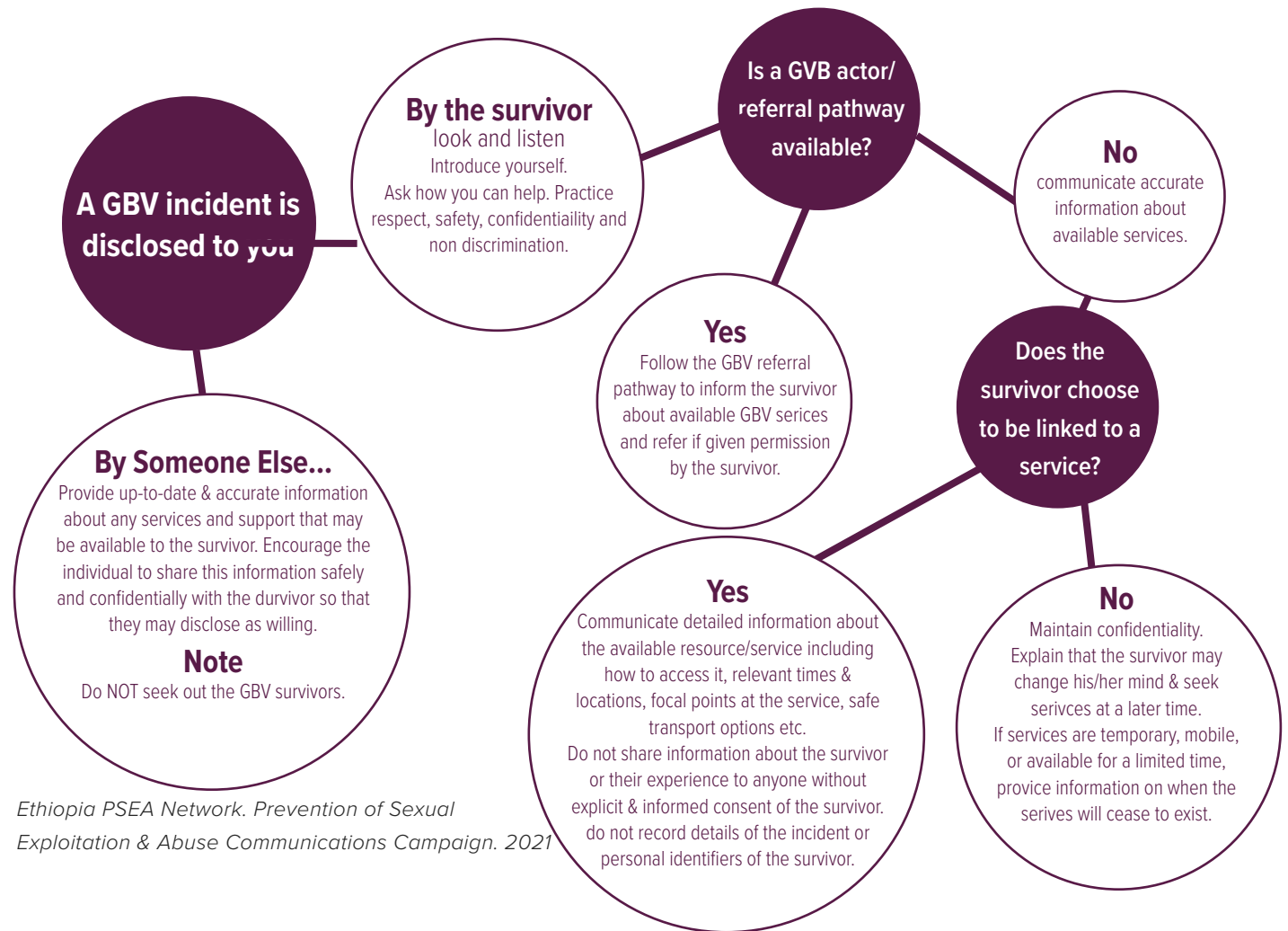


Tip Sheet: What to Do and Say When a Survivor Discloses GBV¹³



Look

- Receive a survivor, demonstrating a welcoming attitude
- Ask how you can help to address any urgent needs. Some survivors may need immediate medical care or clothing.
- Ask if the survivor feels comfortable talking to you in the current location. Find a more private or comfortable place if needed.
- Offer water, a tissue, etc.

Examples of helpful things to say:

- “You seem to be in a lot of pain right now, would you like to go to the health clinic?”
- “Does this place feel OK for you? Is there another place where you would feel better? Do you feel comfortable having a conversation here?”
- “Would you like some water? Please feel free to have a seat.”

¹³ Adapted from: IASC (Inter-agency Standing Committee). *Pocket Guide: How to support survivors of gender-based violence when a GBV actor is not available in your area*, 2015. <https://gbvguidelines.org/en/pocketguide/>

Listen

- Listen more than you speak.
- Control your curiosity and don't press with questions.
- Comfort with words of support. Reinforce that what happened was not the survivor's fault.
- Express sympathy and understanding.
- Let her know that you will hold the information she shares with you in confidence.
- Stay focused on the survivor and her experience, even as you may have concerns about the perpetrator or the wider context or security situation.

Examples of helpful things to say:

- *"I'm glad you told me."*
- *"I know this is happening to other women in the community. You are not alone."*
- *"I'm sorry this happened to you."*
- *"What happened was not your fault."*
- *"Everything that we talk about together stays between us. I will not share anything without your permission."*
- *"Please share with me whatever you want to share. You do not need to tell me more than you want to."*

Link

- Respect the survivor's rights to make her own decisions.
- Use the GBV referral pathway and share information on services available.
- Ask if she would like any specific support from you.
- Tell the survivor she does not need to make decisions now and can access services in the future.
- Ask if anyone in her family is aware and supporting her.
- Offer to help strengthen her family support—but only if she wants this help.
- Offer to accompany the survivor for services.
- Maintain confidentiality and don't share information about her situation without her consent.
- Make a plan to talk again with the survivor if she likes and let her know you are available.

Helpful things to say:

- *"Our conversation will stay between us."*
- *"There is a special program that supports women and girls in similar situations. Would you like to know about them?"*
- *"How can I help you?"*
- *"I can help to connect you to services if you like?"*
- *"I want to be sure your family is supporting you. Is there anything I can do to help? Do you want me to talk to anyone?"*
- *"Do not feel pressure to make any decisions now. You can think about things and always change your mind in the future."*
- *"I want to be sure you're okay and receiving the support you want. How can I check in with you?"*