

Question 20.k.

APAV provides specialized support to children and youngsters victims of sexual violence, throughout the CARE network. Also, support and actions regarding sexual exploitation online, grooming or child pornography are provided with an internal interaction between CARE network and Safer Internet Helpline (better presented in the answer to question 14).

All the support provided is free of charge and confidential.

The support provided by CARE network starts with an individual assessment of child's needs, considering a multisource approach: data and information regarding the actual (victimization and post-victimization) and past situation (pre-victimization) is collected from several sources, like, for example, the victim, their caregivers, police officers, other social institutions that know and/or are intervening with the child.

Also, it's done the risk assessment that looks not only for the risk of new situations of sexual violence, but also the risk of retaliation and the physical and emotional safety of the children. If the safety of the child is compromised and/or is still living with the perpetrator, immediate measures are taken with police and child protection services.

Even when the needs and risks' assessment isn't possible, emergency psychological support can be provided to emotionally stabilize the person who quests for help, if needed (victim and/or caregivers, friends and other nonoffender persons that may be affected by the crime(s) reported).

After this, it is designed an intervention plan; all support is provided considering child's wellbeing and safety and looking ahead to their recovery.

It may be provided long term psychological support (as long as it's needed and considering the impact of the crime) to children, nonoffender caregivers and/or friends.

Also, it's provided, when needed, legal support, which may include the clarification of children's rights, the help on exercising those rights, including right to be heard, right to protection or right to compensation (from the offender and/or the State).

Other protection measures considering revictimization are activated whenever possible, especially regarding child interviewing and proceedings (see answer to question 23).

Also, when social needs are identified (like shelter/housing, school, transportation, financial) these are worked out with other local entities that may cover those problems.

When APAV's support does not seem to be sufficient, there may be articulation with/referral to structures for the promotion and protection of children and young people or to structures related to mental health, when potentially psychopathological conditions persist (e.g. suicide thoughts/plan or attempted suicide).

CARE network and Safer Internet Helpline might have to formally report the crimes regarding children, considering Portuguese Legal Framework. To do so, a closer connection to National Crime Police (Polícia Judiciária) is essential, which is (also) why that APAV and National Crime Police have a protocol of cooperation, to enhance and promote the best interaction possible.

It's important to enhance that, moreover, APAV has several national and local protocols with different organizations that, somehow, work with and for children, like:

- INEM (National Institute for Medical Emergency), especially regarding the CAPIC (Center for Psychological Support and Intervention in Crisis)
- CNPDPCJ (National Commission of Promotion of Rights and Protection of Children and Youth), and also some of their local Commissions
- Local Schools and Education Institutes
- Child shelters
- Other NGOs

These protocols establish a facilitated connection between APAV and State and civil society organizations, not only considering the efforts that may be putted into this subject but also facilitating the access to specialized support when dealing with a situation of sexual violence against children.

To do so, APAV has implemented with those entities a referral system. In addition to the fact that victims can directly access to the services of APAV (and particularly the CARE Network) on their own initiative or from family members/friends, they can benefit from a referral system. <https://www.msn.com/pt-pt/feed>

A referral system consists on providing the victim with information that there is a specialized support service that can help them. If the victim intends to benefit from it, the victim (or his/her legal representative/caregiver) gives his/her informed consent so that the referring entity can provide his/her contact details to the support service (in this case, to APAV).

Then, it is up to the support service to directly contact the victim (or their legal representative/caregiver) and take the necessary steps to address their needs arising from the situation of violence.

This articulation is essential for the support provided: it promotes effective inter-institutional contact and collaboration based on mutual respect for the individuality of the intervention of each of the entities and gives the victim the (effective) perception that the entities work together to help them.