

# Kazakhstan

## Advancing Adolescent Health through Policy and Legislation



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### 60 Second Summary

Kazakhstan's 2025 Health Development Policy prioritizes strengthening youth-friendly health centres (YFHCs). A package of new regulations was developed and centred on increasing coverage and access to adolescent sexual and reproductive health. With support from the United Nations Population Fund, the Ministry of Health also created a legal framework, developed clinical and operational standards, institutionalized YFHCs while strengthening their capacity. Interventions also seek to generate demand for the services, and develop communication tools. Adolescents have access to SRH at the primary health-care level, including outpatient access to youth-friendly health services.



### Sexual and Reproductive Health Challenge

The 2025 Health Development Policy prioritizes strengthening youth-friendly health centers (YFHCs) in Kazakhstan. The Government of Kazakhstan further committed to YFHCs during the 2019 International Conference on Population and Development (Nairobi Summit, ICPD25). Access to youth-friendly health services in Kazakhstan is limited. There are 128 YFHCs located primarily in large cities and servicing no more than 1% of the total population aged 14–28 annually. Furthermore, the services provided in YFHCs are of uneven quality, not standardized, not clearly defined in the budget-funded, state-guaranteed benefit package, and financed based on the regional authorities' capability.

In 2015, youth-friendly health services were privatized. The Healthy Lifestyle Promotion Centres under which they were placed, were deemed unprofitable. The mandatory social health insurance (MSHI) introduced in Kazakhstan from 2020 did not cover youth-friendly health services.



## Kazakhstan's Sexual and Reproductive Health–Universal Health Coverage Intervention

The Government of Kazakhstan embarked on a multi-pronged approach to improve adolescent health. There have been concerted efforts to implement the World Health Organization's recommendations on “developing national quality standards for adolescent-friendly health services” into the national health-care system and in the list of services of the mandatory social health insurance (MSHI). To implement these standards, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported Kazakhstan's Ministry of Health (MOH) to create a legal framework, develop clinical and operational standards, institutionalize YFHCs, strengthen their capacity, generate demand for the services, and develop communication tools.

A key component of this effort was the development of a comprehensive legal framework during 2020–2021. The Government amended the legislation to address existing gaps in regulations on adolescents' rights and parental and health workers' responsibilities, as well as to support access to adolescent health and expand its coverage.

In 2020, Parliament amended the National Code “On population health and the healthcare system”, considered as Law, to:

- Include the right of minors to receive information on reproductive health.
- Lower the age of consent to receive outpatient services without parental consent from 18 to 16.
- Grant authority to the Ministry of Health to approve how to provide YFHCs. More specifically, the Ministry of Health must develop and approve specific subsidiary rules on how to organize the services and the types of services the YFHCs should provide.

Additionally, during 2020–2021, the Ministry of Health approved a package of subsidiary legislations to support the National Health Code, including a mandatory requirement to establish YFHCs in each city, national standards for YFHCs, and inclusion of youth-friendly health services in MSHI coverage, among others.



## Sexual and Reproductive Health–Universal Health Coverage Outcomes

Kazakhstan's package of new regulations and legislation for youth-friendly health services and YFHCs is increasing coverage of and access to health-care services for adolescents.

### Success

As a result of these advances, the following have been achieved:

- Outpatient youth-friendly health services are available for minors from the age of 10 with parental consent, while prevention and diagnostic treatment for minors from the age of 16 is available without parental consent (except for abortions and surgical procedures).
- Youth-friendly health services include laboratory tests (for HIV, sexually transmitted infections and hormone levels), physician's examinations (gynaecologists and urologists), ultrasound visualization, psychological counselling, and social and paralegal support in the case of unintended pregnancies, sexual or gender-based violence, and suicidal behaviour.
- Mandatory social health insurance (MSHI) services now include youth-friendly health services and the State covers the insurance premium for minors and youth over 18 studying full-time.
- With effect from 2021, MSHI began directly contracting YFHCs and purchasing their services through a fee-for-service method.
- UNFPA provided training to around 300 professionals (physicians, psychologists and social workers) working in YFHCs following the modus operandi of the YFHCs based on unified national standards.



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## Challenges

There is a need to continue advocacy efforts among parents, society and young people on the availability of youth-friendly health services to strengthen the reproductive health of the younger generation.

## Lessons

- An enabling policy and legislative environment is important for advancing adolescent health coverage and uptake – for example, lowering the age of consent for youth to access health-care services without parental consent.
- At the policy and implementation level, clearly outlining a list of youth-friendly health services is necessary for the mandatory health insurance and health benefits package.
- The adolescent health agenda depends on integrating financing arrangements, such as by drawing on the contracting model for youth-friendly health services in Kazakhstan.

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