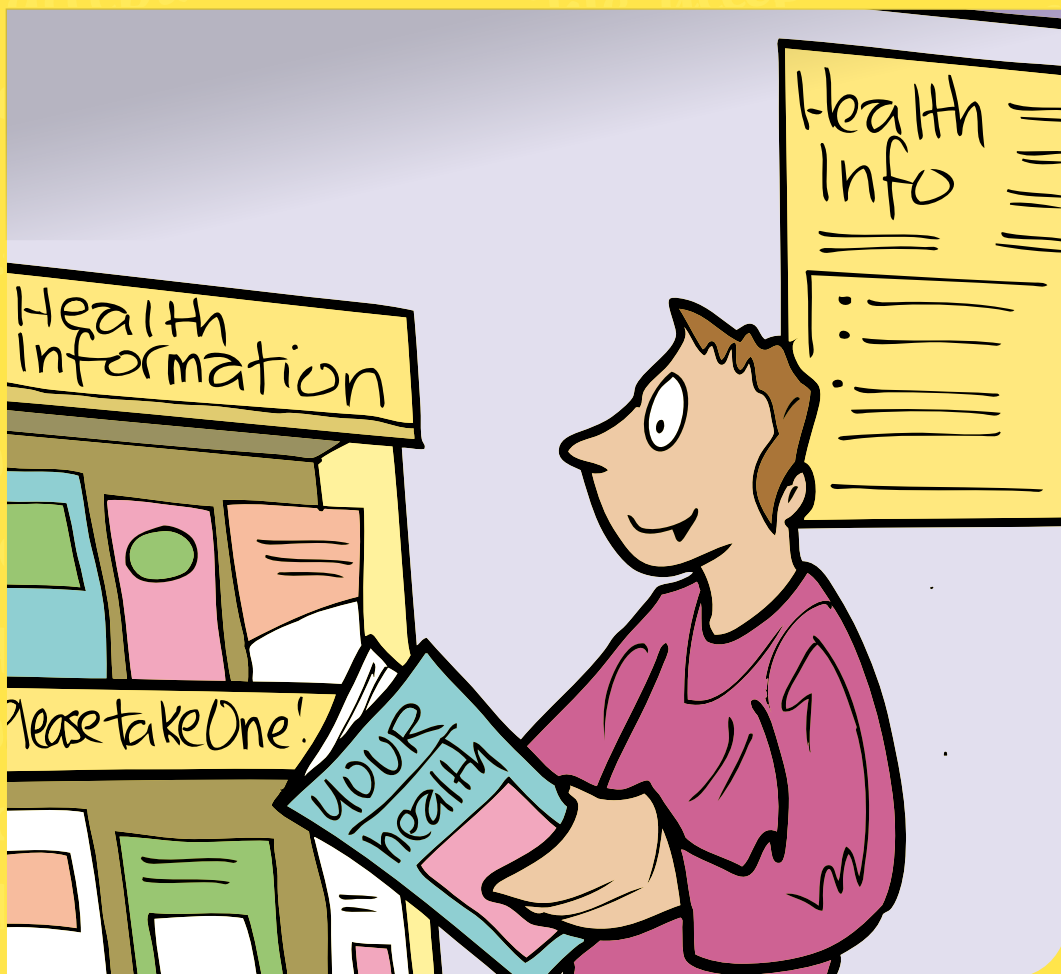




World Health
Organization

Making health services adolescent friendly

Developing national quality standards for
adolescent-friendly health services



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**Developing national quality
standards for adolescent friendly
health services**

Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health



**World Health
Organization**

Acknowledgements

One of the key recommendations made at the Global Consultation on Adolescent Friendly Health Services organized by WHO in 2001 was to develop tools to support countries in improving the quality of health service provision to adolescents.

In line with this, WHO set out to develop a tool that countries could use to define quality standards for health services.

Save the Children, UK seconded Siobhan Peattie to WHO for six months in 2002, to contribute to the development of these tools. She worked with staff from the former Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development to organize a meeting, drawing on the ideas and suggestions of various stakeholders and, based on this, developed the first draft of the tool.

Following further discussions, it was agreed that before finalizing the tool, it would need to undergo reality testing. It was decided to use it in draft form to support countries and to use these experiences to strengthen it. Between 2002 and 2012, the tool was used to develop national quality standards for adolescent-friendly health services in dozens of countries in all five WHO regions. WHO staff from headquarters (Paul Bloem, Krishna Bose and Jane Ferguson) and staff from the WHO Regional Offices (Matilde Maddaleno, AMRO; Nagbandja Kampatibe, AFRO; Valentina Baltag, EURO; Neena Raina, SEARO; and Patanjali Nayar, WPRO) used the tool and contributed to its further development. Staff from ministries of health and nongovernmental organizations in countries around the world also did so.

The main lesson emerging from these experiences was that while the overall objective of developing national quality standards for adolescent-friendly health services would remain unchanged, the way in which this is done varies depending on the context. In light of this, the tool underwent many changes over time that contributed to making it leaner and more flexible.

Dr Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli oversaw the development of the tool from the concept stage to the finished product.

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Abbreviations

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AFHS	adolescent-friendly health services
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HSDP	health service delivery point
NGO	nongovernmental organization
RH	reproductive health
STI	sexually transmitted infection
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

This Guidebook sets out the public health rationale for making it easier for adolescents to obtain the health services that they need to protect and improve their health and well-being, including sexual and reproductive health services. It defines ‘adolescent-friendly health services’ from the perspective of quality, and provides step-by-step guidance on developing quality standards for health service provision to adolescents. Drawing upon international experience, it is also tailored to national epidemiological, social, cultural and economic realities, and provides guidance on identifying what actions need to be taken to assess whether appropriate standards have been achieved.

The Guidebook is intended to be a companion to the *Quality Assessment Guidebook: A guide to assessing health services for adolescent clients*, which was published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2009. These two guidebooks are part of a set of tools to standardize and scale up the coverage of quality health services to adolescents, as described in another WHO publication: *Strengthening the health sector’s response to adolescent health and development*.

The current publication is intended for national public health programme managers, and individuals in organizations supporting their work. Its focus is on managers working in the government sector, but it will be equally relevant to those working in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and in the commercial sector.

Chapter 1 outlines the theoretical basis for actions to improve the quality of health service provision to adolescents. It covers the following issues and themes:

The meaning of the terms ‘adolescents’, ‘health’ and ‘health services’.

- What adolescents need to grow and develop in good health.
- The role of health service provision in contributing to the health and development of adolescents.
- Main health problems of adolescents.
- Whom adolescents typically turn to for help when they face health problems;
- the factors that make it difficult for adolescents to obtain the health services they need.

- What adolescents perceive as ‘friendly’ health services.
- What is currently being done to make health services adolescent-friendly.
- Evidence of the effectiveness of actions to improve the provision and use of health services (in relation to adolescents).
- WHO recommendations for reaching adolescents with essential health services.

Chapter 2 describes a step-by-step process to develop national quality standards for health service provision to adolescents. It explains the importance of each of the following five steps and describes how they can be undertaken:

- Developing a shared understanding of adolescent health and of strengthening health service provision to adolescents.
- Establishing the basis for formulating the national quality standards for health service provision to adolescents, in national HIV and/or reproductive health policies and strategies.
- Developing the national standards.
- Examining the programmatic implications of applying national quality standards.
- Outlining the preparatory work that needs to be done at a national level before quality standards can be applied.

Chapter 3 provides materials that can be used to prepare for and conduct a workshop to develop national quality standards for adolescent-friendly health services. It contains:

- The outline of a background paper for a national workshop to develop national quality standards on adolescent-friendly health services.
- The objectives and agenda for a workshop to develop national quality standards for adolescent-friendly health services, and a facilitators guide to conduct the workshop.
- A set of slides for the facilitator to use in conducting the workshop.

Annex 1 lists the five dimensions of quality health services for adolescents and the twenty characteristics that relate to them.

Annex 2 lists the actions to be taken at national, district and local levels to improve the quality of health service provision to adolescents.

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