Minimum Standards for Individual Referral

Fondazione Terre des Hommes Italia ONLUS

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1. Background

1.1. Introduction and short background

These Minimum Standards follow on directly from the **Terre des Hommes Italia's Ethical Code and Code** of **Conduct**, which identify the values on which the Foundation's activities are based and set out the requirements for the good conduct of staff and from the **Terre des Hommes Italia's Whistleblowing policy** and **PSEAH Policy**, which establish the mechanisms to report any behaviour that contravenes TDH values and to prevent any form of exploitation, abuse and harassment respectively.

These Minimum Standards are meant to ensure protection to our beneficiaries (both children and adults) and to provide an effective way to refer those in need to available services in a safe and effective way, as NGOs and other civic actors often bring a vast amount of experience based on their work in human-rights protection and victim assistance. Moreover, the variety of backgrounds of different groups of victims/people at risk highlights the need for a range of services, which cannot usually be provided by a single organization.

1.2 Definition of referral

Referral is a protection mechanism that may involve both governmental and non-governmental actors and is aimed at securing the human rights of individuals in need of support.

More specifically, the referral is the **process of formally requesting services** (such as, for instance, cash assistance, health care, shelter, etc.) for an individual from another department (Internal referral) or from another agency (external referral) **through an established procedure** and/or form.

These minimum standards apply to cases in which TDH Italia staff has been asked to take action for access to services on behalf of an individual or an individual has asked TDH Italia staff to take action in facilitating access to a service. General information on services (for instance requested during awareness raising sessions) is not to be considered a referral and, similarly, provision of information to an individual about how to independently seek services is not to be considered a referral.

Referrals may be provided in emergency and development settings to address a range of issues, including child protection concerns, SEAH etc. Respecting these Minimum Standards shall ensure quality, consistency, and coordination of services even in areas where TDH Italia does not implement programs, thus ensuring a holistic approach towards the rights of the people we serve.

2. Summary of main steps to be undertaken for a proper referral

Communities where we work around the world may need specialized support services. Whenever possible, TDH Italia commits to refer those in need to competent support services as appropriate and available and according to the willingness of the individual.

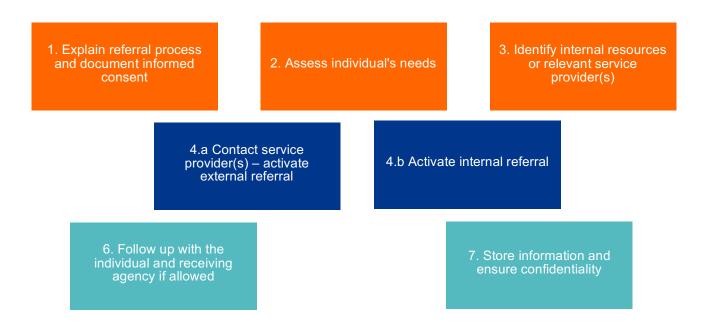
Referrals should be guided by precise guidelines and handled by the Country Delegate or, upon HQ's approval, by another staff appointed by the Country Delegate.

Main steps for ensuring proper referral are the following:

1. Prepare and update to the best of your knowledge/availability of effective services in the Country of operation, a list of local service providers, agencies or national institutions/authorities. In Countries where a list of this kind is available at National/Cluster/Working Group/s level, this can be adopted. The list should provide options for both children and adults where relevant (e.g. names of a paediatric and adult medical care provider/facility). Especially in cases involving children, consider consulting with UNICEF

country offices.¹ The list shall include (if existing): safe shelters, relocation services, medical care facilities, psychological/psychosocial/case management services, legal assistance services, list of providers of basic material assistance (FIs and NFIs, non-formal education, livelihood support services), facilities providing support for children born as a result of SEAH. If a Delegation is unable to conduct the external referral process on its own, existing and reliable service providers/organizations should be also included.

2. Strictly adhere to the minimum standards guiding the referral process, outlining the steps that personnel need to take (see graphic below), including referral forms. Make sure that those involved in the process are adequately trained on how to refer people in need for assistance safely and confidentially, including those cases involving children. If a Delegation is unable to conduct the referral process on its own, it should contact external and pre-identified service providers or organizations for support.



Please note that staff should be flexible in applying these steps and should adapt this process to meet the needs of the victim.

Always obtain consent before facilitating assistance, respecting the right of a person², including children, to freely choose which type of support services they want to access or to decline services entirely.
Always respect confidentiality, protecting identifying information of all those involved in the alleged

3. Guiding principles

incident.

For a referral not to create harm to the individual/community in need of assistance, the referral needs to respect at all times the following principles:

Confidentiality. The principle of confidentiality requires all staff, volunteers, and community members to protect information disclosed or gathered in relation to any individual and to ensure that information is made accessible to a third party (i.e. service providers) only with the individual's explicit permission. It is the right of the individual to decide if, how, when to whom, information on his/her case is disclosed. Staff should refrain

¹ In some cases, organizations may also be able to access additional funding to provide specialized services through the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (the "Trust Fund") established by the Secretary-General. For more information on the Trust Fund, see: <u>https://conduct.unmissions.org/remedial-trust-fund</u>

² Persons with disabilities may need specific support to enable their ability to provide informed consent depending on the nature of their disability.

from revealing names or any identifying information to anyone not directly involved in the provision of services, without explicit consent, and should, in no circumstance, discuss individual cases with family, friends and colleagues. Disrespecting the principle of confidentiality is a breach of TDH Italia Code of Conduct.

Consent. Referrals should only take place once the individual has given their **informed consent** (ANNEX 1). The individual has the right to limit information s/he wishes to disclose and persons with whom information will be shared. **Informed consent means making an informed choice freely and voluntarily**. Informed consent occurs when the person understands the consequences of the choice, and freely chooses to accept the consequences, and is based on equal power relations. Obtaining informed consent means that before any information is shared with others, or any referral is made, in order to be able to make an informed decision, the individual should be given honest and complete information about possible referrals, their implication, and of any risks or implications of sharing information about her/his situation and of any limits to confidentiality.

With regard to children, as a general principle, permission to proceed with referrals is sought from the child as well as the parent or caregiver, unless it is deemed inappropriate to involve the child's caregiver (for instance the caregiver or parent are involved in the abuse). Permission is sought by obtaining "informed consent" from caregivers or older children and/or "informed assent" from younger children. Informed consent and informed assent are similar, but not the same. Informed assent is the expressed willingness to participate in services. For younger children who are too young to give informed consent, but old enough to understand and agree to participate in services, the child's "informed assent" is sought. Informed assent is the expressed willingness of the child to participate in services.

Exceptions to confidentiality. Confidentiality and informed consent should always be given priority. However, limits to these can occur in very exceptional circumstances

- If the victim is a child, in situation where a child's health or safety is at risk or a situation of abuse is suspected, limits to confidentiality exist in order to protect the child when it is in the best interest of the child.
- If the victim is an adult who threatens his/her own life or who is directly threatening the safety of others, referrals to lifesaving services can be sought. This could only exceptionally happen when there are indications that the person is planning to take their own life
- If, according to the situation, TDH Italia staff is required by law to report crimes

In all cases, the potential harm caused by non-disclosure of the confidential information should be weighed against the potential harm caused by disclosure of the information and these limitations of confidentiality should be always explained to victims (and/or their caregiver where appropriate)

Respect the individual. The role of TDH Italia staff is to provide information about available services. Under no circumstances TDH Italia staff is allowed to give counselling or put pressure to the individual to access one or other services. Respect their decision-making capacities and preferences. You are not supposed to express your opinion, pass judgment or blame who is seeking support.

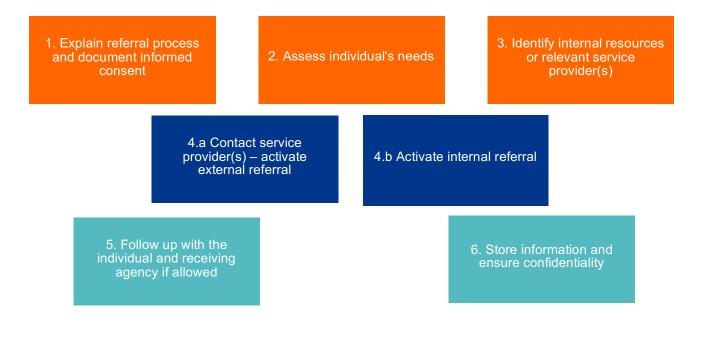
Do not make promises or create expectations. Only share information if, based on service mapping, the services exist/are available. TDH Italia staff cannot guarantee access to the services or the results or quality of the service, and this needs to be explained to beneficiaries. However, it should also be explained that in case of any problem accessing the services, individuals requesting referrals can come back to inform referring TDH Italia and can ask for additional support.

Safety and Security. Organizations' staff must take actions to ensure the physical and emotional safety of individuals who are in need of support. The physical safety of the individual should be prioritized above all other actions or referrals that may be available. Safety and security considerations should also be taken into the best possible account when presenting referral options to an individual. This means being careful to avoid causing any additional harm to victims (and their families) as a result of how the case is being managed (e.g. possible revenge acts due to mishandling of case information).

Additional precautions to be taken for child referral. When dealing with children, staff should communicate the information in a child-friendly manner, adapting it to the child's age, maturity, language, gender and culture (i.e. simplifying content) and obtain informed consent from both the child (taking into account his/her evolving

capacities) and one of the child's parents or guardians, unless it is deemed inappropriate to involve the child's caregiver (for instance, if the child has been abused and the caregiver or parent are involved in the abuse).³ At the same time, it is essential to ensure that the best interest of the child serves as the primary guide for making decisions regarding assistance and referrals. With regard to the assent of young children, please refer to the above paragraph about "consent".

4. Referral pathway



The referral pathway should be structured as follows:

1. Explain referral process and document informed consent.

When approached by a beneficiary/individual requesting to be referred, staff should introduce him/herself, and his/her role. The referral process should be explained in detail, taking into due account the guiding principles outlined above. Consent should be sought before making the referral (if allowed by the situation, using the form in ANNEX 1) and prior to recording any information related to potential referral of an individual. To obtain consent staff should share the identity of the staff collecting the information and their role; contact information so that the person being referred can reach the staff collecting the information; service options available; providers; next steps and who s/he will contact as well as, confidentiality, and how information collected will be used and stored by the organization. The beneficiary should be informed of the fact that they can choose not to be referred, or they can request at any time that the information they provide is destroyed. This information should be communicated clearly and using non-technical language that the beneficiary can understand. If an individual does not provide consent or does not request TDH Italia staff to contact the service providers, the staff should limit his/her role to providing information on where to access services and sharing any relevant hotline numbers.

³ For younger children, who are by law or nature too young to agree to the services, TDH Italia staff should seek their "informed assent," an affirmative agreement to accept the services and ask for parents' permission. For more information on informed consent and informed assent, see Inter-agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection. The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy and Programme Managers and Caseworkers, http://www.cpcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CM guidelines_ENG.pdf

2. Assess individual's needs.

If consent is given, only basic information shall be taken or noted down for purpose of helping the individual accessing the services he/she requests, on a strict "need to know" basis (i.e. only information that is relevant for the provision of the specific service requested by the beneficiary). Only ask and share the minimum information necessary for the referral (e.g. first name, contact number to be reached, best time to call). Make sure to understand which kind of services the individual needs and check what is available (both in-house and out-source). Clearly explain which information will be sent to the receiving agency/staff in order to make the referral sought by the individual. While assessing individual's needs, the case should be classified by priority, and response should be ensured within a set time, as follows:

High (Follow up within 24- 48 hrs.)

☐ Medium (*Follow up within 3-5 days*)

Low (Follow up within 10-14 days)

3. Identify internal resources or relevant service provider(s).

Depending on the request of the person being referred:

- Make contact for the individual with the relevant agency/ organization (external referral) see 4.a or
- Make contact for the individual with the relevant TDH Italia staff/Department/Partner organization (internal referral) – see 4.b

4. Referral

According to the outcome of point 3, TDH Italia staff may at this point:

4.a Contact service provider(s) – activate external referral. If the needed service/support is **not** available inhouse, external support should be sought. TDH Italia staff shall contact the service provider to confirm eligibility. Requested information should include what their referral protocol entails and whether they will be able to assist the individual. All information about the referral should be explained to the individual (e.g. What services are provided? Where is the service provider located? How can the individual get there and receive services?). Keep in mind that the person seeking support can choose at any time to not be referred. If the individual decides to proceed, referral needs to be done immediately (no delays):

Via phone or online platforms: communicate in a quiet place, ensure only relevant information is shared to allow receiving service provider to get in touch with the person in need of services. Ask the individual what her/his preferred ways of communication are. Indicate also if there are immediate risks – expressed by the person being referred or observed.

Or using the external referral form (ANNEX 3). The form is signed in three copies. One is given to the receiving agency focal point, one to the individual in need (or his/her caregiver) and 1 is kept for internal records and follow-up.

The person making the referral needs to share only pertinent and relevant information (basic biodata, location/address, best way to contact the person, required service, other referrals made in parallel, potential immediate threat/danger) for providing the services requested by the individual (need to know basis) and in any case no information or details about the incident can be shared.

Referrals should be documented ensuring that the following minimum information is tracked: date of identification, date of referral, name of focal point within the receiving agency, reason for referral/category of case, date feedback on referral received, referral outcome.

Always inform the person being referred that if they face any problem accessing the services, they can come back to TDH Italia. If the beneficiary/individual mentions that he/she is not able to access a specific service, try to provide information (if available) on other relevant, nearby services.

4.b Activate internal referral. If the needed service/support is available in-house, TDH Italia staff shall contact the relevant Department/focal point within the Delegation. All information about the referral should be explained to the individual (e.g. What services are provided? How services are delivered?). Keep in mind that the person

seeking support can choose at any time to not be referred. If the individual decides to proceed, referral needs to be done immediately (no delays):

Via phone/online platforms/in person: communicate in a quiet place, ensure only relevant information is shared to allow receiving staff to get in touch with the person in need of services. Ask the individual what her/his preferred ways of communication are. Indicate also if there are immediate risks – expressed by the person being referred or observed.

Or using the internal referral form (Annex 2). The form is signed in two copies. One is given to the individual in need (or his/her caregiver) and 1 is kept for internal records and follow-up. The person making the referral needs to share only pertinent and relevant information (basic bio-data, location/address, best way to contact the person, required service, other referrals made in parallel, potential immediate threat/danger) for providing the services requested by the individual (need to know basis) and in any case no information or details about the incident can be shared with anyone else within the Delegation.

The relevant focal point/Department will then activate the services according to a deeper assessment that shall be carried out by specialized staff only, using the forms developed by Each Delegation according to the available in-house services.

NB: If the individual is in immediate risk of harm to his/her health or safety, action should be taken while TDH Italia staff is still with him/her.

5. Follow up with the individual and receiving agency if allowed.

Receiving agencies/service providers have a responsibility to respond to the beneficiary in any case – whether the service can be provided, timeframe and modalities – or if it cannot be provided and reasons why. Nonetheless, it is the responsibility of the referring agency (TDH Italia) to explain next steps, procedures and assess with the individual pros and cons (including risks) related to the provision of the requested service before activating the referral.

Receiving agencies/services providers, unless differently foreseen by law, have a responsibility to provide feedback to the referring agency (TDH Italia) about whether the referral has been accepted and the timeframe in which it will be actioned, and provide feedback on whether or not the referral resulted in service provision within a reasonable time (ideally, no more than 14 days). In case of no provision of services, TDH Italia staff should re-assess the needs and decide, together with the victim (or his/her caregiver) whether further referral to another service provider has to be done or the case is to be considered as closed.

Information provided through feedback should be limited to details required to support the individual (see ANNEX 4). No information is shared regarding the type of service provided, or the reasons for service provision or lack thereof, unless services were not provided because the referral was inappropriate and/or the receiving agency lacked capacity to respond. In the latter situations, this information may be needed to improve the quality of referrals from the referring agency (for example, to correct a misunderstanding about eligibility for service provision or types of services provided by the receiving agency), in which case no reference need be made to any individual referral/ beneficiary.

Feedback on referrals received is documented according to the internal procedures of each Delegation, ensuring that at least information listed in ANNEX 4 are collected and safely stored.

6. Store information and ensure confidentiality

Both referring and receiving agencies are responsible for:

- Maintaining statistical data on referrals by category to the extent possible, whilst respecting the principles of confidentiality and ensuring that individual or identifiable information is not included in the compiled data sets
- Identify and inform relevant working groups/coordination mechanisms of gaps and trends in service delivery and advocate for appropriate solutions
- Upon request, provide feedback to receiving agencies and relevant sector/working groups on the number of referrals and their status (accepted, declined, pending)

ANNEX 1 – Informed consent/assent form

(Paragraphs in italic are tips to be used by the interviewer and should not appear in the signed document)

Suggested script:

Hello, my name is......and I am.....from TDH Italia. We learned that you [your...in case of young children] might need some additional help, and I'm here today to talk to you [and your family] about what's going on. What we talk about today won't be shared with no one; it is just between us. Together we will decide what are the main things you [and your family] need help with and come up with a plan for how to help. I will be your caseworker throughout the process, which means I will be the one responsible for the plan we make and that I'll be the one following up with you [and your family]. I won't share information about you [and your family] without your permission, unless I think you are in immediate danger. Then I might need to ask someone for help. My agency will store some information about you to help us keep track of services we are providing and the kinds of problems people in your community face. Your name and personal details will always be kept private. Your participation in services we offer is always voluntary – it's up to you. You can ask questions at any time today or in the future. You can also decide at any time to stop receiving services and to delete all information from our record, and there will be no negative consequences for you or your family.

EXPLAIN WHAT IT IS GOING TO HAPPEN.

Do you understand the services I have explained and what we are going to do here today? [Yes or No]

Do you agree to receive services provided by [Name of Agency]? [Yes or No]

Name

Signature or Fingerprint

If the individual in need of support is a young child, a non-offending parent or caregiver should sign as well. If no parent or caregiver is available (e.g. in the case of an unaccompanied child), you may proceed without parental consent.

Caregiver Name

Relationship to Child

Age

Caregiver Signature

WITNESS

I confirm that the informed consent process has been followed and the individual has given consent freely.

TDH Italia staff Name:

TDH Italia staff Signature

Date

ANNEX 2 – Internal referral form

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Priority	☐ High (Follow up requested in 24- 48 hrs ☐ Medium (Follow up within 3-5 days) —		.) Referral date	
	Low (Follow up within 1	0 days)		
Basic biodata	Name	Male 🗌		Date of Birth
		Female 🗌		
Contact details	Address	Phone Numbe	r	Preferred way/time for being contacted
Nationality and ID number		1		<u> </u>
Has the victim been informed of the referral?	Yes 🗌		lf no, explai	n
	No 🗌			

If beneficiary is a minor				
Information of primary caregiver	Name	Male	Relation	nship with the child
		Female 🗌		
Contact details (if different than above)	Address	Phone Nu	nber	Preferred way/time for being contacted
N Nationality and ID number				
Caregiver is informed of referral	Yes 🗌		lf no, expl	ain
	No 🗌			

Is child separated			
or unaccompanied?	Yes 🗌	Νο	

II. INTERNAL REFERRAL

Referred from:	Finance team			
	Logistics team			
	Management team			
	Add/modify) according to Delegation	n internal structure		
Staff name and title (referring staff)		Contact details (e-mail and phone number)		
Referred to:	Protection: Child protection PSS activities- life skills			
	Protection: Child Protection case management			
	Protection: Child protection emergency			
	Add/modify) according to available services			
Staff name and title (Receiving staff)		Contact details (e-mail and phone number)		

III.CASE INFORMATION

Type of	Child Protection case management
assistance needed	Centre-based activities: Community Centre (incl. life skills training, PSS activities)
	Emergency cash assistance

	Shelter (incl. relocation to collective cer	tre, shelter box, cash for rent)		
	Medical care/Mental health services			
	Education/Vocational training			
	Livelihood support			
	Legal Assistance			
	Social Services			
	☐ (Add/modify) according to available in-h	iouse services		
	Material assistance, specify:			
	☐ Other:			
Background information/				
Reason for				
referral				
Has the victim	Yes 🗌	If yes, provide details		
been referred to any other				
organization?	No 🗌			

IV. CONSENT TO RELEASE INFORMATION (Read with person of concern and answer any questions before s/he signed below)

I, (person of concern name), understand that the purpose of the referral and of disclosing this information to is to ensure the safety and continuity of care among service providers seeking to serve this family. The				
Signature of Responsible Party: (Person of Concern or Caregiver if a minor)				
Date:	D/M/Year			

-

ANNEX 3 – External referral form

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Referring agency			
Agency/org:	Contact:		
Phone:	Email:		
Location			

Receiving agency			
Agency/org:	Contact:		
Phone:	Email:		
Location			

II. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Priority	High (Follow up request	ed in 24- 48 hrs	.) Referral	Referral date	
	☐ Medium (Follow up within 3-5 days)				
	Low (Follow up within 1	0 days)			
Basic biodata	Name	Male 🗌	I	Date of Birth	
		Female 🗌			
Contact details	Address	Phone Numb	er	Preferred way/time for being contacted	
Nationality and ID number				<u> </u>	
Has the victim	Yes 🗌		lf no, explai	'n	
been informed of the referral?					
	No 🗌				

If beneficiary is a minor				
Information of primary caregiver	Name	Male 🗌	Relationship with the child	
		Female 🗌		

Contact details (if different than above)	Address	Phone Number	Preferred way/time for being contacted
N Nationality and ID number			
Caregiver is informed of referral	Yes 🗌	lf no, expl	ain
	No 🗌		
Is child separated or unaccompanied?	Yes 🗌 No 🗌	i	

III. EXTERNAL REFERRAL – CASE INFORMATION

Type of	Child Protection case management				
assistance needed	Centre-based activities: Community Centre (incl. life skills training, PSS activities)				
	Emergency cash assistance				
	Shelter (incl. relocation to collective centre, shelter box, cash for rent)				
	Medical care/Mental health services				
	Education/Vocational training				
	Livelihood support				
	Legal Assistance				
	Social Services				
	(Add/modify) according to available identified services				
	Material assistance, specify:				
	☐ Other:				

Background information/ Reason for referral		
Has the victim been referred to any other	Yes 🗌	If yes, provide details
organization?	No 🗌	

Details of Referral						
Any contact or other	Yes 🗌	If yes, explain below:				
restrictions?	No 🗌					
Referral delivered via: 🗌 Phone 🗌 E-mail 🗌 Electronically (e.g., App or database) 🗌 In Person						
Follow-up expected via: 🗌 Phone 🗌 E-mail 🗌 In Person.						
By date (DD/MM/YY):						
Information agencies agree to exchange in follow up:						
Name, date (DD/MM/YY) and signature of recipient:						

IV. CONSENT TO RELEASE INFORMATION (Read with person of concern and answer any questions before s/he signed below)

Signature of Responsible Party: (Person of Concern or Caregiver if a minor)

Date: D/M/Year

ANNEX 4 - Follow up form

Case Number	Caseworker Nar	ne	Date of Follow up DD/MM/YY		
Planning the follow up					
Type of follow up	External		Internal		
Location of follow up	☐ House ☐ Office ☐ Other (specify				
Purpose of follow up	Irpose of follow up				
Summary of Current Case Status:					
Details of the Follow up					
Outcome of the meeting (including additional points noted / progress made / actions planned):					
Case closed: Yes (stop here and sign) No (fill the table below)					
Next Steps					
Type and location	Describe step to be taken	Person responsible	e Due date		
(Add as many rows as needed)					
Caseworker signature		1			