIA

The IPPF Member Association in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association (BFPA), has a voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) centre for young people in Sofia. It was initially established as part of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) programme in Bulgaria in 2005 and became part of the network along with the 16 other VCT centres established in cities throughout the country. An advantage of the VCT centre of BFPA is that it links VCT and SRHR services. The youth-focused centre provides free HIV and STI testing in an anonymous and youth-friendly environment,

Providing emergency contraception without a prescription

Emergency contraception is a safe and effective means of preventing pregnancy after unprotected intercourse. Opposition to the provision of emergency contraception without a prescription is based on the view that increased access to it will lead to promiscuity and unsafe sex. However, studies have shown that this is not true and that providing emergency contraception without a prescription simply facilitates quicker access to it, particularly for young people.^{4 5}

The following European countries provide emergency contraception without a prescription⁶:

- from a pharmacist⁷ – Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, Switzerland, UK
- over the counter⁸ – Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands

→ GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

THE NETHERLANDS

The emergency contraceptive sold under the name of NorLevo™ has been available behind the counter in pharmacies or over the counter at chemists' shops since January 2005. This allows women to buy emergency contraception without a doctor's prescription, so that they can obtain the treatment more quickly, and as a result only about 10% of emergency contraception purchases are made with a prescription.⁹

4 Harper, Cynthia C et al (2005) The effect of increased access to emergency contraception among young adolescents, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 2005; 106: 483–491

5 Marston, C et al (2005) Impact on contraceptive practice of making emergency hormonal contraception available over the counter in Great Britain: repeated cross-sectional surveys, *British Medical Journal* 2005; 331: 271

6 International Consortium for Emergency Contraception (2006) The Emergency Contraception Newsletter. Winter 2006/2007. vol.11, No.2. <http://emergencycontraception.org/asec/newsletterwinter2006.pdf>

7 Also referred to as "behind the counter" which is availability that does not require a prescription, but requires the customer to ask the pharmacist for the medication.

8 Refers to being available on drug store shelves.

9 Van Lee, L, Picavet, C and Wijzen C (2006) Emergency or Precaution? Background and risk profiles of emergency contraception users, Utrecht: Rutgers Nisso Groep

Safe abortion

Abortion services must be made more responsive to the circumstances and needs of young people. For example, in some countries young women require mandatory consent from their parents to access abortion services, which is often a serious barrier to seeking help and undermines their right and their ability to make a decision. Also, an open dialogue between a young client and her parents should be encouraged in counselling, however, this should not be a legal condition for obtaining a service. Some hospitals require the signatures of a minor's parents for anaesthesia and/or operations, but an exception should be made for abortions to protect young women's right to confidentiality.



Youth counselling session



Young person at Danish Member Association's clinic

→ GOOD PRACTICE IN ACTION

UK

The UK government has issued guidelines on access to abortion for minors that do not require parental consent. The UK medical profession shares the government's view that a failure to respect confidentiality would deter girls from accessing the healthcare and advice that they need, both in respect of abortion and contraception.¹⁰

IPPF European Network Member Associations offering abortion counselling services for young people:¹¹

- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Cyprus
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Ireland
- Italy
- Poland
- Portugal
- Spain
- Sweden

IPPF Member Associations offering abortion services for young people:¹²

- Belgium
- France

In principle, pre- and post-abortion counselling offers a good opportunity for checking whether a young woman is comfortable with her decision and that no pressure has been put on her. It is also a good moment for providing information on and preparation for the procedure, and about contraception after the procedure. However, counselling should only be given to those women who want it, and there should be no legal obligation for them to receive it. The content of counselling should be part of guidelines and protocols set up to deliver high-quality services, and implementation of the guidelines should be monitored to ensure that the counselling offered is of a high quality.

¹⁰ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6444725.stm

¹¹ IPPF EN (2006) Global Indicators Survey

¹² Ibid.



For more information, see *A Guide for Developing Policies on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Young People in Europe* (IPPF EN, 2007) online at www.ippfen.org or e-mail info@ippfen.org

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For more information, see: www.ysafe.net/safe

IPPF European Network

IPPF is a global service provider and an advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all; a worldwide movement of national organizations working with and for communities and individuals. The IPPF European Network is one of IPPF's six regions and promotes support for and access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights through the work of its 41 member associations in Europe and Central Asia.

IPPF European Network

146, Rue Royale – 1000 Brussels – Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 250 0950 – Fax: +32 (0)2 250 0969

Email: info@ippfen.org – www.ippfen.org

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