

Health ambassadors and legal and ethical considerations

The health ambassadors meet people in order to assist or help during daily life with the purpose of promoting healthy families and healthy children.

In Norway when working with children and young people you have to hold a certificate of good conduct.

The participants in the EU project represent different countries each with their own legislation on the conduct of health professionals. Confidentiality and privacy rules may differ, but we propose some recommendations on ethics, privacy and health ambassador/ health professional divide.

- The health ambassadors are not representing any health profession in their tasks in the project, even if they may have an education with health science or care. They are supposed to be caring fellow humans or “Mitmenschen” in German. As such they may get access to peoples’ homes or private premises. The health ambassador is all the time just this, a caring person, and not a representative of official or private agencies having any influence of moral, financial or other sort putting pressure on the families participating
- If health ambassadors get access to private information, this must not be transferred to others without the consent of the informant. Thus it is recommended that the health ambassadors relate to the families, as if they had to follow professional legislation on privacy. This must be made clear to the health ambassadors and families.
- A country specific set of examples of the limits of conduct should be worked out.
- Advice should be given to the health ambassadors on what to say or do if the families expose needs which could be handled by known agencies in the municipality.
- Access to information on illegal activity and or neglect in or around the families must be handled according to the relevant laws of the participating countries. This is not the obligations that health professionals have to follow. The general duty of the public to inform official agencies should be the relevant starting point for a discussion with the health ambassadors during the introduction lectures.

- Health ambassadors may fall into one of two pits: The involvement with the families takes off and the ambassador promotes own views more than the family needs, or the ambassador may get frightened by what she/he sees and do not dare to get involved. These issues must be explained to the health ambassadors.
- Over-involvement may tempt some to enter into financial obligations to the families. This should not be a part of the EU project for helping families or children, when not explicitly regulated in each country.