

Published in **August 2025** by the Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR), The Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS), and the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR).

We want to thank the following organizations for their contribution for the development of this fact sheet:

- Alliance of Magnanimous Youth Leaders
- Children’s Rehabilitation Center
- Commission on Human Rights
- Dakila MMR
- Family Planning Organization of the Philippines
- Filipino Freethinkers
- Kaisa Ka
- Maguindanao Alliance of Youth Advocates
- PANTAY
- Partido Manggagawa (PM) Kabataan
- Philippine Safe Abortion Advocacy Network (PINSAN)
- Salinlahi Alliance for Children’s Concerns
- Save the Children Philippines
- Young Advocates for SRHR

*KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS IS YOUR FIRST LINE
OF PROTECTION. SPEAK UP, STAY INFORMED,
AND NEVER LET ANYONE TELL YOU YOU'RE
TOO YOUNG TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!*



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
---------------------------	----------

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS	3
--	----------

Guide for Your Health, Rights and Future	3
--	---

Can I access sexuality education?	4
---	---

Can I access contraceptives?	4
------------------------------------	---

FACT SHEET: ADOLESCENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES	5-6
---	------------

Can I get tested for HIV?	7
---------------------------------	---

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS	8
-----------------------------------	----------

Can I get married?	8
--------------------------	---

Can I drive?	9
--------------------	---

Can I legally consume alcohol?	9
--------------------------------------	---

Can I smoke cigarettes or use vape?	9
---	---

Can I be legally employed?	10
----------------------------------	----

Can I vote?	10
-------------------	----

CRIMINAL STATUTES AND CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY IN REFERENCE TO MINORS	11
---	-----------

Can I be criminally responsible?	11
--	----

What if you're 16 or 17?	11
--------------------------------	----

Criminal Liability for Rape	12
-----------------------------------	----

What is "grooming"?	12
---------------------------	----

THIS GUIDE WAS MADE WITH YOU IN MIND—YES, YOU.



Whether you're curious, confused, or fired up about your rights, this fact sheet is here to help you understand your rights and responsibilities as teens that affect your body, health, and future.

We get it! Talking about sex, relationships, HIV, contraception, or even school rules can feel weird, awkward, or just plain complicated. But here's the tea: you have the right to know. And when you understand your rights, you can make smarter, safer choices for yourself and help others do the same.

This fact sheet breaks down key Philippine laws that affect teens like you - using simple language, no judgment, and zero shame. It also looks at what the government is doing right, what still needs to change, and how we can push for better, more youth-friendly policies.

We believe that:

- Teens are smart and capable of making informed choices
- You deserve honest, complete, and clear information
- Your voice and experience matter
- Health is a right, not a privilege

So, whether you're just flipping through or deep-diving into every page, know this: you are not too young to understand, speak up, and claim your rights.

Let this be your tool, your reminder, and your starter pack for knowing what's legal, what's not, and what we're fighting to change—together.

Note: This booklet is based on national laws only and does not include Bangsamoro-specific laws. If you're from the Bangsamoro region, some rules may be different—so be sure to ask your local officials or legal groups for more info.

Use this guide to stay informed, start conversations, and stand up for your rights.

Guide for your health, rights, and future

As teenagers, you have the right to understand how to take care of your health and well-being. This guide will help you learn about important topics like sex, consent, HIV, and your legal rights—so you can make informed and empowered choices.



What is consent?

Consent means a clear, willing “yes.” It must be:

- Freely given
- Informed
- Reversible
- Enthusiastic
- Specific

No one can consent if they’re drunk, scared, asleep, or unsure—even if you’re in a relationship.



Consent

Sexual Consent: What’s Legal?

- The legal age of sexual consent is 16.
- Under 16? It may be considered statutory rape, even if both partners agreed.
- Exception: If both are at least 13 years old, the age gap is 3 years or less, and the relationship is non-abusive, it’s not a crime. This is what the law calls “close-in-age exemption”, “Romeo and Juliet clause” or “sweet heart clause”
- Under 13? Any sexual act with a minor under 13 = rape, no exceptions.



Can I access sexuality education?

Starting Grade 5, schools are required to teach sexuality education topics such as:

- Consent and healthy relationships
- Puberty and body changes
- Pregnancy prevention and contraception
- HIV and STI protection

BUT: Not all schools and teachers are trained to discuss these topics. Parents can “opt out” their kids, so some teens miss out.

Comprehensive sexuality education is mandated by the RH Law, this means you have the right to accurate, complete info. If school skips it, ask a health worker or trusted adult.



Can I access contraceptives?

Under the RH Law (RA 10354):

- Under 18? You need written parental consent for most contraceptives (pills, injectables, implants), unless:
 - You're a parent
 - You've had a miscarriage

Some clinics or hospitals may still turn you away—even if the law says it's allowed.

Experts like WHO and UN say teens should access birth control without needing permission.



**MY BODY
MY CHOICE
MY RULES**

Can I get an abortion?

Abortion is highly restricted under current laws in all cases in the Philippines—even for teens, rape survivors, or life-threatening pregnancies. This forces many to seek unsafe abortions, which can lead to maternal deaths and complications. Helping someone get one is also a crime.

Post-abortion care is allowed in the Philippines and supported by the RPRH Law, but its implementation remains inconsistent. Many face barriers like poor treatment, limited access to quality services, and fear of prosecution.

ADOLESCENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES



WHAT ARE MY LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

AGE

13-14

15

Can I legally consent to sex?	⚠️ If both are 13 yo or older, age gap is 3 yrs or less, consensual sex	
Can I access sexuality education?	✅ Allowed	✅ Allowed
Can I access free contraceptives?	❌ Not Allowed	❌ Not Allowed
Can I get an abortion?	❌ Not Allowed	❌ Not Allowed
Can I vote?	❌ Not Allowed	
Can I drive?	❌ Not Allowed	❌ Not Allowed
Can I start working and earn money?	⚠️ Can work under supervision of parent/guardian; work should not affect school	✅ Allowed
Can I be criminally responsible?	⚠️ Not criminally liable but subject to appropriate proceedings	✅ Allowed



	16	17	18
	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed
d	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed
ed	⚠ Only w/ parental consent; or if minor had previous pregnancy or experience w/ miscarriage		✓ Allowed
ed	✗ Not Allowed	✗ Not Allowed	✗ Not Allowed
	⚠ Can vote in SK Elections only		✓ Allowed
ed	⚠ Can drive under student permit w/ adult supervision	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed
d	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed
d	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed	✓ Allowed

LEGEND



Allowed



With Limitations



Not Allowed

Can I get tested for HIV?



Under RA 11166 or Philippine HIV and AIDS Policy Act, HIV testing is **voluntary, confidential, and free in many public clinics.**

You can get tested if:

- 15 and above
- Pregnant, at risk, and with a health/social worker's consent if under 15
- Under 15 and you secured a parental or guardian consent.
- "At risk" means you may have been exposed to situations where HIV could be passed to you.

You have the right to be safe and healthy, if you're unable to give consent and your well-being is at risk, social workers may step in and ensure your rights are protected.

What if I tested positive with HIV?

- Treatment (Antiretroviral Therapy) is free and helps you live a full, healthy life.
- Getting a positive HIV result doesn't mean your future is over. Many young people live normal, healthy lives because they got tested and started treatment early.
- 15 and up? You can usually start treatment yourself
- Under 15? May need parental consent—unless urgent

Health workers must explain everything clearly and keep your info private.



You deserve honest info, respect for your choices, confidential services, protection from harm or abuse. If you're unsure, talk to a health worker, teacher, counselor, or youth-focused org. **Don't be afraid to ask questions—your health matters.**

Adolescent Rights	What the Law Says
Age of Consent	16 years old (with close-in-age exception)
Contraceptives	Parental consent needed under 18, unless a minor is already a parent or had miscarriage.
Abortion	Not allowed in all cases. No exceptions.
Sex Education	Required from Grade 5, but not always implemented
HIV Testing	Allowed from age 15 (or under 15 with pregnancy/risk)
HIV Treatment	No age specified; generally allowed from age 15



Can I get married?

You must be 18 or older to legally marry in the Philippines. According to the Family Code and RA 6809, 18 is the legal age of adulthood. But just being 18 isn't enough — the law sets conditions depending on your age.

What Does the Law Say?



A valid marriage needs:

1. Both people must have legal capacity (*meaning they must be a male and a female, and at least 18 years old*), and
2. Both must give free and full consent — in front of the person officiating the ceremony.

The law currently defines marriage as between a man and a woman. There is still no legal recognition of same-sex marriage in the Philippines. We see and support the LGBTQIA+ community, but under current law, same-sex couples are not yet protected in this aspect.

Child Marriage = Not Allowed



If one or both of you are under 18, the marriage is **VOID** — as if it never happened, legally speaking. No ifs, no buts.

Anyone who arranges a wedding, officiates it, allows a child to live with an adult like they're married, can face legal charges. That includes fines and jail time.



Age	Legal to Marry?	Requirements
Below 18	No	Marriage is void
18-20	Yes	Needs written parental/guardian consent
21-25	Yes	Must ask for parental advice or wait 3 months
26+	Yes	No consent or advice needed

Can I drive?

At 16, you can get a Student Permit, but you can't drive alone. You need a licensed adult beside you, you can only drive during the day, and not on expressways. Driving solo with just a permit? Illegal. If you cause an accident, you and your parents can be held legally responsible — even if you're a minor. No helmet on a motorcycle? That's a violation too. At 17, you can apply for a Non-Professional License and drive solo, but only private vehicles — no Grab or delivery jobs yet. At 18, you can finally get a Professional License and drive for work or commercial use.

Age	What you can do
16	Student Permit — drive with adult supervision only
17	Non-Pro License — drive solo, private vehicles
18	Pro License — drive for work and private use



Alcohol and cigarette companies often target young people, but early use can harm your brain, body, and future. You have the right to grow up healthy and in control. Saying no isn't just refusal—it's saying yes to your goals and your power.

Can I legally consume alcohol?

The law says you must be 18 to drink, buy, or be given alcohol (PD 1619 or Volatile Substances Selling to Minors). Break any of these rules = fines, jail, or both for the drinker, not just the seller — even for the drinker, not just the seller. Minors are subject to appropriate proceedings.

Can I smoke cigarettes or use vape?

If you're under 18, you can't buy, use, sell, or even hold them, even if nicotine is absent.

- Prohibited near schools, youth centers, playgrounds, and parks.
- Vape ads? Can't be made to attract teens or be shown near youth spaces or on teen-heavy platforms (like TikTok or IG).



Can I be legally employed?



Age	Max Hours/Day	Max/Week	Not Allowed to Work
Under 15	4 hours	20 hours	8 PM to 6 AM
15-17	8 hours	40 hours	10 PM onward



Jobs that are not allowed

- Forced labor
- Debt bondage or when someone is forced to work to repay a debt but unfair rules keep them trapped and unable to pay it off.
- Prostitution or adult content
- Drugs or illegal work
- Jobs that are hazardous or risky: lifting, chemicals, underwater, machines
- Work involving abuse, harassment, shame
- Ads for alcohol, vape, gambling, violence



Who Has the Right to Your Income?

- Up to 20% can be used by the family.
- 80% and beyond: For you — education, savings, personal needs
- Earn ₱200K+ in a year?
 - 30% must go to a trust fund
 - Parents must report to DOLE twice a year
 - You get the full fund at 18



Can I vote?

To vote in the national and local elections, you need to be at least 18 years old on or before election day, a Philippine resident for at least 1 year, and living in the place where you'll vote for at least 6 months. Good news: you can already register at 17, as long as you turn 18 by election day!

If you want to run for public office, you must meet the age, residency, and citizenship requirements — but there's no need to own property or have a college degree. Voting and running for office are rights, not privileges.

Under 18? You can't vote in national or local elections just yet — but you're not out of the game. Through the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), young Filipinos 15 to 30 years old can vote and get involved in local governance. If you want to run as an SK official, you need to be 18 to 24 years old on election day.

Can I be criminally responsible?

When it comes to the law, being a child isn't just about how young you look — it's about your age and your ability to take care of yourself.



You are legally considered a child if:

- You're under 18 years old, OR
- You're 18 or older but have a disability or condition that makes it hard for you to understand things or to look after yourself.
- In both cases, the law says you deserve extra protection and support.

Every Child is Protected by the Law



If you're under 18, the law automatically sees you as a child. You don't have to prove it. You're not treated like an adult.

For example:

If you're **15 or younger** and do something wrong, you can't be sent to jail. Instead, the system helps you understand what happened and supports you to make better choices.

What If You're 16 or 17?

Things change a little for older teens. Before deciding what should happen, the law asks:

- ? Did you understand that what you did was wrong?
- ? Did you know someone could get hurt or that there could be serious consequences?

if the answer is **NO**:

You'll be treated like a younger child.

- ✓ No jail.
- ✓ You get help, not punishment.

if the answer is **YES**:

You may be held responsible.



There could be more serious consequences.



If someone claims you're not a minor, they have to prove it — not you. And if it's proven that you are a minor, then they must also prove that you understood what you were doing was wrong and that you knew the possible consequences. If they can't prove both, the law says you shouldn't be punished like an adult — instead, you should get support and guidance.



Criminal Liability for Rape

Age of Partners		Liability?
18	15	None as long as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consensual and non-abusive / exploitative ○ Age gap between partners is 3 years or less ○ The younger person is at least 13 years old
17	14	
16	13	
15	12	The 15-year-old is not criminally liable but subject to appropriate proceedings
19	14	The 19-year-old is subject to criminal liability for the offense of rape under prevailing legal provisions

What is “grooming?”

In the Philippines, “grooming” isn't just morally wrong; **it can be a criminal offense**. It encompasses a range of behaviors designed to exploit or deceive someone, particularly minors, in order to facilitate sexual contact, and is typically committed by an adult.



Even if there's no physical contact, grooming can still be considered as a criminal offense. This includes things like:

- Sending or asking for sexually explicit photos or videos
- Chatting online with sexual intentions
- Trying to meet up for sex



Any sexual act with someone under 16 is legally considered rape

If someone claims you're not a minor, they have to prove it — not you. And if it's proven that you are a minor, then they must also prove that you understood what you were doing was wrong and that you knew the possible consequences. If they can't prove both, the law says you shouldn't be punished like an adult — instead, you should get support and guidance.



Criminal Liability for Rape

Age of Partners		Liability?
18	15	None as long as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consensual and non-abusive / exploitative ○ Age gap between partners is 3 years or less ○ The younger person is at least 13 years old
17	14	
16	13	
15	12	The 15-year-old is not criminally liable but subject to appropriate proceedings
19	14	The 19-year-old is subject to criminal liability for the offense of rape under prevailing legal provisions

What is “grooming?”

In the Philippines, “grooming” isn't just morally wrong; **it can be a criminal offense**. It encompasses a range of behaviors designed to exploit or deceive someone, particularly minors, in order to facilitate sexual contact, and is typically committed by an adult.



Even if there's no physical contact, grooming can still be considered as a criminal offense. This includes things like:

- Sending or asking for sexually explicit photos or videos
- Chatting online with sexual intentions
- Trying to meet up for sex



Any sexual act with someone under 16 is legally considered rape



This booklet contains a youth-friendly fact sheet and complementary annexes that provide a clear overview of Filipino minors' access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in line with international human rights standards. It also breaks down key Philippine laws on criminal responsibility and explains how these impact the ability of minors to exercise their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.



Scan this QR code to access the **policy brief**
Or go this link: bit.ly/wgnrrpolicybrief



Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)

is a global, member-led network based in the Global South that supports and strengthens movements for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights (SRHR), and justice. Their work focuses on making sure everyone can fully enjoy their SRHR, especially those who are most marginalized.



The Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS)

is a local non-profit group that provides legal support and services. They focus on helping farmers, disaster-affected communities, and victims of human rights violations, especially those who are poor or vulnerable.



The Center for Reproductive Rights

is a global human rights organization of attorneys and advocates working to ensure reproductive rights are protected in law as fundamental human rights for the dignity, equality, health, and well-being of every person.