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5. Healthcare

Introductory remarks

The term ‘healthcare’ as referred to in this section encompasses both mental and physical healthcare which is provided to applicants for international protection. It also includes counselling of applicants suffering from serious illnesses and necessary measures to promote the rehabilitation of victims of violence and torture. In this sense, the medical screening carried out by several Member States at the beginning of the reception process can provide an important starting point as it facilitates a clearer idea of applicants’ medical needs that need to be addressed throughout the reception process. ‘Medical personnel’ for the purposes of this section refers to qualified medical professionals (e.g. doctors, dentists, nurses), as well as psychologists.

The guidance should be read in line with the overarching principles of consent and confidentiality, which are applicable to all reception staff and medical personnel involved in the provision of healthcare, as well as to the interpreters. At no stage should information be shared without the prior consent of the patient. Without prejudice to national regulations governing the access to medical records, applicants should be entitled to access their medical records, when needed.

Legal references — Health care
Article 13 RCD: medical screening Article 17 RCD: general rules on material reception conditions and health care Article 19 RCD: health care

Standards and indicators

STANDARD 29: Ensure access to necessary healthcare, at least level of emergency care and essential treatment of illnesses and serious mental disorders.

Indicator 29.1: The applicant has access to all types of necessary healthcare services.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *Where possible, gender should be taken into consideration when providing healthcare, (e.g. access to female medical personnel when requested and available).*

Indicator 29.2: Healthcare services are provided by qualified medical personnel.

Indicator 29.3: Healthcare is available inside the housing or outside at a reasonable distance.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *For more clarification on 'reasonable distance' see Standard 1: Location.*

Indicator 29.4: Necessary healthcare, including prescribed medication, is provided free of charge or economically compensated for through the daily expenses allowance.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *This means that both transport to access necessary healthcare and the provision of medication are free of charge (cf. Standard 1: Location, Standard 28: Provision of a daily expenses allowance)*

Indicator 29.5: Adequate arrangements are in place to ensure the applicant is able to communicate with the medical personnel.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *In particular, this means that a trained interpreter is provided (free of charge) where necessary. Provided the applicant consents, other individuals except for children can translate.*

Indicator 29.6: Arrangements are made to ensure access to first aid in emergencies.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *A first aid kit should be made accessible.*

Indicator 29.7: The applicant is provided with access to his/her medical records, without prejudice to national legislation.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *Provided the applicant has expressed his/her consent, the medical record can be transferred from one medical professional to another.*

Indicator 29.8: Specific arrangements are in place for applicants with special medical needs.

Additional remarks: *This would include, for example, access to a paediatrician, gynaecologist or prenatal healthcare or ensuring that persons with disabilities are provided with necessary arrangements. It would also include counselling provided to victims of trafficking and (gender-based) violence as well as victims of torture or other forms of psychological and physical violence.*

Good practice with regards to healthcare

It is considered good practice:

- to equip collective housing facilities with at least one member of staff who is trained to provide first aid; and where preventive healthcare and/or vaccination are not part of the general mandatory health programmes, to provide preventive health care, including a medical screening at reception intake and/or vaccinations; and to provide condoms as well as certain medication free of charge, including when not prescribed.

Previous Home Next

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