

spectra

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Early identification and early intervention

2 Help for children and adolescents at risk

The large majority of young people come through the turbulences of adolescence with no harmful consequences. However, some of them are left with lasting scars from problematic developments such as addiction, violence, marginalisation, emotional pressures and other difficulties. Specialists agree that such developments need to be nipped in the bud the moment the first signs appear. This is precisely the goal of early identification and early intervention, which constitute a relatively recent approach to prevention. This approach has been gaining steadily in importance since 2006.

4 Dialogue week: «Talking about alcohol»

How do we handle the cultural asset alcohol in a way that is both enjoyable and responsible? How do we take the interests of the restaurant, catering and retail sectors into account while also credibly seeking to prevent excessive alcohol consumption and its costs to society? A nationwide dialogue week on these and other questions is to take place from 21 to 29 May 2011. During this period, between 200 and 300 different activities will be staged in regions, cities, villages and neighbourhoods. Under the motto of «Talking about alcohol», the entire Swiss population will be invited to ask questions, contribute their own viewpoints and open up new perspectives.

4 Combating sexually transmitted infections

The campaign used to be called «LOVE LIFE – STOP AIDS». Now it is known simply as «LOVE LIFE». Though the campaign still targets HIV/AIDS, all sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have now been integrated into HIV prevention efforts. And with good reason. Firstly, there has been a steep rise in STIs in Switzerland. Secondly, people with an STI are more susceptible to HIV, and people with HIV plus another STI can pass on HIV more easily to others. The campaign, with its principal message of «If something itches or stings, go and see a doctor», aims to put an end to this spiral of infection.



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Creating a level playing field for all children and adolescents

Early identification and early intervention in schools and municipalities. The majority of children and adolescents in Switzerland are healthy and cope well with the challenges facing them. But about 10 to 20% of all young people are at risk of developing difficulties of a health-related or social nature (e.g. addiction, violence, social marginalisation or emotional pressures). Municipalities and schools are well advised to consider their approach to such problems at an early stage so as to have the necessary structures and procedures in place before any actual cases become too serious for the pupils or schools to handle.

The aim of early identification and early intervention is to enable children and adolescents to cope with developmental phases and problems without harming their health or putting their social integration and further development at risk. Most children and adolescents are perfectly capable of resolving such difficulties, whether on their own or with help from their social environment. But a small, not clearly quantifiable number of young people slip through the social net and may fall into a downward spiral. To be able to help these adolescents and to increase equality of opportunity, municipalities and schools need to have a culture and a system of observation and support. This is also in their own interests because personal problems and behaviours often create challenges for and consequential pressures on these systems. Observation and support are the cornerstones of the concept of early identification and early intervention. It should be understood as an integrated concept because the two areas – identification and intervention – are interde-

RADIX develops and implements health promotion and prevention services for everyday practice. It cooperates closely with the federal authorities, cantons, municipalities, schools and also many specialist organisations. Early identification and early intervention are a focal point of its activities. Further information on the programmes: Carlo Fabian, head of RADIX Northwestern Switzerland and head of Healthy Communities, fabian@radix.ch

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Publication: “Früherkennung und Frühintervention in Schulen. Lessons learned”. [Early identification and early intervention in schools. Lessons learned.] Fabian, Carlo & Müller, Caroline. (2010). Berne: RADIX. Order at www.radix.ch/f-f

pendent and have to be regarded as a single unit. There can be no intervention without first identifying the problem. Conversely, early identification of pressures and negative developments does not help if those affected cannot be offered appropriate support.

Successful early identification and early intervention requires a systematic approach

The aim of early identification and early intervention services is to ensure timely recognition and support for young people at risk and find appropriate assistance for them to develop healthily. The focus is on promotion of the individual. This goal requires setting-based activities, i.e. cooperating in school and community settings with locally active people and specialists who work with children and adolescents. These include clubs, youth workers, the authorities, teachers, school management and specialists in prevention, counselling and treatment.

For successful early identification and early intervention, certain elements and measures have to be in place in both settings. These have to be defined in the framework of a project. Once a defined mandate, project management and project group are in place, knowledge has to be communicated and an awareness of early symptoms created in all participants. A shared attitude has also to be developed. This relates to such questions as how to deal with problematic behaviour, for instance whether integration- or exclusion-based methods are to be used. In addition, common goals and rules of conduct have to be developed. Lastly, at the implementation level, the respective tasks, procedures and responsibilities of all those taking part or involved have to be defined. The core element of early identification and early intervention approaches are the intervention guidelines and/or action plan which emerge from the project and which lay down binding procedures, responsibilities and interfaces.

Early identification and early intervention programmes in schools and municipalities

Since 2006, RADIX – the Swiss centre of excellence for health promotion and prevention – has been implementing early identification and early intervention programmes in schools and municipalities on behalf of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). To date, it has reached 57 schools and 36 municipalities in the German- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland, and a wide range of experience has been gathered. Looking back, it is becoming clear that every project is different in terms of its structures, processes and outcomes. This is due to the differing starting situations, problems and needs involved. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, RADIX initiated two new three-year early identification and early intervention programmes for communities



and schools in March 2011, to run parallel to the ongoing programme of “Intervention précoce dans le champ de la formation (2010–2012)” [Early intervention in the educational field (2010–2012)]. The focus in the next three years will not be on implementing the largest possible number of projects but on drawing up and developing the groundwork and tools, documenting good practice models and ensuring multiplication of the knowledge acquired. This will involve collating the experiences of the last few years, transforming them into a form suitable for practical use and implementation and making them available to other interested parties. A total of up to nine municipalities and nine schools can take part in the programmes. They are implemented in cooperation with RADIX and receive on-site support from a local or cantonal specialist unit. RADIX sets up these contacts. Municipalities and schools can join the programmes as their needs and resources dictate. Joining a programme will be possible until about mid-2013, provided there are places available.

The following goals and services constitute the core of the 2011–2014 phase of the programme:

- The RADIX programmes for early identification and early intervention in schools and municipalities are geared to nationwide application (German- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland).
- RADIX develops the groundwork and tools in cooperation with the partner organisations and makes these available to the municipalities, schools and specialist units taking part in the programme and subsequently on www.radix.ch.
- Good practice models are documented and made available.
- RADIX networks the programme participants across cantonal boundaries and helps develop cooperation between the responsible cantonal authorities, the specialist units and the projects.
- RADIX organises various knowledge transfer and experience sharing events.

The participating municipalities and schools benefit from the following free services:

- Use of all RADIX groundwork documents and tools and of the experience gained to date.
- Participation in the annual exchange of experience for participating municipalities and schools.
- Participation in the annual exchange of experience for the specialists providing support from the participating municipalities and schools.
- Reduced rate for taking part in RADIX’s early identification and early intervention conferences

Expectations to be met by the participating municipalities and schools:

- Development and introduction of early identification and early intervention services in accordance with RADIX’s general specifications.
- Cooperation with a specialist unit (as a rule, these assume responsibility for providing support as laid down in their prevention mandate).
- Participation in meetings organised for the exchange of experience.
- Documentation of their efforts to multiply knowledge (www.radix.ch).

Early identification and early intervention services are an investment in the future not only of children and adolescents, but also of the schools and municipalities themselves, and help create a level playing field for vulnerable young people in Switzerland. They are a proactive, targeted and sustainable form of prevention that calls for self-critical examination of the effectiveness of structures, processes and cooperative alliances within the institutions and for improvements to be made to them as required.

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The starting point for early identification and early intervention in young people is society

Publications. A new booklet produced in the French-speaking part of Switzerland presents a model for addressing early identification and early intervention in young people at risk. It contains recommendations and examples of good practice derived from a range of settings.

Youth is a highly challenging time of life, shaped by the search for personal individuality and the need to recognize boundaries and grasp opportunities. Social conditions can make it hard for young people to develop into independent, responsible adults. The scarcity of apprenticeships and jobs, an excess of temptations in all shape and form and the growing pressure to succeed are only some of the hurdles they have to take on their road to adulthood. The large majority of young people come through the turbulences of adolescence with no harmful consequences. Some of them, however, are left with lasting scars. Problematic situations can become so acute that they cause serious suffering in those affected and their families. If these young people are to be integrated into society and the work environment, specialists agree that, wherever possible, such developments need to be nipped in the bud the moment the first signs appear. This is what early identification and early intervention services are primarily about: recognising problems at the earliest possible stage and knowing what needs to be done. A booklet entitled «Intervention Précoce – Accompagner les jeunes en situation de vulnérabilité» [Early intervention – helping young people in vulnerable situations] presents the early intervention model in detail. It has been produced by the Groupement romand d'études des addictions (GREA) on behalf of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH).

Dynamic, four-phase process

In this model, early identification and early intervention are presented as a four-phase process that involves both the collective and the individual.

- Phase 1: Creation of conducive general conditions that support young people in their development. The goal is to strengthen collective and individual resources in professionals and members of society so as to promote healthy development in the young. Problems experienced and overcome at a youthful age make it easier for people to find their place in society and working life and help prevent exclusion and marginalisation of individuals or groups.
- Phase 2: Early identification of vulnerability. Attentive, adult persons of reference (in the family, at school, etc.) identify vulnerability in young people and try to talk to them about it. If a vulnerability situation seems to be developing, it is often

advisable to have it analysed by an external specialist together with the young person involved.

- Phase 3: Diagnosis of vulnerability by a professional assessment unit. There must first be a professional structure in place that can conduct a full assessment of the situations. The vulnerability elements previously observed are then examined closely with a view to determining possible remedies together with the young person affected.
- Phase 4: Early intervention. This requires support structures to be in place that can carry out any indicated intervention on a professional basis. A minority of young people at risk need an intervention of a psychosocial nature. This must be appropriate for the needs that the vulnerability analysis brings to light and not just for the obvious symptoms.

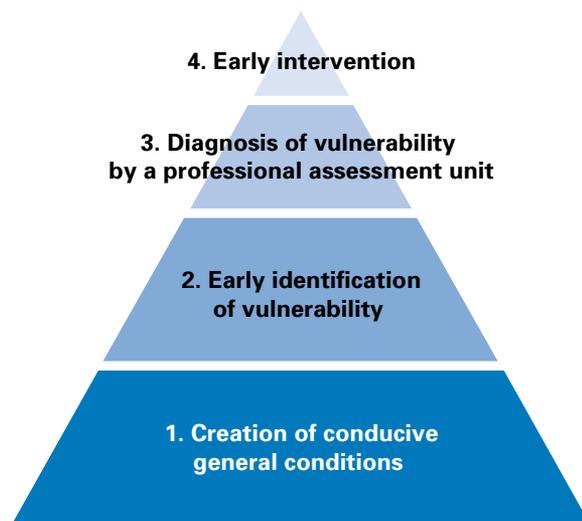
Phases 1 and 2 concern both society as a whole and families, municipalities and those professionals who work with young people. Phases 3 and 4 concern the young people at risk, their environment and the specialists who initiate an intervention. This approach to early intervention is a dynamic process that promotes continuous learning. For instance, the experience gained from the early identification, vulnerability diagnosis and intervention should subsequently be used in the development and implementation of programmes de-

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signed to promote an environment conducive to young people's development.

Examples of projects from French-speaking Switzerland

The second part of the booklet shows how early interventions can be implemented. It presents a range of «good practice» projects drawn from different settings and thematic fields (schools, municipalities, social work, youth centres, drugs, etc.) and provides addresses of useful points of contact.

Orders for the booklet «Intervention Précoce – Accompagner les jeunes en situation de vulnérabilité» should be placed at www.intervention-precoce.ch

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German-language booklet on the subject

A similar booklet aimed at the German-speaking part of Switzerland has been available since 2008: «Jugendliche richtig anpacken – Früherkennung und Frühintervention bei gefährdeten Jugendlichen» [Effectively tackling young people's problems – early identification and early intervention in young people at risk]. Produced by Fachverband Sucht. The booklet can be ordered at www.bag.admin.ch/shop (section: «Alcohol, tobacco, drugs»).

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At first hand

The foundations of adult health are laid in childhood and youth. The habits acquired and experience gained in these life phases influence not only the physical and psychosocial development of the individual but also his or her future health.

The Federal Office of Public Health has been active in the fields of prevention and health promotion in children and adolescents since 1990. Together with the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, it developed the Swiss «Schools and Health» Network to disseminate knowledge of health promotion among children and adolescents in schools.

But even though such programmes help improve health in the majority of children, they do not reach the minority of about 20% who experience problematic psychosocial development. With a view to supporting these young people, the FOPH has been actively promoting early identification and early intervention services for more than ten years. The aim of this approach to secondary prevention is to identify vulnerable children and adolescents as early as possible, foster their development and improve their chances of social integration. The new Article 3c of the revised Narcotics Act creates the relevant legal framework by extending the scope for early intervention in the young people affected.

The health of young people – like that of adults – is by no means a matter of health policy alone. Though too often forgotten or even sacrificed to other interests, health is a matter of cardinal importance. It deserves a key role, not only in the healthcare sector, for instance in the national prevention programmes (tobacco, alcohol, nutrition and drugs) but also in non-healthcare-related areas such as spatial development or the economy.

Ensuring the good health of our children today means improving quality of life for the adults of tomorrow. In the light of demographic developments, it also means ensuring a long life for our healthcare system and our economy.



Ursula Koch and Roy Salveter, joint heads of the National Prevention Programmes Division, Federal Office of Public Health



If something itches or stings, go and see a doctor

LOVE LIFE campaign. The LOVE LIFE campaign went public in a new and different form in March 2011. Its focus is on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which are now included in HIV prevention activities. "If something itches or stings, go and see a doctor." This main message is communicated both clearly and humorously in TV spots, on posters and on web pages.

The campaign aims at raising public awareness of STIs and has been developed by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), the PLANeS Foundation and the Swiss AIDS Federation (AHS). It has been public since 21 March, and a second wave is scheduled for the coming autumn. The latest LOVE LIFE campaign is part of the new National Programme on HIV and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) 2011–2017 that the Swiss Government approved last year and in which other STIs apart from HIV have been included for the first time. The inclusion of STIs was due primarily to two factors. Firstly, the number of new cases of STIs is increasing in both Switzerland and other Western European countries. Secondly, the other STIs have an impact on the spread

of HIV. People with an STI are more susceptible to HIV. Conversely, those with HIV plus another STI can transmit HIV more easily. A number of European countries have therefore already developed strategies for a combined approach to combating HIV and other STIs.

Rising numbers of sexually transmitted diseases

About 20,000 people with HIV live in Switzerland, and each year between 600 and 800 test positive for the virus. The other STIs are on the increase. They are asymptomatic in many cases, which makes diagnosis more difficult. Moreover, many of them are relatively easy to pass on. If untreated, these infections can have serious effects: chronic disease, cancer, infertility, complications in pregnancy, fetal damage and disabilities in the newborn. In other words, STIs can have grave consequences for those directly affected and are a serious threat to public health. The campaign's advice to go and see a doctor will probably lead to a rise in the number of STIs diagnosed in the first phase. But treatment of these cases will subsequently bring about a drop in the number of newly diagnosed infections. The target is to bring about a 50% reduction in the number of new infections by 2017.

Additional safer-sex rule

The inclusion of the other STIs in the programme means that the familiar safer-sex rules of «Always use a condom when having penetrative sex» and «No semen in the mouth, don't swallow semen. No menstrual blood in the mouth, don't swallow menstrual blood» have had another rule added to them: «If you experience itchiness, stinging or discharge, go and see a doctor at once». A further aim of the campaign is to encourage people with an STI to inform their partners. Information on the campaign and also a risk check are available at www.check-your-lovelife.ch.

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Alcohol Dialogue Week: new range of activities up for discussion

Alcohol campaign. A nationwide dialogue week on the subject of alcohol is to take place from 21 to 29 May 2011. During this period, between 200 and 300 different activities will be staged in regions, cities, villages and neighbourhoods.

The «Alcohol Dialogue Week» marks the start of a campaign being implemented as part of the National Programme on Alcohol (NPA). The Federal Office of Public Health and various partner organisations are inviting representatives from civil society, business, the arts and sport and specialists from different fields to set up a joint platform. This new approach to campaign management is centred around social dialogue – for instance round-table discussions and neighbourhood-based activities. It will

focus on questions such as the following: How can we set an example and communicate the consumption of the cultural asset alcohol as something to be enjoyed in moderation? How can we take the interests of the restaurant, catering and retail sectors into account while also credibly seeking to prevent excessive alcohol consumption and its costs to society? The following are some of the activities that have been registered under the motto «Talking about alcohol»: All activities taking place during the dialogue week are listed in the event calendar on our website.

Full information on campaign website

Regularly updated information on the dialogue campaign will be posted at www.ich-spreche-über-alkohol.ch. Besides an event calendar, the website

contains opportunities for online dialogue and for ordering information material (e.g. a flyer on «10 reasons why we need to talk about alcohol», available only in German, French and Italian, or a poster providing details of the dialogue week). Those who wish to receive regular information on the dialogue week can subscribe to the newsletter on the site www.ich-spreche-über-alkohol.ch.

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