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6. Healthcare

Introductory remarks

Article 24 CRC emphasises that children have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. State parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of their right of access to such healthcare services. Furthermore, unaccompanied children should have the same access to healthcare services as national children. Special attention should also be paid to the particular vulnerabilities of unaccompanied children and the impact of these vulnerabilities on a child's health (25).

Accordingly, unaccompanied children should be given access to the same healthcare services as national children and for some children, due to particular vulnerabilities, additional health services should be provided. For unaccompanied children, special attention also must be paid to the fact that they have no parents to explain the medical history of the child. Unaccompanied children therefore need special support to gain access to the health services needed.

The term 'healthcare' as referred to in this chapter encompasses both mental and physical healthcare, which is provided to unaccompanied children. It also includes counselling of unaccompanied children suffering from serious illnesses as well as necessary measures to promote rehabilitation of victims of violence and torture. In this sense, a medical screening carried out at the beginning of the reception process can provide an important starting point as it allows to get a clearer idea of children's medical needs that need to be addressed throughout the reception process. 'Medical personnel' for the purposes of this chapter 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 previous consent of the patient. Without prejudice to national regulations governing the access to medical records, unaccompanied children should be entitled to access their medical records, when needed. In each case, it also needs to be assessed whether or not the qualified staff or the representative should accompany the unaccompanied children when seeing a medical professional.

When planning healthcare services and certain preventive programmes for unaccompanied

children, education programmes and other education arrangements have to be considered so that the services are made available for the children. This is particularly important when health services are provided inside the housing.

Legal references – Healthcare

- Article 13 RCD: Medical screening
- Article 17 RCD: General rules on material reception conditions and healthcare
- Article 19 RCD: Healthcare
- Article 24 CRC: Health and health services

(25) UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside their Country of Origin*, para. 46-49.

