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9.7 Communication equipment and services

Introductory remarks

Communication plays an important role for unaccompanied children throughout the reception procedure. The term ‘communication’ includes both communication concerning the unaccompanied children’s procedural status as well as private communication e.g. with family members. Importantly, adequate access to communication can contribute to the mental health of children as it can help to prevent anxiety resulting from lacking contact with family members and friends left in the country of origin or transit or insufficient access to communication with representative, organisations providing legal aid or other relevant services.

STANDARD 57: Ensure that unaccompanied children have adequate access to a telephone to maintain contact with family, carry out calls concerning procedural, legal, medical and educational issues.

Indicator 57.1: Access to a telephone is possible at least for calls concerning family contact, contact with the representative and procedural, legal, medical or educational issues.

Indicator 57.2: Unaccompanied children have daily access to at least one telephone per facility.

- ***Additional remarks****: The number of phones to be installed in the premises will depend on the number of children residing in them.*

Indicator 57.3: Unaccompanied children can take calls in a private setting, i.e. other unaccompanied children cannot hear the conversation.

STANDARD 58: Ensure that unaccompanied children have adequate access to the internet.

Indicator 58.1: Unaccompanied children have daily and free of charge access to the internet in the housing itself for reasons regarding schooling and family contact.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *Internet access and duration should be age appropriate and regulated by the staff.* Access to the internet in the housing can be facilitated through the

availability of a wireless network (WiFi) for unaccompanied children with own communicational devices *(e.g. smart phones) and through the availability of an adequate number of computers for a set number of persons.*

STANDARD 59: Ensure unaccompanied children have the possibility to charge their devices for communication.

Indicator 59.1: There is minimum one plug available and accessible per child to charge electronic devices.

- ***Additional remarks****: To avoid conflicts at the plug station, each room should have multiple sockets.*

Good practice with regards to facilitating access to communication equipment and services It is considered good practice to:

✓ provide unaccompanied children with the possibility to copy or print documents relevant for school purposes, asylum procedure or medical issues free of charge;
✓ facilitate access to a television with channels in at least two languages most widely spoken by unaccompanied children in the housing.