

PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO THE CHILD & CAREGIVERS

Adherence counseling must include an assessment of the child's socioeconomic circumstances, including **food security, shelter, secondary caregivers, and status of parents.** This assessment should be conducted during the initial screening and should be repeated during subsequent visits.

It is extremely important that clinic staff provide ongoing support and guidance to caregivers. Staff should assist caregivers to:

- Assess the child's **needs**
- Develop a **plan** addressing these needs
- Link with relevant **community-based services** for children
- **Disclose** the child's HIV status gradually to the child in an age-appropriate way

In providing support for adherence to ARV treatment, staff should assess:

- Caregiver's level of comfort with the medications (*Is the caregiver anxious that the ARVs could harm the child?*)
- Caregiver's cognitive/psychological capabilities (*Are they sufficient to ensure the child's adherence to treatment?*)
- Caregiver's awareness of the risks to the child as the result of inadequate adherence
- The involvement of other caregivers in the child's therapy. (*Will the primary caregiver leave the child with others who will need to give medicines to the child?*)
- The understanding, level of comfort, and capabilities of any alternative caregivers

Stigma can be one of the most powerful barriers to adherence. Therefore, staff must identify those individuals/families that are being stigmatized and develop methods whereby they can assist them to survive in a hostile environment. This may involve assisting caregivers and/or older children to access support groups.