

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Youth-Friendly Health Services

Easy access to health services is important to the youth.

Access issues may include: lack of transportation, difficulties making appointments, not knowing where to go, hours and days when services are available are not convenient, and requirements to return for follow-up.

Access issues pose significant barriers to a youth person's ability to get the health care services they need.

This time, we will look at how inconvenient clinic hours of operation affect the youth in accessing health care.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the effects of inconvenient operating hours of Youth-Friendly Health clinics to the youth importance
- To advocate for flexible clinic hours for adolescents
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the importance of having flexible clinic hours for adolescents

The Problem: Inconvenient Operating Hours for Youth-Friendly Clinics

Various demands on a young person's time can make it difficult for them to use youth-friendly health services, particularly when facilities are far away.

School work and household chores can be two of the main reasons many young people fail to access these services. Another reason: most youth friendly health clinics open from 8:30 to around 2:30 p.m.

These hours aren't convenient to most youth, since they're at school or at work during this time.

In an interview with a few adolescents from Namitambo in Chiradzulu district and Blantyre City, most young people said they wish the youth-friendly health services could operate from 8am to 5:30p.m. or, better still, on a 24 hour basis.

They said they sometimes find it difficult to access the services because they are either busy at school or if they go to the clinic during lunch time – the clinic is closed.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community, young people and the health care providers understand that inconvenient hours for the operation of clinics affect young people in accessing these health care services.

Youth-friendly health clinics can play a vital role in promoting the sexual and reproductive health of young people. This can only be achieved if the youth are also able to access these services at hours that are convenient to them.

To ensure that the youth are able to fully utilize the services of the youth-friendly health clinics, the clinics should offer flexible hours for adolescents. Clinics could even remain open during lunch hour, so as to give young people a chance to visit during lunch break.

The clinics can also offer appointments in the evening and during weekends, when most of the young people are free from school, work or other personal activities. clinics.

Services can be taken to where young people are, through outreach clinics. These places could include youth clubs and youth gatherings within the community.

The health services could also be linked to schools. Schools offer a critical entry point to

bringing services to young people who are in school and yet aren't able to access these services during school hours.

Have a vox pop with a few young people from your area and ask them if the youth-friendly health clinics are open during convenient hours for them.

Interview someone in-charge of a health centre that offers youth-friendly health services. What are the clinic hours? Do they seem convenient to students? Ask the official if he/she would consider changing the hours to be more convenient for young people who attend school.

Interview the health minister and find out from her why youth-friendly health clinics don't offer flexible hours for adolescents.

Discuss with the local clinic director about changing the hours to be more convenient. Have a panel discussion on the radio and invite youth and the clinic director – so the official can hear for themselves the need to change the hours.

Is there an outreach clinic in your community? Are youth-friendly health services offered in your school? If not, why not?

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