

## **IAAH POLICY**

### **Establishing a new association for Adolescent Health**

The International Association for Adolescent Health (IAAH) welcomes the establishment of new organizations (such as associations or societies) committed to advancing adolescent and young adult health (hereafter referred to as adolescent health) at subnational, national and regional levels.

The establishment of an association or organization is often a natural progression from informal professional networks or special interest groups within other professional organizations. The formation of multidisciplinary associations for adolescent health should be viewed as a mechanism to complement rather than replace other special interest groups.

This document describes principles to consider when establishing an adolescent health organization or association.

#### **Objectives:**

The organization should establish objectives in line with a mission to advance the health, wellbeing, development and welfare of adolescents and young adults in their country or region.

These objectives may include:

- In countries where adolescence is not recognised as a policy priority, to advocate for recognition, establishment and prioritization of national adolescent health policies and strategies.
- To advocate for legislative reform pertaining to adolescent health.
- To be a resource for multidisciplinary professionals who are committed to improving the health, wellbeing, development, and welfare of adolescents.
- To contribute to the development and use of evidence-based policies, practices and programs.
- To build capacity in the various disciplines whose workforces are relevant to adolescents and their health through ensuring that adolescent development, health and wellbeing is part of relevant pre-service and postgraduate education.
- To advocate for greater programmatic investment in adolescents and their health, including through research and prevention.
- To promote the importance of addressing social determinants of health through multidisciplinary policy frameworks including around families and schools.
- To disseminate new information related to adolescent health through various forms, including but not limited to publications, newsletters, meetings, education sessions, program support materials and social media.
- To ensure that adolescents' voices are included in the development of programs, resources and educational activities that are designed to serve them.

#### **Governance:**

Organizations should have a clearly developed governance structure in the form of a constitution, by-laws or terms of reference, in line with the governance legislation and

regulations of the country in which the organization is being established. The organization should be registered with the appropriate government-stipulated agency.

Governance principles:

- *Terms of tenure:*
  - Set terms of tenure for the directors, executives or officers of the organization.
  - Limit leadership tenure to two or three successive terms.
- *Representation of directors:*
  - Consider the types of skills required to meet the objectives of the organization when choosing officials, directors or officers to oversee the governance of the organization.
  - Whenever possible, young people should be included in the organization's governance.
- *Accurate documentation:*
  - Ensure proper documentation of the proceedings of all meetings held by the organization, to be ratified by the directors of the organization.
- *Fiscal responsibility:*
  - Ensure proper financial due diligence, in line with corporate and non-profit legislation and regulations in the country of origin.
- *Regular reporting:*
  - Establish regular reporting to the members of the organization, in line with the legislation and regulations in the country of origin.
- *Quorum of members:*
  - For an organization with membership, it should have at least fifteen (15) members in good standing.

### **Organizational operation:**

The following are considered best practice for organizations related to adolescent health.

- *Non-profit status:*
  - This ensures effort is concentrated on adolescents, rather than the goal of securing profits for stakeholders.
- *Multidisciplinary:*
  - Organizations which include the range of disciplines relevant to adolescents are more likely to be responsive to their needs.
- *Age*
  - Consider a definition of adolescents and young adults that extends from 10 years of age into the 20s, in line with contemporary understandings of continued biological, social and emotional development that extends at least through the mid-20s.

### **Strategic Operation:**

Adolescent health-focused associations should consider the following strategic activities:

- *Inclusion of adolescents:*

- Ensure that the organization establishes mechanisms to include youth participation and consideration of the views of young people. This may include participation of adolescents in the governance of the organization
- *Foster wider connections:*
  - Organizations should stay informed about wider developments in their country and regions.
  - Consider connecting with related groups or peak organizations, such as membership of the International Association for Adolescent Health.
- *Host regular educational meetings or conferences:*
  - This provides an important opportunity to foster local partnerships, build knowledge and skills, provide networking opportunities and grow the capability of local professionals.
- *Engage in advocacy:*
  - Provide a strong evidence-informed platform for the promotion of adolescent health through the development of policy statements and advocacy agendas.

### **Definitions:**

*Adolescents:* The World Health Organization uses the term *Adolescent* to refer to people aged 10-19 years old.

*Adolescents and young adults:* A combination term that commonly refers to people aged 10-24 years old, but in some countries spans the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade.

*Director, Executive or Officer:* Refers to an official who is responsible for overseeing the governance of the organization.

*Health:* Defined as physical, mental, spiritual and social wellbeing.

*Member in good standing:* Refers to a member whose financial dues are paid, and whose contact details are up to date for the purposes of communication.

*Region:* Defined as including at least two countries in the same geography. Regions are best defined in line with the definitions set out by international health agencies.

*Young people:* A combination term referring to adolescents and young adults.