

Connect adolescents with support

An important part of your work with adolescents in humanitarian situations is making sure that they have the support they need to develop safely and in a healthy manner. This means connecting them to services and programmes they can benefit from, providing them with useful information, and taking steps when their health, wellbeing or safety is at risk.

Refer to **Connecting adolescents to support** tool.



1. Inform adolescents about services and support

As a first step, find out what services and programmes are available for adolescents in your community. Adolescent girls and boys can benefit from essential services in education, health and child protection, and can enjoy programmes in youth clubs, recreation, sports and arts. Encourage facilitators to:

- ▶ Update adolescents about new or existing services and programmes at the beginning of sessions;
- ▶ Post information about services for adolescents in their activity spaces, including schedules, locations, staff contact details and any other useful information;¹
- ▶ Involve adolescents in raising awareness about available services and programmes by creating posters, putting on drama or music performances, or reaching out directly to other adolescent girls and boys.



2. Collaborate with other programmes or services for adolescents

- ▶ As much as possible, try to harmonise your intervention with the Adolescent Kit with other programmes that support adolescents in your community.
- ▶ Encourage facilitators to organise activities in times and locations that encourage, not conflict,

with adolescents' participation in education programmes, attendance at health clinics and use of other services.

- ▶ Stay in regular contact with staff or volunteers of other support initiatives, such as clinics, child protection committees or education schemes
- ▶ Encourage facilitators to consult adolescents (if appropriate) about their experiences using services and programmes and to share helpful information with each other.
- ▶ Support constructive dialogue between adolescents and service providers to discuss how their support can be made more accessible or helpful to adolescent girls and boys.



3. Connect adolescents with information

Adolescents have the right to information about matters that concern them. That means that they should be given space to talk openly, ask questions and to access accurate information on issues that may be considered sensitive (or even inappropriate) in some settings. This could include information about sexual and reproductive health (including access to contraception), gender roles, religious, political or social issues.

- ▶ Train facilitators to manage challenging conversations with adolescents and to share accurate information – even on sensitive issues.
- ▶ Establish clear guidelines regarding confidentiality and adolescents' privacy (bearing in mind the need to balance confidentiality against the best interests of the adolescent).
- ▶ Consider consulting with your steering committee to discuss topics that can and cannot be raised with adolescents. This may be particularly important in cultural contexts where discussing sensitive or taboo issues could actually risk causing harm to your participants, or shut down your intervention with the Adolescent Kit.



Make sure that facilitators share information equitably with adolescent girls and boys, and that they don't try to influence adolescents' decisions about accessing

¹ If activities are held in a temporary or borrowed space, store a poster with a list of services for adolescents with your supplies (e.g. in the Supply Kit), and put it up during sessions.

particular services or support based on their own religious or cultural views and affiliations.

Refer to **Discussing sensitive topics** tool.

4. Take action when adolescents need special support

It is very important to train facilitators to identify when adolescents may need special support, and to respond appropriately.

- ▶ Support facilitators to recognise adolescents who may be particularly vulnerable and require support -- for example: Unaccompanied or separated adolescents, adolescents in institutions, adolescents with disabilities or special needs, marginalized adolescents, unregistered adolescents who can't access humanitarian services, adolescent who are pregnant or mothers, and others.
- ▶ Make sure that facilitators are familiar with **referral pathways** - i.e. individuals and organisations that are available to respond when adolescents need special support or services.
- ▶ Establish clear procedures for reporting concerns about adolescents who are at risk of harm, at risk of harming others or at risk of harming themselves. This includes clearly identifying a child protection focal point or case manager to whom facilitators can refer adolescents.
- ▶ Outline and rehearse steps facilitators should take if adolescents show signs (or report), that their health, safety, protection or wellbeing is at risk.
- ▶ Train facilitators to connect adolescents with services and support discretely, to avoid unnecessary upset or embarrassment, and to respect confidentiality.
- ▶ Encourage facilitators to follow up with adolescents who are referred to services, to ensure that they feel happy with the support provided, that their needs are addressed, and to see if they require referral to any further support.

Ensure that reporting and referral procedures reflect minimum standards for children in humanitarian response interventions, including child protection, HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, mental health and psychosocial support, and gender-based violence.

Referrals

Adolescents who may need referrals for special services and support include girls and boys who:

- ▶ Show signs of, or report, violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect
- ▶ Need medical treatment for physical ailments or illnesses
- ▶ Require individual psychosocial support, counselling or mental health services
- ▶ Demonstrate learning difficulties and might benefit from educational support
- ▶ Are missing out on basic services such as food distributions, health care or education.

Refer to **Supporting adolescents in distress** tool and **Responding to child protection concerns** tool.

Refer to the **Psychosocial and child protection sections of Resources in the Foundation Guidance** for more information and support in this area.

Monitor and adapt

The programmes, services and support available for adolescents are likely to change over time. Work with facilitators and adolescents to keep track of programmes that open and close, to link with new support staff or volunteers (e.g. in health clinics or on child protection committees), and to update your referral information regularly. Take adolescents' feedback into account regarding their experience with particular programmes (and staff), and be ready to adapt the timing or location of activities to avoid conflicts with services that adolescent girls and boys find particularly helpful or enjoyable.