

HANDOUT 14: QUALITY STANDARDS FOR PROVIDING HEALTH SERVICES TO WOMEN SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

STANDARDS FOR SUPPORT SERVICES (COUNCIL OF EUROPE ISTANBUL CONVENTION, ARTICLE 18)

- » Services are based on a **gendered understanding** of violence against women and focus on the human rights and safety of the victims.
- » Services are based on an **integrated approach**, which takes into account the relationship between victims, perpetrators, children and their wider social environment.
- » Services aim at **avoiding secondary victimization**.
- » Services aim at the **empowerment and economic independence** of women victims of violence.
- » Services allow, where appropriate, for a **range of protection and support services** to be located on the **same premises**.
- » Services address the **specific needs of vulnerable persons**, including child victims, and are made available to them.

ELEMENTS OF WOMEN-/SURVIVOR-CENTRED CARE (WHO CLINICAL AND POLICY GUIDELINES 2013)

- Women who disclose any form of violence by an intimate partner (or other family member) or sexual assault by any perpetrator should be offered **immediate support**.
- Health-care providers should, as a minimum, offer **first-line support** when women disclose violence.
- First-line support includes:
 - » being **non-judgmental and supportive and validating** what the woman is saying;
 - » providing **practical care and support** that responds to her concerns, but **does not intrude**;
 - » **asking about her history of violence**, listening carefully, but not pressuring her to talk (care should be taken when discussing sensitive topics when interpreters are involved);
 - » **helping her access information about resources**, including legal and other services that she might think helpful;
 - » **assisting her to increase safety** for herself and her children, where needed; and
 - » **providing or mobilizing social support**.
- Providers should ensure:
 - » that the consultation is conducted **in private** and
 - » **confidentiality**, while informing women of the limits of confidentiality (e.g. when there is mandatory reporting).
- If health-care providers are unable to provide first-line support, they should ensure that someone else (within their health-care setting or another that is easily accessible) is immediately available to do so.