

**Title:** Adolescent Friendly Health Services: Making it Happen Part 1 -  
Formulating national quality standards.

**Intended purpose:**

This tool outlines a step-by-step process for developing a national standards-driven initiative to improve the quality and expand the coverage of health service provision to adolescents.

**Intended mode of use:**

This tool is intended for use by a facilitator in a workshop/working group context.

## **SECTION I. DEVELOP A SHARED UNDERSTANDING ON ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND ON STRENGTHENING HEALTH SERVICE PROVISION TO ADOLESCENTS.**

There is one step in this section:

1. Develop a clear understanding of WHO's approach to promoting adolescent health, and to providing adolescents with the health services they need, among key stakeholders involved in the national effort to strengthen health service provision to adolescents.

What is the step ?

- Develop a clear understanding of WHO's approach to promoting adolescent health and to providing adolescents with the health services they need, among key stakeholders involved in the national effort to strengthen health service provision to adolescents.

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To ensure that key stakeholders involved in the national effort to strengthen health service provision to adolescents have a clear understanding of WHO's approach to promoting adolescent health and to providing adolescents with the health services they need. Key stakeholders may include officials from the Ministry of Health, officials from influential national NGOs, academics, and representatives of international organizations.

What is the importance of this step ?

- The initiative is much more likely to move ahead if the key stakeholders have a shared understanding of promoting adolescent health and of providing adolescents with the health services they need.

How could this step be taken ?

- In formal and informal meetings with individuals, small groups or large groups, seek to understand the perspectives of key stakeholders and to explain WHO's approach to promoting adolescent health and to providing adolescents with the health services they need. Do this using the slide sets and accompanying talking points.

The slide sets and accompanying talking points address the following issues:

1. What do we mean by the term adolescents ?
2. What do we mean by the term health ?
3. What do adolescents need to grow and develop in good health ?
4. What do we mean by the term health services ?
5. What is the place of health service provision in contributing to the health and development of adolescents ?
6. What are the main health problems of adolescents ?
7. When adolescents face health problems whom do they turn to for help ?
8. What are the factors that make it difficult for adolescents to obtain the health services they need ?
9. What do adolescents perceive as 'friendly' health services ?
10. What is currently being done to make health services adolescent friendly ?
11. What is the evidence of the effectiveness of actions to improve the provision and utilization of health services (in relation to adolescents) ?
12. What is our understanding of the reality on the ground ?
13. What are we doing to strengthen country-level action in reaching adolescents with the health services they need ?
14. What is our recommended approach to reaching adolescents with the health services they need ?

Note:

Items 1 - 10 are covered in presentation 1.

Item 11 is covered in presentation 2.

Item 12-14 are covered in presentation 3.

## **SECTION II. ESTABLISH THE BASIS FOR FORMULATING THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS FOR HEALTH SERVICE PROVISION TO ADOLESCENTS, IN NATIONAL HIV AND/OR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH POLICIES AND STRATEGIES.**

There are two steps in this section:

1. Establish the basis for addressing adolescents within the national HIV and/or Reproductive health policy/strategy.
2. Establish the basis for the provision of health services to adolescents within the framework of the national HIV and/or Reproductive Health policy and strategy.

<p>What is the step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Establish the basis for addressing adolescents within the national HIV and/or Reproductive Health policy/strategy.</li></ul>
<p>What is the purpose of this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To establish that this initiative is in line with national policies and strategies.</li></ul>
<p>What is the importance of taking this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Firstly, in many countries there are individuals/groups and organizations who are uncomfortable with providing adolescents with sexual and reproductive health information and services. If there is resistance to the initiative from any quarter, it would be helpful to show that it is entirely in line with national policies and strategies.</li></ul> <p>Secondly, grounding the initiative in national policies and strategies may make it more likely that it will receive both the moral and the material support of decision makers in the government and in international organizations.</p>
<p>How could this step be taken ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Review the national HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health policy and strategy documents.</li><li>2. Hold one-to-one/small group discussions with officials responsible for the national HIV and Reproductive Health programmes.</li><li>3. Based on your findings, prepare a paper and table this for discussion in the process leading to the development of the national quality standards for health service provision to adolescents.</li></ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the national HIV/AIDS and/or Reproductive Health policy/strategy identify adolescents as a population group to be addressed ?</li><li>• Does the national HIV/AIDS or RH policy/strategy identify:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- the magnitude of the problem (s) in adolescents (e.g. the prevalence of HIV infection in males aged 15-19 years among the general population);</li><li>- the behaviours that contribute to the problem (s) in adolescents, (e.g. the prevalence of unprotected sexual activity with multiple partners);</li><li>- the factors influencing these behaviours in adolescents (e.g. low perception of the risk of HIV) ?</li></ul></li><li>• Does the national HIV/AIDS and/or RH policy/strategy include a component to prevent HIV &amp; Reproductive Health problems in adolescents ?</li></ul>

<p>What is the step ?</p> <p>- Establish the basis for the provision of health services to adolescents within the framework of the national HIV and/or Reproductive Health policy/strategy.</p>
<p>What is the purpose of this step ?</p> <p>- To ensure that the national quality standards for health service provision to adolescents are formulated in line with national policies and strategies..</p>
<p>What is the importance of taking this step ?</p> <p>- Grounding the initiative in national policies and strategies will make it more likely that it will receive both the moral and the material support of decision makers in the government and in international organizations.</p>
<p>How could this step be taken ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Review the national HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health policy and strategy documents.</li><li>2. Hold one to-one/small group discussions with officials responsible for national HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health programmes.</li><li>3. Based on your findings, prepare a paper and table this for discussion in the consultancy process leading to the formulation of the national quality standards.</li></ol> <p>To begin with, point to the sections of the national HIV/AIDS and/or Reproductive Health policy/strategy which identify the need to provide sexual and reproductive health services to adolescents ? Then, move on the following points.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The health outcomes being aimed for. (Note: Do the policy /strategy documents specify what changes in the health status are being aimed for ?).</li><li>2. The population groups to be addressed. (Note: Do the policy/strategy documents specify whether the these health outcomes are being aimed for in all adolescents or in some groups of adolescents ?).</li><li>3. The place of health service provision within a broader strategy. (Note: Do the policy/strategy documents specify that health service provision is grounded in a broader strategy which includes providing information and education to adolescents, providing them with counseling services, and making their environment safer and more supportive ?).</li><li>4. The package of health services to be provided. (Note: Do the policy/strategy documents specify the package of preventive and curative health services that need to be delivered at the primary and at the referral levels to contribute to the desired health outcomes ?).</li><li>5. The delivery of these health services - where and by whom. (Note: Do the policy/strategy documents specify where (i.e. from which health service delivery points) and by whom (i.e. which health service providers) the stipulated package of health services should be delivered ?).</li><li>7. A clear position on the authorization of adolescents to obtain the health services they need, and the requirement for the consent of parents/guardians. (Note: Do the policy/strategy documents clearly state whether all groups of adolescents are authorized to obtain the stipulated package of health services;</li></ol>

and whether they can do so autonomously - i.e. without the consent of parents or guardians).

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### **SECTION III. EXAMINE THE PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS OF APPLYING THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS.**

There are four steps in this section.

1. Develop a clear understanding of what a standards-driven initiative to improve the quality and expand the coverage of health service provision to adolescents means in practice, and what it will take to translate quality-standard statements into tangible improvements in quality and coverage at health service delivery points, among key stakeholders involved in the national effort to strengthen health service provision to adolescents.
2. Develop a good understanding of the current situation regarding the provision of health services to adolescents, and their utilization by adolescents.
3. Gather experiences from within the country in applying quality improvement principles and practices in public health programmes.
4. Identify the place of the 'driver' of the national standards-driven initiative in the country; as well as programmatic opportunities and challenges in applying them.

What is the step ?

- Develop a clear understanding of what a standards-driven initiative to improve quality and expand the coverage of health service provision to adolescents means in practice, and what it will take to translate quality-standard statements into tangible improvements in quality and coverage at health service delivery points, among key stakeholders involved in the national effort to strengthen health service provision to adolescents.

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To seek to learn/understand from the stakeholders:  
(i) what problem do they want to solve, what gap do they want to fill, through this national standards-driven initiative to improve quality and expand coverage,  
(ii) what results do they expect to achieve through this initiative.  
- To ensure that the key stakeholders clearly understand:  
(i) what a standards-driven initiative to improve the quality and expand the coverage of health service provision means in practice,  
(ii) what efforts will be required at the national and district levels to translate the quality standard statements into tangible improvements in the quality of health service provision at health service delivery points.

What is the importance of taking this step ?

- It is important to ensure that the key stakeholders involved in the national effort to strengthen health service provision to adolescents have a clear and shared understanding of the issues listed above. It is important that they are fully aware that this effort will take require concerted and complementary efforts at national, district and local levels.

How could this step be taken ?

In formal and informal meetings with individuals, small groups or large groups, seek to understand the perspectives of key stakeholders and to inform/explain to them WHO's viewpoints on this. Do this using the slide sets and accompanying talking points.

<p>What is the step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Develop a good understanding of the current situation regarding the provision of health services to adolescents, and their utilization by adolescents.</li></ul>
<p>What is the purpose of this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To understand the current situation regarding:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) By whom - and where - are health services currently being provided to adolescents.</li><li>(ii) Barriers to the provision and utilization of health services to adolescents.</li><li>(ii) Help seeking, and health care seeking practices of adolescents.</li><li>(iv) Initiatives that are under way in providing adolescents with the health services they need.</li></ul></li></ul>
<p>What is the importance of this step ?</p> <p>Firstly, a good understanding of the current situation will provide a solid basis for considering how the situation could be improved, building on the areas of strength, and addressing gaps and areas of weakness. Secondly, it will send a clear message that there is a systematic effort to draw out, and to draw upon, the lessons learned from within the country, in this area.</p>
<p>How could this step be taken ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Through discussions with key informants in the Ministry of Health, non government organizations, academic institutions and international agencies, gather published papers and reports on the following issues:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) By whom - and where - are health services currently being provided to adolescents.</li><li>(ii) Barriers to the provision and utilization of health services to adolescents.</li><li>(iii) Help seeking, and health care seeking practices of adolescents.</li><li>(iv) Initiatives that are under way in providing adolescents with the health services they need.</li></ul><p>(Note: It would be very important to obtain the view points and perspectives of different groups of adolescents).</p></li><li>2. Identify individuals and organizations who are carrying out research and/or implementing programmes/projects on health service provision to adolescents.</li><li>3. If possible, bring together a small working group to prepare a working paper highlighting the lessons that could be drawn from their work for scaling up health-service provision to adolescents.</li><li>4. Identify possible individuals who could be involved in the formulation of the national quality standards</li></ol>
<p>What is the step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Gather experiences from within the country in applying quality improvement principles and practices in public health programmes.</li></ul>
<p>What is the purpose of this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To draw out the experiences gained from initiatives in the country which have worked to improve the quality of health-service provision and to increase health-service utilization by any population group in order to achieve a clearly defined</li></ul>

health outcome.
<p>What is the importance of taking this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- There are three potential benefits of doing this. Firstly, it will help communicate the message that quality improvement principles and practices are not foreign to the country. Secondly, it will help key stakeholders understand what the application of quality improvement principles and practices can achieve, and more importantly what it takes to put - and keep - in place. Thirdly, it will point to individuals and organizations from within the country whose expertise could be drawn upon.</li></ul>
<p>How could this step be taken ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Through discussions with key informants in the Ministry of Health, non government organizations, academic institutions and the international agencies, identify noteworthy initiatives that have applied quality improvement principles and practices in public health work.</li><li>2. Gather published papers or reports that describe the process employed by these initiatives and the results that they achieved.</li><li>3. Identify individuals and organizations who are carrying out research and/or implementing programmes/projects on health service provision to adolescents.</li><li>4. If possible, bring together a small working group to prepare a working paper highlighting the lessons that could be drawn from their work for scaling up health-service provision to adolescents.</li></ol>
<p>What is the step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identify the place of the unit driving the national standards-driven initiative in the country; as well as programmatic opportunities and challenges in applying them.</li></ul>
<p>What is the purpose of this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To identify the 'driver' of the national standards-driven, the strengths and weaknesses of the unit, and its linkages with other units in the Ministry of Health.</li><li>- To identify aspects in the environment that could help or hinder the implementation of the initiative. For example, a national effort to improve the quality of reproductive health services supported by UNFPA could be an potential opportunity link the initiative. However, the lack of willingness to engage health service providers in the private sector in public health programmes could hinder the ability of the initiative to work with a key group who many groups of adolescents turn to.</li></ul>
<p>What is the importance of taking this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Firstly, the national standards-driven initiative to improve the quality and expand the coverage of health service provision to adolescents is much more likely to succeed with a driver with the authority, the technical capacity and the resources needed to move the initiative.</li></ul> <p>Secondly, in moving the initiative, it would be important to be well aware of potential opportunities and challenges in the environment.</p>
<p>How could this step be taken ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Through discussions with key informants in the Ministry of Health, non government organizations, academic institutions and the international agencies,</li></ul>

identify programmatic openings, prepare a working paper on:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the 'driver' of the initiative, and what could be done to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses;
- The potential opportunities and challenges in implementing the initiative.

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## SECTION IV. DEVELOP THE NATIONAL STANDARDS.

There are two steps in this section:

1. Obtain the public support of the key stakeholders whose support is important for the national standards-driven quality improvement to succeed.
2. Develop the national standards (and accompanying elements of a standards-driven quality improvement initiative).

What is the step ?

- Obtain the support of a wide range of stakeholders whose support is important for the national standards-driven quality improvement initiative to succeed. In addition to individuals and organizations involved in the preparatory work, this step should involve other community members such as political leaders, religious leaders, teachers and officials from government departments other than health whose work affects adolescents/young people. It would be important to involve adolescents as well in the consultative process.

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To table the conclusions and recommendations of the preparatory work that has been done (as described in sections I, II and III) and to obtain further inputs.  
- To place in the public arena the fact that the national standards are to be developed and the ground work that has been done to prepare for this.

What is the importance of taking this step ?

- For the initiative to succeed it is important to ensure that the wide range of stakeholders referred to above are fully aware that national standards for health service provision to adolescents are to be developed and comfortable with the process for this. Secondly, they must be fully aware of the preparatory work that has been done and satisfied that is adequate. Thirdly, they need to believe that their perspectives have been listened to and taken on board.

How could this step be taken ?

- Organize a consensus- building workshop bringing together the wide range of stakeholders.

(Note: It would be important to involve adolescents in the consultative process. This could be done by having one or more meetings in advance of the national consensus-building workshop. Adolescents selected by their peers could be invited to participate in the consensus- building workshop.

What is the step ?

- Develop the national standards (and accompanying elements of a standards-driven quality improvement initiative).

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To define the key problems (i.e. gap between required quality and actual quality) that the standards seeks to address.

For each problem:

- To formulate the standard (i.e. the desired quality to be achieved),
- To identify the input, process and output criteria to achieve each standard (i.e. what needs to in place and what needs to happen in and around at points of

<p>health service delivery for the standard to be achieved),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To identify the actions needed at national, district and local level to achieve each criteria,</li><li>• To identify the indicators to verify the achievement of the criteria, and means of verifying them.</li></ul>
<p>What is the importance of taking this step ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- This step clearly outlines the objectives of the national initiative seeks to achieve, what needs to be done to achieve these objectives, and what needs to be done to assess whether these objectives are being achieved.</li></ul>
<p>How could this step be taken ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A working group consisting of 8-10 persons should work together to draft the standards. Here is an indicative list of working group members:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1-2 officials from the Ministry of Health at the national level</li><li>1-2 persons from influential NGOs,</li><li>1-2 academics,</li><li>1- 2 representatives of international organizations</li></ul></li></ul> <p>The working group could be and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The draft standards should be shared with key holders involved in the national effort to strengthen health service provision to adolescents.</li><li>- The working group should meet to review the feedback that has been received, and work to revise and finalize the standards. (This step may need to be repeated.).</li></ul> <p>Note: The accompanying presentation titled <b>Developing standards</b> and the accompanying document titled <b>Generic characteristics of Adolescent Friendly Health Services within WHO-defined dimensions of quality</b>, could be can be used to guide the development of the standards and other elements.</p>

## **SECTION V. OUTLINE THE PREPARATORY WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE AT NATIONAL LEVELS BEFORE THE QUALITY STANDARDS CAN BE APPLIED.**

There are four steps in this section:

1. Develop an implementation guide which outlines what district health management teams and managers of health facilities need to do to ensure that the structure criteria accompanying each standard statement are in place.
2. Develop a monitoring guide which outlines what and how district health management teams and managers of health facilities need to track implementation.
3. Identify and engage organizations with expertise in quality improvement to support implementation and monitoring on an ongoing basis.
4. Inform key stakeholders at the national level, who could help or hinder the implementation of the initiative; explain to them what it aims to achieve and how it aims to do this.

What is the step ?

- Develop an implementation guide which outlines what district health management teams and managers of health facilities need to do to ensure that the structure criteria accompanying each standard statement are in place.

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To provide clear guidance to district health management teams and managers of health facilities on what they need to do to ensure that the structure criteria accompanying each standard are put in place.

What is the importance of taking this step ?

- It is important to ensure that district health management teams and managers of health facilities are clear as to what they need to do to ensure that the structure criteria accompanying each standard are put in place. Without clear guidance, it is likely that things that need to be done are not done.

How could this step be taken ?

- Identify and engage an individual/organization with the expertise in this area, to prepare an implementation guide. For example, structure criteria 4 which accompanies standard 2 in the Tanzanian standards for Youth Friendly Reproductive Health Services states. 'Equipment, supplies and medicines will be constantly available'. In this case, the implementation guide needs to specify the list - and quantities - of equipment, supplies and medicines that need to be placed in each health facility.

What is the step ?

- Develop a monitoring guide which outlines what and how district health management teams and managers of health facilities need to track implementation.

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To provide clear guidance to district health management teams and managers of health facilities on what they need to check for, and how they need to do this, to verify that the required actions are being carried out.

What is the importance of taking this step ?

- It is important for district health management teams and managers of health facilities to be clear as to what exactly they to check for and how they need to do this.

How could this step be taken ?

- Identify and engage an individual/organization with the expertise in this area, to prepare a monitoring guide.

What is the step ?

- Identify and engage organizations with expertise in quality improvement to support implementation and monitoring on an ongoing basis:

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To identify organizations from within the country with expertise in an area that is critical to implementing and monitoring the national standards, and to find ways and means of making this expertise available both the to national unit responsible for overseeing the initiative, and to district health management teams.

What is the importance of taking this step ?

- In many countries, the cycle of gathering data to assess quality, examining the data to understand the situation and identify what needs to be done, and to then carry out these actions is not part of standard practice. Support from an organization well versed in quality improvement can help ensure that the national standards, the accompanying criteria, the actions required to achieve them, and the ways of verifying their achievement will be used as a working document.

How could this step be taken ?

1. Through discussions with key informants in the Ministry of Health, non government organizations, academic institutions and the international agencies, identify organizations with expertise in this area.

2. Again, through discussions with key informants identify ways and means by which these organizations could be engaged to contribute to the initiative. Probe for examples of precedents in doing this.

What is the step ?

- Inform key stakeholders at the national level, who could help or hinder the implementation of the initiative; explain to them what it aims to achieve and how it aims to do this.

What is the purpose of this step ?

- To ensure that these stakeholders do not oppose the initiative, and where relevant to draw upon their support in moving forward.

What is the importance of taking this step ?

- Firstly, key stakeholders may have the power to 'kill' the initiative themselves. Alternatively, they could contribute to 'killing' it by speaking about it in a negative manner. They may do this because they do not understand fully, because they believe - or may have heard - that it is not useful/feasible, or because they may feel excluded from the consultative process contributing to the initiative. Secondly, they may be able to provide useful ideas and suggestions to strengthen the initiative. Thirdly, they may be willing and able to support the initiative.

How could this step be taken ?

1. Identify the key stakeholders who need to be reached. Here is an indicative list.:

(i) Within the Ministry of Health: the National HIV/AIDS Programme, the National Reproductive Health Programme, and the Primary Health Care unit in the Ministry of Health.

(ii) The Ministry of Local Government.

(iii) Key international organizations: within the United Nations system, bilateral agencies, international organizations.

(iv) National NGOs

2. Ideally, set up one-to-one meetings to explain the initiative to them, and to obtain their ideas and suggestions.

3. Use an appropriate forum, such as a regular meetings of the National HIV/AIDS Programme, to update the stakeholders periodically.