

Houses for adolescents

“*Maisons des Adolescents*” literally means “Houses for Adolescents.” This is the term used for adolescent-specific clinics. The *Maisons des Adolescents* were initiated in France in 2004 as a result of two observations. First, the lack of medical facilities and counseling centers specifically designed for adolescents (aged between 12 and 21 years). And second, the absence of services where adolescents, their families and the various professionals caring for adolescents within a given area, could come together and connect. There are now 59 *Maisons des Adolescents* in France. The government’s goal is to create at least one per district. These clinics are meant to give adolescents quick access to any form of multidisciplinary help they may need, be it health, social services, educational or legal aid. There are various types of *Maisons des Adolescents*, each has specific circumstances (within a hospital or not, part of a psychiatric department or not, with or without in-patient beds), but all share common goals: to inform, counsel, and support adolescents, their families, and the professionals working with them.

How can an adolescent go to a *Maison des Adolescents*?

Access to a *Maison des Adolescents* is free cost, confidential and easy —i.e. without appointment and without prior parental consent. Minors can be seen without their parents during the first few appointments; involving parents can be subsequently negotiated. Reasons for consultation can be physical, psychological, educational, social or legal. Adolescents themselves seldom seek a consultation. Sometimes relatives are the ones who call, but more often it will be a professional in contact with the teenager. Therefore, an essential part of the groundwork is to create a good referral network. Each *Maison des Adolescents* belongs to a network and is well-grounded in its area, thereby encouraging all types of cooperation and connections between health professionals (institutional or private), the Board of Education, social services, child protection services, local administrations and associations. Any professional working with adolescents within a given area is part of this network whose goal is to increase prevention and avoid interruptions of care. The *Maisons des Adolescents* participate in raising awareness and in training professionals who work with teenagers. Professionals seeking an opinion on a teenager or who need advice on his referral can also contact the *Maison des Adolescents* for help. There are many reasons for consultation: teen angst, family conflicts, anxiety-depression, language disorders, behavior disorders, self-aggressive acting-outs, suicide attempts, eating disorders, school refusal, school phobia or drop-out, psychological disorders linked to a chronic somatic pathology, addiction (cannabis, alcohol, other drugs), psychotic disorders, ill-treatment, trauma, and neurotic disorders among others.

What can a *Maison des Adolescents* offer adolescents and their families?

They will first be met by a multidisciplinary team that will welcome them, listen to them, inform them and assess their needs. Subsequently, depending on each particular case, they will be referred either to an adolescent psychiatrist, a general practitioner, a specialist physician (pediatrician, gynecologist, dietician, endocrinologist), or to a facility offering individual psychoanalytical or cognitive-behavioral therapy, group therapy, occupational therapy, relaxation or speech-therapy. The use of different mediators encourages creativity and the expression of suffering and conflicts. Other forms of help can also be provided, such as social assistance, educational support and legal aid. Patients and their families can also access transcultural consultations and family therapy. Indeed, informing parents and assisting them is one of the *Maisons des Adolescents*’s core missions. After the initial assessment stage, parents can be referred to a support group or to another institution for help. The *Maisons des Adolescents* have strong links with parent-specific institutions. If hospitalisation

is needed, the adolescent can be admitted to the Maison des Adolescents itself if it has in-patient beds (for instance, the Maison des Adolescents at Cochin Hospital in Montparnasse), or to partner hospitals (such as the closest pediatric ward for example). The Maisons des Adolescents are therefore multipurpose institutions where every aspect of care is taken into account, be it physical, psychological, relational, social or educational.

For further information go to:

<http://www.derpapad.com/ressources/mda.php>

<http://travail-solidarite.gouv.fr>

Aurélie Harf MD, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and General Psychiatry, Avicenne Hospital, AP-HP, Paris 13 University, EA 3413, Inserm U669, 125, rue de Stalingrad, 93000 Bobigny, France.

Marie Rose Moro PhD, MD, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University Paris Descartes; Head of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Cochin et Avicenne Hospital (Assistance Publique, France); Technical Advisor for Doctors Without Borders (MSF), Editor-in-Chief of the journal *L'autre*. France. www.clinique-transculturelle.org