

APPENDIX C | “Enabled Disclosure” of SGBV: Sample Do’s and Don’ts



Do’s for individual staff members

- Offer help with basic needs before asking questions about reasons for leaving, experiences of violence in transit, etc.
- Show empathy and compassion.
- Emphasize and demonstrate confidentiality.
- Practice active listening, including making eye contact, being attentive when the person is speaking, ensuring you are not distracted.
- Show that you believe their story.
- Be honest, transparent, and patient.
- Build self-esteem by affirming a person’s feelings, desires and expressions.
- Learn refugees’ and migrants’ colloquial or euphemistic expressions for sexual acts.
- Check in spontaneously to see how someone is doing; pay attention to details and demonstrate care in small ways (eg, giving new shoelaces or playing with children).
- Play games with children and sit on the floor with them to be at the same physical level.

Don’ts for individual staff members

- Never ask someone about violence in the presence of a partner, family member or friend.
- Don’t judge or blame an individual for anything that happened to them. Remember that your own life experiences and background may influence how you view or interpret someone else’s experiences and behavior.
- Don’t criticize an individual if they admit later to having lied about their story previously.
- Avoid body language such as crossing your arms or facial expressions that convey disbelief or irritation.
- Don’t push someone to talk if they are uncomfortable or not ready to do so. Instead reassure them that they can talk to you later or refer them to someone else who can help.
- Don’t speak openly with colleagues in visible settings about a case or whisper with a colleague right after an individual shares sensitive information with you. This can erode trust and create anxiety.

Do’s for organizations and institutions

- Create an inviting facility that is clean, well-lit, and comfortable. For shelters, it may help to replicate aspects of “home” as much as possible, with resident access to a kitchen or garden, or rooms for reading or watching TV.
- Ensure there are confidential spaces for one-on-one talks.
- Display posters and other materials about SGBV and support services.
- Train all staff on psychological first aid and SGBV detection and response.
- Ensure greatest possible diversity of gender, ethnicity, age, language, and sexual orientation / identity on staff.
- Have dormitories for LGBTI individuals and women who solicit this option.
- Engage refugees and migrants in routine activities, chores, etc., to create rapport and provide more opportunities for speaking freely.
- Ensure that shelter or reception staff are visibly accessible to residents for formal and informal conversation.
- Provide diverse staff-resident interaction opportunities, including group activities (know your rights trainings, group therapy, etc.).
- Establish peer support groups amongst refugees and migrants.
- Discuss SGBV in info sessions, stressing that it is never ok and help is available.
- Assign one person to a case (eg, one case worker always sees the same individual) and ensure each case worker or manager has no more than 25 cases at a time.
- Maintain safe, confidential, and updated inter-agency referral and case management systems.
- Ensure access to religious and spiritual counsel if desired.
- Provide for self-care check-ins, trainings, and support of your staff.
- Establish feedback and community-based complaint mechanisms accessible to all population groups, including women, girls, boys, men from diverse backgrounds.

Don’ts for organizations and institutions

- Don’t assume your facility feels safe or welcoming: ask for client feedback and ideas about how to create a more comfortable environment.
- Don’t expect one SGBV training to be enough. Provide ongoing sensitization and skills-building to improve your team’s quality of support and knowledge.
- Don’t tolerate discriminatory or stigmatizing comments toward persons or staff in your care. Establish an organizational procedure to confront offending individuals.
- Don’t perpetuate isolation, discrimination, or stigmatization of marginalized and diverse groups (eg, indigenous, LGBTI individuals) in shelters, reception centers, during social activities or discussions; be inclusive, sensitive, and compassionate.
- Don’t allow staff or the organization to share or use any information a survivor has revealed without first asking permission from the survivor and explaining the purpose of sharing.

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