

22nd

International Association  
for Adolescent Health  
(IAAH) European  
Regional Conference



Joint Event:

15th STATE OF THE  
ART Panhellenic  
Adolescent Health /  
Medicine Congress

*Youth Development Challenges in the post-COVID-19 era*

[www.IAAH-Athens2022.gr](http://www.IAAH-Athens2022.gr)

## **Youth Friendly Services (YFS)-Service design and implementation strategies/World Health Organization (WHO)**

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Youth friendly health services provide health services and support to young people in an inclusive and accessible way. The main purposes are to reduce stigma, to increase knowledge around youth issues, to improve access to services and to support youth in creating healthy lifestyles.

WHO's constitution defines health as: "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." [Constitution of the World Health Organization. Geneva, World Health Organization, 1948]

Health services and/or interventions include any action that directly contribute to improving the wellness of individuals. The goal of health services is to improve individuals' quality of life and also address prevention, health education and life coaching needs. Adolescent and young adults' quality of life may determine future adult wellness and have significant impact in societies. Young people are generally quite healthy, yet they seem vulnerable to challenges regarding modern crises. There are consequences for their somatic and psychosocial wellbeing according to official numbers, especially in the post pandemic era. In Greece, there are no specialized services dealing with youth health through an holistic approach.

Youth all over the globe, would benefit if they were provided with access to health environments where they can enjoy life without

facing danger of harm nor being involved in high risk, while they are in full bloom of their somatic and psychosocial development.

The World Health Organization (WHO) undertook an extensive and elaborate process to develop Global Standards to improve quality of health care services for adolescents. These standards are intended to help Member States target resources at the most effective interventions for adolescents with the highest need, involve key focus areas and be supported by a system of rigorous evidence-based data collection and analysis.

Adolescents and young people may experience health problems resulting from high risk behavior and experimentation (e.g. accidents, violence, substance use), mental health problems, sexual and reproductive health problems, under nutrition and over nutrition, endemic diseases, school difficulties etc

Diseases that cause significant personal, social and financial burden, with high morbidity and mortality rates, could be prevented – to an extent – by interventions in adolescence are:

- ✓ Obesity
- ✓ Metabolic syndrome-cardio vascular diseases
- ✓ Osteoporosis
- ✓ Infertility
- ✓ Cancer (certain types)
- ✓ Injuries - accidents
- ✓ Emotional distress and anxiety

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The WHO Standards' for YFS are described in 8 (eight) key points:

➤ **Standard 1 Adolescents' health literacy**

- The health facility provides the means and set the systems to ensure that adolescents are apprehensive of their own health and know where and when to secure health services.

➤ **Standard 2 Community support**

- The health facility implements systems to ensure that, parents, guardians and community members and organizations recognize the value of granting adolescent services and support the equipping and use of services by adolescents.

➤ **Standard 3 Appropriate package of services**

- The health facility administers a package of information, consultive, diagnostics, treatment and care services that are appropriate to the demands of all adolescents. Services are implemented at the facility and through referral and communication links.

➤ **Standard 4 Providers' competencies**

- Health care providers establish the technical capability required to secure effective adolescent health services. Both health care providers and support staff respect, protect and accomplish adolescents' rights to information, privacy, confidentiality, non-discrimination, non-judgment and respect.

➤ **Standard 5 Facility characteristics**

- The health facility has beneficial working hours, a warm and hygienic environment and secures privacy and confidentiality. It has the

appropriate equipment, pharmaceutical supplies and technology needed to ensure effective assistance delivery to adolescents.

➤ **Standard 6 Equity and non-discrimination**

- The health facility implements quality health services to all adolescents regardless of socioeconomic status, age, gender, education level, national origin, sexual orientation or other characteristics.

➤ **Standard 7 Data and quality improvement**

- The health unit collects, analyzes and uses data on service application and quality of care, disaggregated by age and sex, to support quality improvement. Health facility staff is encouraged to participate in continuous quality improvement.

➤ **Standard 8 Adolescents' participation**

- Adolescents engage in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of health services and in resolving issues about their own care, as well as in some appropriate aspects of service plan.

The Adolescent Health Service (A.H.S.) of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens is a unique setting based on the WHO guidelines for youth-friendly services and is evaluated by parents and youth with high scores regarding qualitative and quantitative criteria ((Δομή Εφηβικής Υγείας/ Ιατρικής - ΔΟΜ.Ε.Υ.Ι. ΦΕΚ 2466 Τ.Β'2022) .

A.H.S. is based on the following guidelines :

- Services accessible to all adolescents, respecting their rights and having no

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discrimination criteria regarding race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability etc.

- Multidisciplinary, holistic approach from a group of trained and friendly personnel
- Low cost or free of charge services in the public sector
- Convenient visiting hours (e.g. outside of school hours) and flexible appointment procedures (e.g. the possibility of a consultation without an appointment)
- Individualized care and health education (within the facility and through outreach) and that will develop adolescents' skills, knowledge and efficacy to act in order to maintain good health
- Confidentiality for addressing many types of various health issues. Several studies have shown that adolescents are both interested in and willing to talk with clinicians about recommended preventive counseling and screening topics, during private, confidential health care visits. GDPR protection policies are of great importance.

Thus, it is essential for Greece to develop Youth Friendly Services (YFS) in a pilot first level, having the scientific support of G.S.A.M., in collaboration with W.H.O. and Universities/ institutions that can significantly contribute.

Towards that goal and in order to develop protocols, training curriculums and evaluation procedures and tools, an international network is created as YFS Alliance, having Ambassadors that can – in various ways – contribute to the YFS development in Greece and internationally.

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