



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

## Providing Young People with Sexual Reproductive Health Services:

### A Guide for Health Service Providers

#### Did you know?

- ✗ Of the 158 million young people in east and southern Africa, 52 get infected with HIV every hour.
- ✗ In some countries, HIV infection is the leading cause of death in young people.
- ✗ One in five girls are pregnant by the time they are 17 years old.
- ✗ Pregnancy and childbirth are the second biggest cause of death for 15-19 year old girls globally.
- ✗ Most young people lack accurate information about their sexual and reproductive health.

To have good sexual and reproductive health, young people need the knowledge, ability and services to make positive, informed, safe and responsible decisions about sex and sexuality.

This is their right.

Some common communication barriers prevent service providers from providing sexual and reproductive health services to young people. This leaflet includes suggestions to help you overcome those barriers and support young people effectively.



**Youth Friendly  
SRH Services:  
It Starts with YOU!**

# BARRIER

Knowledge



"I don't know enough to explain this to a young person"

Attitude



"This young person shouldn't be talking about sex"

Socio-economic Differences



"How can I talk to a young person about SRH when I'm so much older/ when we don't share the same culture/ religion/ we are of opposite sexes, or he/ she is much richer/ poorer than I am"

Language



"A young person won't understand the medical terms I use"

Time



"I'm too busy to talk to young people about SRH"

Venue



"This room is too noisy / uncomfortable for us to talk in"



# BE THE CHANGE

Keep up-to-date. If you don't know something, tell the young person that you will find out for them. Get their contact details and then follow up

Be welcoming. Your role is to provide health services to those who require them, not to judge, or impose your opinions on them

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You may be different from the person needing your services, but your role is to ensure health. Make them feel comfortable; don't judge them and be sensitive to their worries. Respect their values, even if you disagree with them

and

Keep your language simple and confirm they have understood what you've shared. If not, explain the term(s) or use simpler words

Make a time especially for young people to come to you for services – keep in mind their schedules. Focus on the young person you are talking to, don't appear distracted or too busy as this can make it hard to communicate well

Make the room inviting to young people. Make sure it is easy to get to and that young people can visit safely, without worrying that they will be seen

Adolescence is a time of great physical, behavioural and emotional changes. In order to make informed decisions about their sexual health, young people need information about these changes and about sexuality.

Ensuring sexual and reproductive health is about knowledge, skills and accessing health services; AND about having the ability to make positive, informed, safe and responsible decisions about sex and sexuality.

Information helps young people delay sexual activity; but they also need access to contraceptives, if and when they decide to have sex.

Comprehensive sexuality education is about providing age-appropriate information on good sexual and reproductive health and development, including: having relationships; values, attitudes and skills; culture and society; human rights; human development; sexual behaviour and sexual and reproductive health.

Service providers need to ensure that young people have access to the knowledge and services they need to make responsible decisions and to protect themselves and others from the unintended consequences of sex, including exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and unplanned pregnancy.

## Minimum package of services

Service providers should be prepared to give young people advice on:

- × Puberty, reproductive body parts; sex; the sexual life cycle; sexual behaviour and sexual response; and sexuality.
- × Pregnancy prevention, including contraceptive provision and emergency contraception.
- × Understanding, recognising and reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections and HIV, including post-exposure prophylaxis for prevention of HIV transmission.

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