

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Youth Friendly Health Services

Confidentiality is very important in the provision of youth-friendly health services.

Sometimes the information that a young person shares with health care providers is very sensitive and potentially embarrassing.

Therefore the health care providers must keep this information private. In fact, those visiting health clinics expect that the information they share with the health care providers will be kept between them.

If that privacy is not guaranteed, the youth might be reluctant to seek health care or treatment.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To remind medical practitioners about the importance of confidentiality when dealing with the youth
- To help create a positive attitude among the youth towards seeking reproductive health services
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the importance of confidentiality when it comes to health care providers and the youth

The Problem: Lack of Confidentiality in Some Clinics

Youth feel more comfortable if health care providers respect their privacy during counselling sessions, examinations, and procedures at youth-friendly health clinics.

For example, a young person who is HIV-positive has a critical need for guaranteed confidentiality, especially in regard to their HIV status. They might be fearful of being rejected by family and friends if their status becomes known.

If privacy is not guaranteed, a person may delay getting

their monthly treatment (ARV's) or even stop seeking medical care, at all, when they get sick.

The health care providers also must realize that young girls who are pregnant need their privacy. This means the providers must not divulge any information to the girls' parents or friends.

The providers must only recommend that a young person should let her parents know about the pregnancy. Without privacy, the girl may not seek medical help – which could endanger her life.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community, young people and health care providers understand that youth-friendly health services do not only require providing high quality health services to young people, but also it means minimizing challenges that prevent youth from accessing these services.

Confidentiality is one of those challenges. If a health care provider cannot keep the privacy of the youth, then the youth will not be motivated to use these services.

Young people must feel comfortable in giving out information about their behavior or their health to a health provider.

As the Malawi government is working to ensure youth-friendly health services are a success, there is a need for all health providers to provide confidential services as well, which will encourage people to continue seeking medical help at youth-friendly health clinics.

Remind young people that medical practitioners are guided by professional ethical guidelines and confidentiality. Therefore, youth should understand that whenever they go to a clinic for medical help their privacy will be kept – and in cases where this privacy is violated -- they can report it to the Medical Council of Malawi.

Do a vox pop with a few young people from your area and ask them how they would feel if their privacy was not kept at a clinic.

Have an interview with members of any youth club and discuss if medical practitioners from your area keep the youths privacy, whenever they go to seek medical help.

Interview the District Health Office (DHO) of your area and ask him/her how hospitals in the district keep privacy of the youth.

Are youth-friendly health services available in your community? If not, why not? Contact the health ministry to find out why.

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