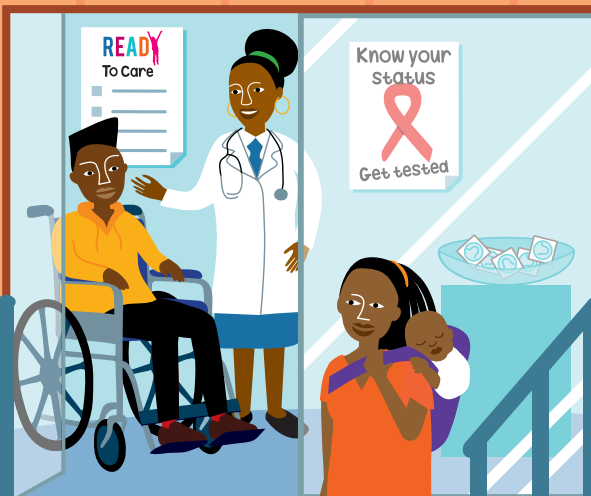


# Toolkit on Strengthening Youth-Friendly Spaces

## YOUTH CORNER



OPEN  
all are  
welcome



# Contents

Acknowledgements	2
About the READY Movement	3
Background	3
Aim and Audience	4
Youth-Friendly Spaces: What Are They and Why Do They Matter?	5
Minimum Standards for a Youth-Friendly Space	6
Safeguarding: Key Principles and Practices	9
Measuring Impact: Feedback Mechanisms	10
Implementation Guide: Setting Up a Youth-Friendly Space	12
Conclusion	15
Checklist for Minimum Standards	17

## Acknowledgements

Authors and contributors: Priscilla Ama Addo, Junior Programmes Officer: READY Programme, Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+ Global); Modester Mangilani, Senior Programmes Officer: READY Programme, Y+ Global; Angelita Silva, Marketing and Communications Manager, Paediatric-Adolescent-Treatment Africa (PATA); Wankumbu Simukonda, Technical Advisor, PATA; Heleen Soeters, Senior Programmes Manager, PATA; Virgilio Suande, Senior Advisor: Programmes (READY), Frontline AIDS; and Tamar Underhill, Advisor: Programmes, Frontline AIDS.

Editor: Sarah Hyde.

Design and illustration by Garry Robson, with credit and acknowledgements to Jane Shepherd.

Thanks to all our partners and young people who have given their time, ideas and passion. We would also like to thank the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Maputo for their generous support.



## About the READY Movement

READY is a movement of youth-led and youth-serving organisations working with and for adolescents and young people living with and affected by HIV. It is designed to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and mental health through youth-driven initiatives. READY creates a platform for young people to take the lead in HIV advocacy and meaningful engagement. The movement reaches adolescents and young people in all their diversity, building resilience and empowering them to influence the decisions that affect their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The READY movement is led by Y+ Global, with support from Frontline AIDS and its partners.



## Background

The READY movement was launched in late 2016. Now, after nearly a decade of working with young people, one lesson has become clear: the environments in which young people access services are just as important as the services themselves.

Experience has consistently shown that youth-friendly spaces play a central role in building young people's confidence, offering tailored support and enabling stigma-free access to healthcare and psychosocial support. These spaces matter because they create welcoming environments where young people feel respected, included and valued.

However, recent assessments across various health facilities in Eastern and Southern Africa reveal major disparities. While some sites provide dedicated rooms for adolescents and young people, others make do with small, improvised corners, or have no designated youth spaces at all. Even when spaces exist, they are often poorly equipped, lack visual appeal for young people, and do not adequately ensure privacy, confidentiality or a sense of safety. These gaps undermine efforts to foster resilience, empower young people and strengthen peer engagement. They also highlight the urgent need for advocacy with ministries of health, facility managers and implementing partners to recognise youth-friendly spaces as core components of quality adolescent health services – not optional add-ons.

## Aim and Audience

This toolkit provides practical guidance on establishing, upgrading and sustaining youth-friendly spaces within health facilities and other settings, for example vocational training centres and community-based organisations. It outlines minimum standards and features case studies of successful youth-friendly spaces in urban, peri-urban and rural settings as well as vocational centres. The toolkit also showcases accessible tools, such as the READY to Care scorecard,<sup>1</sup> to support continuous feedback and quality improvement.

A fundamental aim of this resource is to help sustain progress beyond the timelines of donor-funded initiatives. While extensive experience has demonstrated the value of dedicated spaces for adolescents and young people, long-term success relies on strong local ownership and leadership. Engaging communities, peer networks and local health authorities from the outset increases the likelihood that these spaces remain functional, financially feasible and integrated into national health systems.

The toolkit is intended for healthcare providers, local government, peer supporters, health facility managers, programme implementers and community-based organisations committed to improving healthcare for adolescents and young people. First and foremost, it is a practical guide. But it also serves as an advocacy tool, informing efforts to influence national policies and drive investments that prioritise safe, accessible environments responsive to the needs of young people. Although developed by READY partners, we hope that this toolkit will endure as a flexible, user-friendly resource that can be utilised in diverse settings by a wide range of providers.

### Fundamental requirements for any youth-friendly space include:

- **Guaranteed privacy and confidentiality** to build trust and encourage care-seeking.
- **A welcoming, non-judgmental atmosphere** where young people feel safe, respected and free from stigma and discrimination.
- **Accessible and appropriately resourced areas**, designed with meaningful input from young people.
- **Safeguarding** to protect young people's wellbeing, safety and rights. As a shared responsibility among staff and service providers, safeguarding is essential for building trust and ensuring that adolescents and young people feel respected, protected and able to seek support without fear.
- **Trained staff and peer supporters** who understand adolescents' and young people's needs and uphold youth-friendly standards.
- **Flexibility to adapt to the context** so that each space reflects local realities, cultural norms, available resources and priorities identified by young people themselves.



*By embedding these principles into routine practice, health systems can create sustainable, meaningful spaces that enhance adolescent wellbeing and improve the overall quality of care.*

# Youth-Friendly Spaces: What Are They and Why Do They Matter?

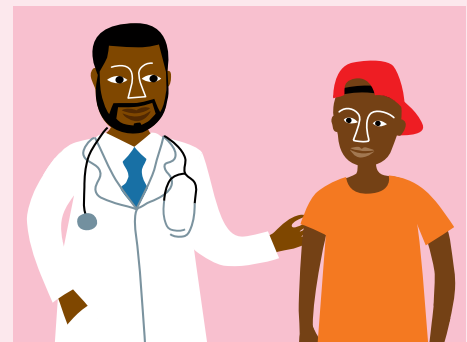
Despite some progress in recent years, young people in sub-Saharan Africa – particularly young women and adolescent girls – remain disproportionately affected by HIV.<sup>2</sup> In settings where young people's sexuality is perceived as sensitive or taboo, communities can be reluctant to acknowledge or discuss young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. As a result, adolescents and young people often face stigma and discrimination when seeking to access sexual and reproductive healthcare and information. And for those adolescents and young people living with and affected by HIV, this stigma is even greater.

Against this backdrop, a youth-friendly space – an environment where adolescents and young people can access services, information, peer support and counselling without fear of discrimination, judgement or harassment – is crucial. Key characteristics are respect, confidentiality, inclusion and a sense of belonging. In healthcare settings, these spaces often take the form of a youth corner or a dedicated room within a health facility, which is separate from adult services.

A youth-friendly space can be established even in remote and/or resource-limited settings. It is not always a fixed, physical room – it could be a mobile or pop-up space designed to bring services closer to adolescents and young people, especially in rural, hard-to-reach areas.

## Youth-friendly spaces matter because they:

- 1. Maintain confidentiality and reduce stigma:** Areas exclusively for young people ensure privacy, facilitating open, confident discussions on sensitive topics between young people and healthcare providers. This is especially important for adolescents living with HIV and/or those seeking sexual and reproductive healthcare, who often fear judgement.
- 2. Foster trust and emotional safety:** Free from discrimination or harassment, these spaces encourage young people to share their concerns and build supportive relationships with providers and peers.
- 3. Increase service uptake:** Dedicated spaces allow adolescents to relax and access information and commodities such as condoms. Young people also return for services more often. Without such spaces, long queues, lack of privacy and stigma can discourage them from seeking care.
- 4. Promote youth participation and accountability:** Youth-friendly spaces create venues for peer supporters to engage young people. Paired with monitoring tools like the READY to Care scorecard, they strengthen feedback loops and youth-driven quality improvement.



**Adolescents and young people:** We understand the term 'youth-friendly' to mean sensitive and responsive to the unique needs of adolescents and young people (typically aged 10-24).

# Minimum Standards for a Youth-Friendly Space

Below are suggested minimum elements that every space should include, along with a brief explanation of why each element is critical. These standards can be adapted to the size and context of the health facility or mobile setup. All standards must align with safeguarding principles (see page 9) and 'do no harm' values of healthcare providers, prioritising emotional and psychological safety, privacy and confidentiality. Much of the content below is adapted from the READY+ brief on Youth-friendly services.<sup>3</sup>

## 1 Confidential consultation area

- **Description:** A private room or partition where young people can speak with providers or peer supporters without being overheard.
- **Why it matters:** Confidentiality reduces the fear of stigma and encourages openness. Evaluations of healthcare settings found that young people disliked sharing waiting rooms with adults, as they could not discuss issues freely.

## 2 Welcoming, youth-friendly atmosphere

- **Description:** The space should feel comfortable and inviting, with warm or neutral colours and adaptable furniture that can be moved to suit the sessions taking place. Staff should welcome young people with a smile.
- **Why it matters:** A welcoming atmosphere helps young people relax and feel valued. Overly clinical environments can feel intimidating and discourage engagement.

## 3 Neutral decor

- **Description:** Neutral designs should be used. It is preferable to avoid busy, cluttered images or contrasting colours – especially intense or bright hues like red – that can overstimulate people or trigger trauma or distress.
- **Why it matters:** Trauma informed care emphasises that neutral decor can create environments that feel emotionally safe, calming and supportive.<sup>4</sup>

## 4 Clear signage and accessible information

- **Description:** Signs for exits and toilets should be provided as well as resources in plain language with pictograms. Information should be made available in local languages. Where possible, discreet entry and exit points should be included to respect privacy.
- **Why it matters:** Clear signage enables young people to navigate the space independently, improving their confidence and accessibility. Providing information in local languages allows young people who speak indigenous or marginalised languages to access services equitably.

## 5 Inclusivity and physical accessibility

- **Description:** The space should accommodate mobility devices and include ramps, handrails and wide passages. Staff should be trained to understand and respect clients' diverse cultural backgrounds, and services should be provided in local languages where possible.
- **Why it matters:** Inclusive design enables all young people, including those with disabilities or from diverse cultures, to feel safe and respected.

## 6 Private breakout or quiet areas

- **Description:** An area within the space where adolescents can take a break, rest or reflect in a calm, supportive environment.
- **Why it matters:** Some adolescents and young people may need a quiet area to regulate their emotions or recover from discussions that trigger a strong emotional response.

## 7 Commodities and essential supplies

- **Description:** Each space should be equipped with a minimum package of essential commodities to improve health, hygiene and psychosocial wellbeing. These include sexual and reproductive health commodities such as condoms, menstrual products, pregnancy test kits and contraceptives; basic health items like first aid kits, gloves, pain relievers and mental health screening tools; and information, education and communication (IEC) materials. Access to clean running water, waste bins and disinfectants should be provided.
- **Why it matters:** An adequate supply of commodities helps ensure that services are available, safe and youth-responsive, reducing barriers to care and promoting dignity, especially for girls and young women.

## 8 Youth-friendly materials and resources

- **Description:** Posters about human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights, leaflets, comics, games, self-care tools, condoms and sanitary products should be provided. Materials should be available in various languages, where possible.
- **Why it matters:** Youth corners displaying a range of posters and leaflets make the space educational and engaging. These materials encourage young people to gain knowledge, while promoting safe practices.

## 9 Peer support and staff training

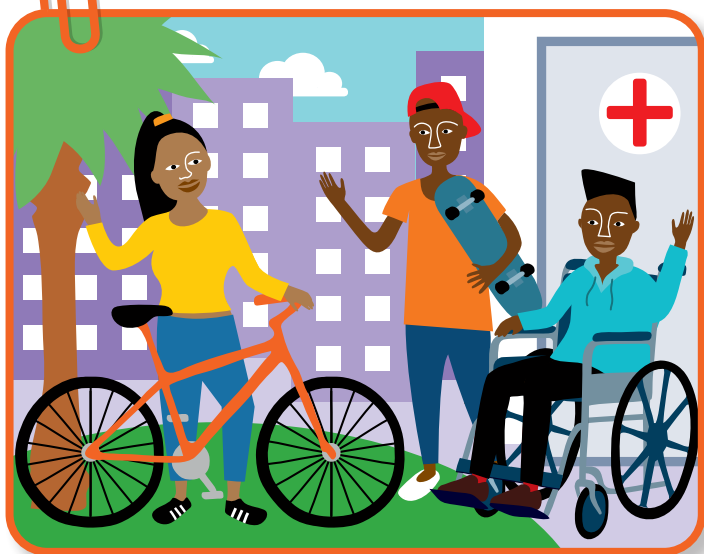
- **Description:** Peer supporters should be recruited to provide counselling and support. All staff and volunteers should be trained in safeguarding principles, trauma-informed care, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity and meaningful youth engagement.
- **Why it matters:** Peer supporters help young people feel understood: participants in READY focus groups appreciated that peer supporters visit communities and facilitate group support. Safeguarding training helps staff to identify and respond to risks such as abuse or exploitation so that all interactions protect young people's privacy, dignity and wellbeing. Trauma-informed training supports staff to create emotionally safe, respectful environments that empower young people and minimise further trauma.

## 10 Participation and feedback mechanisms

- **Description:** Suggestion boxes, feedback forms and/or digital surveys should be provided. In addition, youth meetings should be held to create an opportunity for young people to discuss improvements.
- **Why it matters:** Engaging young people in design and continuous improvement fosters ownership and makes sure that the space responds to their needs.

## CASE STUDY

### Youth-Friendly Space in an Urban Health Facility in Southern Africa



A major public hospital has created a dedicated youth-friendly space that offers **comfort, privacy** and a **sense of belonging**. To make services accessible, most activities for adolescents and young people are scheduled at the weekend, when they do not have to mix with adults. This approach helps reduce stigma, shortens waiting times and creates a calmer atmosphere for young people. Young people gather in a spacious, shaded outdoor area. This spot serves as a relaxed, welcoming environment where they can take part in peer support groups.

- One-on-one counselling takes place within the health facility. The rooms are arranged to **ensure privacy and confidentiality**, allowing young people to express themselves openly. Counsellors provide support with adherence to HIV treatment, psychosocial care and referrals.
  - By combining an inviting social space outdoors with private indoor counselling areas, the facility creates an environment that is **respectful and responsive** to adolescents' needs.
  - Young people consistently report feeling **welcome, heard and supported** by peers and providers.
  - During a youth-led assessment, young people living with HIV scored the facility 85%.
- ✓ *This demonstrates how an urban health facility can adapt its physical layout, appointment scheduling and staff practices to create a youth-friendly environment that promotes dignity, confidence and ongoing care-seeking among adolescents.*

# Safeguarding: Key Principles and Practices

Creating a youth-friendly space does not only mean considering comfort, design and accessibility – it requires intentional safeguarding practices that actively protect young people from harm, exploitation, abuse and discrimination. Health facilities must ensure that the environment, behaviour of staff and processes for delivering care uphold young people's safety, dignity and rights at all times. Safeguarding is everyone's business.

## Safeguarding principles for youth-friendly spaces

- **Inclusive:** All adolescents and young people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to live free from stigma and discrimination. This fundamental right applies regardless of their gender, age, disability, health or HIV status, sexual orientation, sex work or drug use, religion, ethnicity, political beliefs or socio-economic background.
- **Guided by gender, power and social inclusion:** Safeguarding approaches must recognise the ways in which power imbalances heighten individuals' vulnerability and risk, especially with regard to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Effective approaches actively work to shift power dynamics and prevent the abuse of authority.
- **Contextually sensitive:** Safeguarding risks vary across settings, cultures and communities. Therefore, prevention, mitigation and response strategies must be tailored to local realities, the experiences of adolescents and young people, and social norms within communities.
- **Do no harm:** All activities must be assessed for potential risks, with clear measures outlined to prevent unintended harm. Safety and wellbeing must guide all decision-making, including handling cases and adapting programmes.
- **Shared responsibility:** Safeguarding cannot be delegated to one person alone. Everyone – healthcare providers, peer supporters, facility managers and community partners – has a role to play in preventing abuse and promoting a safe environment.
- **Respecting confidentiality:** Young people have the right to choose what personal information they share and with whom. Confidentiality must be upheld unless there is informed consent or immediate risk of harm. Breaches of confidentiality can expose young people to violence, stigma or exploitation.
- **Zero tolerance for inaction:** Safeguarding concerns must never be ignored, downplayed or covered up. Delayed or inadequate responses put young people at further risk and erode trust.
- **Survivor-centred:** If abuse or exploitation occurs, the survivor's rights, needs, wishes and safety must drive every step of the response. Support should be empowering, respectful and designed to minimise further trauma.



## What safeguarding looks like in practice

In a youth-friendly space, the safeguarding principles outlined above translate into clear, visible, everyday practices, including:

- **Physical space:** Private consultation areas, soundproofing or screens and waiting areas that are suitable for young people. Information about safeguarding – aimed at adolescents and young people – is prominently displayed.
- **Confidential service delivery:** Staff speak discreetly, store records securely and do not discuss sensitive information in shared areas.
- **Clear, youth-friendly reporting pathways:** Posters, suggestion boxes, hotline numbers or digital options explain how young people can report concerns confidentially.
- **Staff equipped to protect young people:** All providers, peer supporters and volunteers receive safeguarding training and understand how to identify, prevent and respond to risks.
- **Safe, ethical peer engagement:** Peer supporters are trained to keep boundaries, respect young people's confidentiality and follow referral pathways for any safeguarding concern.
- **Proactive risk management:** Regular assessments of physical spaces, the conduct of staff and processes for service delivery identify and reduce risks.
- **Respectful, rights-based interactions:** Staff model non-judgmental language, respect young people's diverse identities and prevent discriminatory or stigmatising behaviour.
- **Strong referral mechanisms:** Clear links are in place to psychosocial support, legal services, child protection actors and gender-based violence response systems.
- **Involvement of young people:** Adolescents and young people help design safeguarding messages, review systems and identify barriers to feeling safe and respected.
- **Accountability across the health facility:** Safeguarding responsibilities are assigned, monitored and integrated into routine supervision and quality improvement processes.

## Measuring Impact: Feedback Mechanisms

In order to understand whether a youth-friendly space is genuinely meeting adolescents' and young people's needs and creating a positive impact, **effective feedback mechanisms are essential**. This allows young people and healthcare providers to share their experiences, concerns and ideas, ensuring that services remain responsive, youth-friendly and stigma-free.

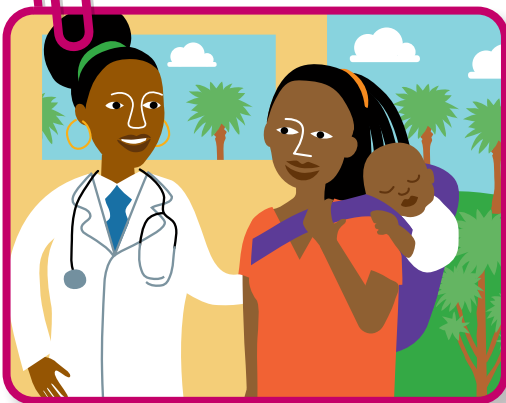
Feedback mechanisms not only help to identify gaps and challenges but also strengthen accountability between health facilities and the communities they serve. Regular feedback creates a continuous improvement cycle, where young people's voices drive the design and quality of services.

## This includes but is not limited to:

- **Suggestion boxes and digital surveys:** Anonymous feedback boxes should be available in the youth-friendly space or tablets used for electronic surveys. These tools should be accessible to young people who have visual, hearing or physical impairments to allow them to provide feedback.
- **READY to Care scorecard:** An innovative accountability tool developed within the READY+ programme to gather feedback directly from young people and service providers.
- **Youth advisory groups:** Regular meetings with peer supporters and clients can help interpret feedback received results and plan improvements.
- **Regular focus groups:** Small group discussions can help participants to explore issues in depth. Participation should be voluntary, and discussions should be facilitated in a safe and respectful way.
- **Exit interviews:** Brief interviews immediately after young people have accessed healthcare can capture real-time feedback on both the space and services.

## CASE STUDY

### Youth-Friendly Space in a Rural Health Facility in Southern Africa



A rural health facility in a remote district has established a youth-friendly space that provides adolescents with **accessible, respectful** and **confidential services**, despite limited resources. The clinic serves a small but diverse group of adolescents and young people living with HIV. It maintains flexible opening hours, ensuring a nurse or trained provider is always available to offer care. A dedicated room functions as the adolescent corner. This space is accessible for wheelchairs and stocked with a full range of sexual and reproductive health commodities. Staff maintain consistent availability

of supplies, since stockouts and long travel distances are barriers to care. Information about reproductive health and self-care is displayed. A trained peer supporter helps create a **welcoming, non-judgmental atmosphere**.

- Adolescents say that they feel listened to, treated with respect and able to ask questions. Providers ensure privacy during consultations and offer clear explanations.
- The facility incorporates engaging activities such as outdoor games, music and facilitated group discussions. This fosters a sense of community, reduces stigma and makes visits to the clinic less intimidating.
- During a recent youth-led assessment, the facility scored 81%.

✓ *This illustrates how even small rural health facilities can create youth-friendly spaces by combining dedicated physical space, flexible service delivery, supportive staff and opportunities for peer interaction.*

# Implementation Guide: Setting Up a Youth-Friendly Space



*This step-by-step guide outlines how to establish or upgrade an adolescent and youth-friendly space within a health facility. Adapt the steps to your context and resources.*

## 1 Conduct a Needs Assessment and Engage Stakeholders

- **Review national policies and standards:** Check national and subnational guidelines on youth-friendly services, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and safe spaces. This ensures alignment and identifies any compulsory requirements before planning.
- **Consult young people, peer supporters and staff:** Facilitate workshops or surveys to understand what adolescents and young people need and value in a youth-friendly space. Involve a diverse range of young people, including those who may face additional barriers to accessing services (for example, due to gender, disability, or social marginalisation), to ensure the space is inclusive.
- **Review health facility infrastructure:** In consultation with health facility managers, identify available rooms or corners that could be used. Also, check accessibility, privacy and proximity to services.
- **Coordinate with management and ministries:** Secure buy-in from facility managers and align plans with ministry of health guidelines and national youth policies. Check if a health facility budget line is available.

## 2 Co-Design the Space

- **Develop a plan with meaningful youth engagement:** Draw floor plans and – in collaboration with adolescents and young people – decide on colours, decor, furniture and signs. Provide at least one confidential area for counselling.
- **Budget for upgrades:** Estimate costs for painting, curtains, movable partitions, cushions, chairs, storage and supplies. Include allowances for maintenance.
- **Discuss budget implications with stakeholders:** Engage facility managers, partners and donors early on to identify available resources and explore funding options. Prioritise essential upgrades first and plan for phased improvements if funds allow.
- **Source materials locally:** Use locally available furniture and materials to promote sustainability. Engage local artists or young people to create murals.

### 3 Set Up the Environment

- **Prepare the physical space:** Paint walls in neutral or calming colours, install comfortable seating and cushions, and provide flexible furniture for group discussions and quiet zones. Add artwork to create a welcoming atmosphere.
- **Ensure privacy:** Use screens, curtains or partitions to separate the space from the main clinic. Provide a private counselling room or corner.
- **Install clear signage:** Label the space and mark exits, toilets and resources, using symbols and languages that are understood by the young people using the service.
- **Display posters and materials:** Provide information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, mental health, sexual and gender-based violence, referrals, young people's rights, and safeguarding, including materials such as READY to Care leaflets. Provide materials in multiple languages and consider audio or highly visual formats for adolescents and young people with low literacy. Finally, ensure that essential commodities are available, including condoms, sanitary products, and self-care kits.
- **Provide entertainment:** If possible, include a TV or radio for educational videos and entertainment, and offer games to stimulate engagement.

### 4 Train and Support Staff and Peer Supporters

- **Capacity building:** Train healthcare providers, peer supporters and volunteers in confidentiality, youth participation, safeguarding and inclusive communication. Emphasise the importance of welcoming young people, listening without judgement and respecting their privacy. For more guidance, refer to the resources and tools cited on page 18.
- **Language and accessibility:** Make sure that staff can communicate in the languages spoken by the young people accessing services, care and support. Provide interpretation, including sign language, where necessary.
- **Peer support:** Recruit and mentor peer supporters to facilitate group activities, counselling and completion of the scorecard.

### 5 Launch and Promote the Space

- **Host an opening event:** Invite young people, parents/caregivers, community leaders and stakeholders to launch the space. Use the event to sensitise the community, showcase resources and explain how to access services. Address any concerns and highlight the benefits for improving adolescent health and maintaining confidentiality.
- **Conduct outreach:** Use social media and/or community meetings to inform young people about the new space. Engage peer supporters to spread the word.

## 6 Operate and Maintain the Space

- **Streamline daily operations:** Establish opening hours that are convenient for pupils. Ensure that a trained staff member or peer supporter is always available. Maintain hygiene and replenish supplies regularly.
- **Integrate services:** Link the space to sexual and reproductive healthcare, HIV services and mental health support so that young people can access various services in one visit.
- **Consider language:** Offer materials and services in local languages. Provide translation or interpretation for speakers of minority languages and check that written materials are culturally appropriate. Ensure that these materials are accessible to young people who have visual or hearing impairments. Train staff to use inclusive language and pronouns, and to avoid making assumptions about young people's identity or experience. Use plain language and visual aids for adolescents and young people with limited literacy.

## 7 Gather Feedback and Adapt

- **Establish routine feedback systems:** Create various avenues for young people and service providers to share their experiences, concerns and suggestions. This can include suggestion boxes, digital surveys, scorecards, focus group discussions and youth advisory groups.
- **Document and share feedback:** Record lessons learned, challenges, innovations and share them with other facilities, community stakeholders and partners to strengthen programming and promote accountability.



## Conclusion

Youth-friendly spaces are central to adolescents' and young people's wellbeing and health. Having a designated space where young people can go for healthcare, information and psychosocial support – where they feel welcome and are not judged for who they are – is essential. This can be a simple area where adolescents and young people feel safe and respected. In low-resource settings, it could be a private corner of a room or a mobile space, especially in rural, hard-to-reach areas.

These spaces matter because they create stigma-free environments where young people feel included and valued. They make a huge difference to young people's experience of accessing health services, improving quality of care and boosting uptake. Now is the time to recognise youth-friendly spaces as core components of adolescent healthcare, not optional add-ons. The benefits are numerous: not only for young people's wellbeing, but also for public health outcomes.

Strong local ownership and leadership can help sustain a youth-friendly space. By involving communities, peer networks and local health authorities, these valuable spaces are more likely to become integrated into national health systems, thereby enduring beyond donor support.


## CASE STUDY

### Youth-Friendly Space in a Vocational Training Centre in Southern Africa



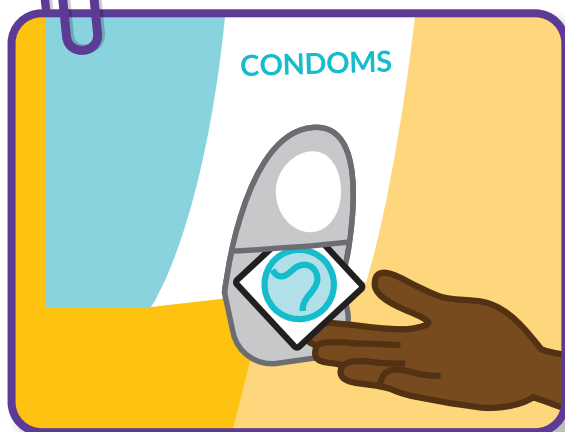
A vocational training centre in a peri-urban area has established a youth-friendly space so that trainees can access sexual and reproductive healthcare and mental health support within a familiar, **stigma-free environment**. Initially, the centre relied on a small, improvised corner for youth activities, which offered minimal privacy and comfort. However, the space was gradually upgraded, despite limited resources. Murals, privacy screens, comfortable seating and youth-branded information materials have transformed the area into a welcoming, functional environment.

- The space now operates as a holistic wellness hub for trainees, offering a “one-stop shop” model of care. Young people can socialise, participate in peer-led sessions on sexual and reproductive health and rights and life skills, access HIV services and condoms, and join facilitated group discussions on wellbeing. Combining recreational, educational and clinical services helps normalise care-seeking and enhances young people's wellbeing.
- **Involving peers** has been pivotal to the centre's success. Peers helped design the space, mobilise trainees and deliver youth-friendly services, increasing trust and uptake. Visibility and youth-oriented branding across the centre have also helped make the space recognisable and approachable.

 *This case study shows how youth participation, low-cost improvements and continuous adaptation can create a sustainable youth-friendly space within an educational setting.*

## CASE STUDY

### Youth-Friendly Space in a Peri-Urban Health Facility in Southern Africa



A peri-urban clinic serving a rapidly growing population on the outskirts of a major city has developed a comprehensive youth-friendly space designed to meet the diverse needs of adolescents. With thousands of young people in its catchment area, the facility provides a full package of youth-friendly services under one roof, enabling young people to access the support they need. Condoms, mental health support, HIV services and contraception are available at any time throughout the week, **providing flexibility for young people.**

- The clinic has a designated youth-friendly space, which prominently displays information on sexual and reproductive health and rights including contact details for toll-free helplines. Clear signage guides young people through the facility and reinforces a welcoming environment.
- A locally made condom dispenser enables young people to discreetly take the quantity they need without stigma or gatekeeping.
- The youth-friendly space is supported by trained providers who uphold confidentiality, respect and non-judgmental care. Young people consistently report feeling acknowledged, supported and able to seek services safely.
- During a recent youth-led scorecard assessment, the facility received a score of 82%.

✓ *This case study demonstrates how a peri-urban facility can maximise its physical space and offer integrated services to deliver quality care for adolescents.*

A colorful leaflet with a blue background and yellow, green, and orange accents. It features four circular icons of diverse young people. The main text reads: "READY to care: Improving health services for young people living with HIV". Below this, it says: "Thank you for picking up this leaflet. We want to share with you some of the things you can do to help young people living with HIV feel more comfortable and supported in health services. Living with HIV presents young people with many challenges and we have lots of questions about our future. You are the adults in our lives who can make a big difference in how we cope and how we stay happy, healthy and safe."

#### Scorecard

We have committed to providing adolescent and youth-friendly health services at this health facility. If you are between the ages of 10-24 years, please complete this survey. Your responses will help us to improve our services. This survey is anonymous – you don't have to write your name. This is your opportunity to share your experiences.

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never
1 Health providers greet me with a SMILE.				
2 Health providers show me that they believe I can live a full and happy life, have healthy relationships, and have a family of my own.				
3 Health providers listen to my questions without judgement.				
4 Health providers provide me with answers that are positive and give me hope.				
5 Even when health providers are busy they give me time to talk.				
6 Health providers explain things clearly and make sure I understand everything and can make my own choices.				
7 Health providers treat me with respect and don't talk about me with others.				
8 Health providers respect my privacy and will speak to me in a confidential space.				
9 Health providers make appointments quick and smooth so I am not waiting around.				
10 Health providers are fair to me and do not allow older clients to jump the queue ahead of me unnecessarily.				
11 Health providers find ways to make sure that I do not have to visit the clinic too often and that I get the range of services I need.				
12 Health providers do not behave inappropriately – they don't flirt with me, gossip about me or insult me.				
13 Health providers make sure that the medication they give me is correct, not expired and they explain to me what I need to know to be able to take it.				
14 Health providers do not burden me with any stress they may be feeling.				
15 Health providers care about me and make me feel cared for, understood and protected.				

# Checklist for Minimum Standards



*Use this checklist to ensure your space meets the minimum standards. Mark items as complete (✓) or in progress (➤).*

## Information

- Up-to-date IEC materials on sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV, mental health and rights
- Contact details for helplines or emergency support prominently posted
- Clear instructions on how to ask for help or report concerns

## Accessibility and Inclusivity

- Clear, visible signage in local languages (with pictograms, where helpful)
- Accessible to a diverse range of young people, including those with disabilities
- Safe, clean toilets (gender-sensitive, where possible)
- Flexible service hours that accommodate young people's schedules

## Privacy and Protection

- Private area for confidential consultations
- Clear procedures for safeguarding and protection
- Quiet and breakout areas available
- Clear referral pathways for clinical, psychosocial, community, social and protection services

## Environment

- Basic utilities (running water, good lighting and hygiene)
- Comfortable seating and welcoming layout
- Dedicated recreation and engagement materials (contextually appropriate games, books, art and murals)
- Visible youth-friendly branding and materials
- Warm or neutral colours and decor

## Services and Supplies

- Consistent availability of sexual and reproductive health supplies and commodities, such as menstrual health products, condoms, contraceptives, self-test kits, pre-exposure prophylaxis and post-exposure prophylaxis
- Mental health support and counselling available

## Youth Participation and Feedback

- Young people involved in planning, design and decision-making
- Feedback mechanisms available and acted upon (scorecard, suggestion box and advisory group)

## Staff and Conduct

- Staff trained in youth-friendly, non-judgmental communication
- Peer supporters available and actively engaged
- Staff and peer supporters trained in safeguarding, trauma-informed care and cultural sensitivity

## REFERENCES

1. Y+ Global and READY+ (2018), READY to Care Scorecard. Available at: <https://readymovement.org/resources/ready-to-care/>
2. UNAIDS (2025), Global AIDS Update 2025. Available at: [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/2025-global-aids-update-JC3153\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/2025-global-aids-update-JC3153_en.pdf)
3. Frontline AIDS and READY+ (2019), Youth-Friendly Services. Available at: <https://frontlineaids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/READY-A4-Youth-friendly-services-briefing-FINAL-web-ready-single-pages.pdf>
4. National Council for Behavioral Health (2018), Recommendations for Trauma-Informed Design. Available at: <https://healingattention.org/wp-content/uploads/Trauma-Informed-Design-Summary.pdf>. See also Clinical Advisor (2024), Color in Health Care: How Mindful Design Can Improve Clinical Spaces. Available at: <https://www.clinicaladvisor.com/features/color-in-health-care-design-spaces>

For further information about creating sustainable youth-friendly spaces, see the READY movement website:



Published March 2026 © READY.

Support the READY movement by posting to social media using **#WeAreREADY**.



READYMovement



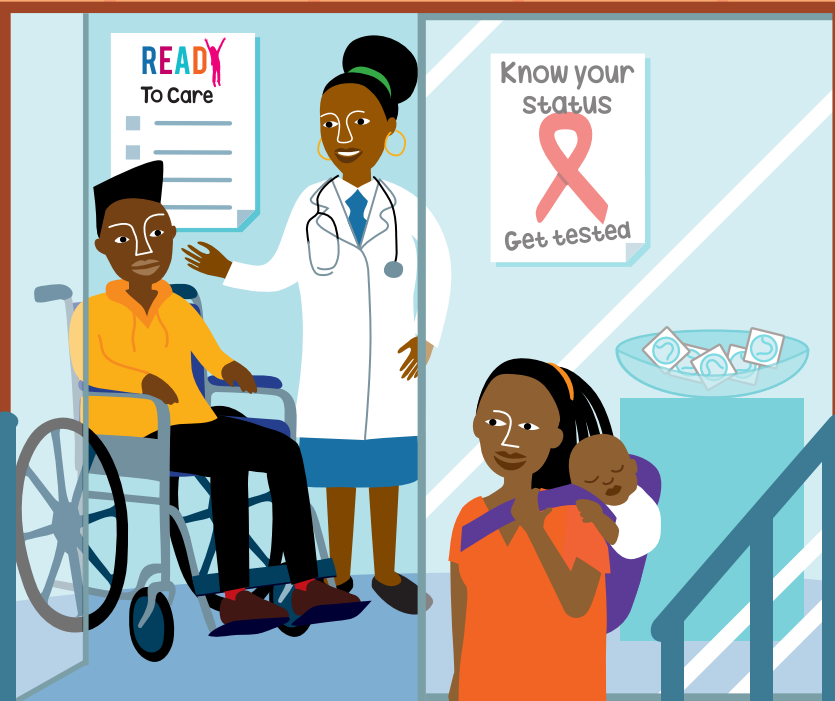
@READY\_Movement



@readymovement

Visit [www.readymovement.org](http://www.readymovement.org) for news and updates

# YOUTH CORNER



OPEN  
all are  
welcome





RESILIENT & EMPOWERED  
ADOLESCENTS & YOUNG PEOPLE

Published March 2026 © READY.

Support the READY movement by posting to social media using #WeAreREADY.



READYMovement



@READY\_Movement



@readymovement

Visit [www.readymovement.org](http://www.readymovement.org) for news and updates

