
Press Release from Youth Net, Youth For Change
To the Minister of the Ministry of Public Health
Request for a support for youth aged less than 18 years old
to receive VCCT without parental consent

The present situation shows that there is an increase of 17,000-20,000 new HIV infected persons annually. Moreover, about 400,000 more HIV infected persons are not aware of their status and of possible HIV transmission to others. If these people have initial access to blood testing and care, the health impact and burden of medical expenses will be reduced. It is also found that if 60% of new HIV infected persons in Thailand have blood tests, it will help reduce the number of new HIV infected persons.

The HIV/AIDS benefits package under the National Health Security System of the National Health Security Office has set up a system of HIV/AIDS prevention and care covering the right and benefit of persons, who determine themselves as at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, to receive Voluntary, Confidential, Counseling, and Testing (VCCT) no more than two times per year at no cost. However, many people do not have access or do not receive VCCT, due to society's perceptions which still stigmatize and discriminate those who seek HIV/AIDS services on conditions of sex, age and nationality. These perceptions also limit children and youth from learning Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). For instance, in the case of youth who are mindful and ready to take care of their own health, society responds with the conclusion that **“Youth should not have sex because they reach a suitable age.”** Or, when youth voluntarily decides to seek VCCT service, they are obliged by the Medical Council of Thailand's regulations to seek parental consent, which compel youth to shy away from blood testing service and lose the opportunity to receive counseling and access to HIV/AIDS care and prevention. As a result, youth-friendly services for preventing HIV transmission among children and youth are forced to conduct themselves behind closed doors, unable to present their work to society.

On behalf of “Youth Net, Youth for Change” and 15 civil society networks on HIV/AIDS and the Thai NGO Coalition on AIDS (TNCA), we would like to support the government to change regulations and policies so that youth under 18 years of age can voluntarily decide to receive VCCT without parental consent. This will enable youth to learn about and determine their own risk behavior in contracting HIV/AIDS and, therefore, lead to self-protection from HIV/AIDS transmission from or to others. Agencies or institutions providing HIV/AIDS care and prevention will be able to screen HIV infected youths at an early stage and be able to provide immediate “youth-friendly services.” Under the principle of **“Respect for the rights on sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and human dignity regardless of sex or age,”** people have the right to determine themselves how to lead sexual lives, free and safe

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from sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, and sexual abuse, without exclusion, stigmatization or discrimination when seeking healthcare.

Youth Net, Youth for Change is a representative for youth working on HIV/AIDS and health, ready to take responsibility in life and society, and support the right of children and youth to learn in creative ways which will benefit society.

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(Ms. Jiraphat Wongsrikaew)

Representative of Youth Net, Youth for Change

with

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Thai National Coalition on AIDS (TNCA)