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PRESS RELEASE

CONFIDENTIALITY

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PRESS RELEASE REGARDING CONFIDENTIAL ACCESS
TO HEALTHCARE FOR ADOLESCENTS UNDER 18
YEARS OF AGE : THE NAC RECOMMENDS THAT A
SPECIAL EXCEPTION SHOULD BE MADE TO THE
PRINCIPLE OF PARENTAL AUTHORITY

The National AIDS Council unanimously approves a Report and Opinion on the issue of confidential access to care for adolescents under 18 years of age, an issue referred to the Council by Dominique Gillot, Secretary of State for Health and the Disabled.

The NAC Report highlights the current discrepancy between legislation and reality. According to the principle of parental authority, minors cannot be given medical treatment without their parents' knowledge. But in actual fact, minors ask that certain treatments involving their private lives be kept confidential if disclosure might lay them open to discredit and disgrace, or have damaging consequences for their health.

It is for this reason that the NAC recommends that legislation should make an exception to the general principle of parental authority. Such an exception must allow situations to be dealt with in which the minor's own best interest requires that the request for confidentiality be satisfied. Such an exception follows on logically from others already made (for contraception, screening tests, legal abortion).

This exception is a tightly defined one : confidentiality, explicitly requested by minors, must be applied to treatments made necessary by personal behaviour relating to their private lives. The healthcare involved must be completely free of charge for the minors concerned. There must be offered the possibility of support and assistance. Finally, a review of the schemes in place in the school and school-related environments must be aimed at providing minors with complete information on the body, sexuality and psychoactive substances (whether legal or not).