10 SIGNS THAT A GIRL IS UNACCOMPANIED OR SEPARATED

It may not be obvious that a girl is unaccompanied or separated. Never assume that a girl can or will tell you that she is a child. This tip sheet aims to help frontline staff identify her, and refer her immediately to the relevant authorities for urgent support. Please keep these 10 signs in mind and reach out to relevant authorities if you suspect a girl is unaccompanied.

1. A girl is travelling alone and/or may ask explicitly for help. If you see a girl travelling alone who appears to be (or you suspect to be) under 18, she may be unaccompanied.

2. A girl says she is 18 or over but appears younger. If she fails to provide documents that prove her age and/or you still have doubts, she may be unaccompanied.

3. A girl does not have valid travel or identity documents or has falsified documents. If she has no documents or if somebody else is holding them on her behalf and/or is reluctant to share her personal details, she may be unaccompanied.

4. A girl tells you a story that seems rehearsed, or that is very similar to stories you have heard from other girls. If her answers to your questions appear well-prepared and she seems vague about her journey and her circumstances, she may be unaccompanied.

5. A girl says that she is married, shows signs of pregnancy or is acting as a ‘parent’ for other children. If a girl who is married is travelling only with her adult spouse, she should be considered unaccompanied. If you suspect that a child is pregnant or the mother of young children, she should also be considered as unaccompanied.

6. A girl is travelling with a group or family that does not seem to reflect the expected age or parent/child profiles. If a girl is travelling with adult companions and their age does not fit the family profile you might expect, or if she is travelling with an older man or ‘uncle’, she may be unaccompanied.

7. A girl is unable to speak the language or dialect of her companions or caregivers. If she does not share a language with her companions, they may not be her family and she may be unaccompanied. In this case, ask for support from linguistic and cultural mediators.

8. A girl’s appearance or physical characteristics differ markedly from those of her caregivers. If her physical features do not resemble those of her companions, she may be unaccompanied.

9. A girl lacks personal care or hygiene, especially in comparison with those accompanying her. If a girl looks uncared for compared with other children who are on the move with parents or in her group, she may be unaccompanied.

10. A girl looks intimidated and ill at ease around her travel companions and displays signs of emotional distress including trembling, shaking or blushing. If she appears upset, refuses to talk or tries to keep her distance, etc., she may be unaccompanied.
What is the purpose of this tip sheet?
The purpose of this tip sheet is to help frontline staff (border officials, security, police, reception staff, etc.) to become familiar with the possible signs that refugee and migrant girls are unaccompanied or separated, and improve identification.
The tip sheet outlines 10 signs that may indicate a girl is unaccompanied or separated. If there is a suspicion that the girl is unaccompanied or separated based on the presence of these signs (or others) then you should refer her to the relevant authorities immediately.

**Unaccompanied or Separated Children (UASC)**
*Unaccompanied children* are separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.
*Separated children* are separated from both parents, or from their previous primary or customary caregiver, but not necessarily other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

What is identification?
**Identification** is the process of establishing which children have been separated from their families or other caregivers, and where they may be found.
- Identification of unaccompanied and separated boys and girls can happen at arrival, but often occurs during displacement through service providers or community-based mechanisms.
- The objectives of identification are to ensure that unaccompanied boys and girls are safe from harm and receive appropriate care and assistance until reunification or alternative long-term solutions are arranged.
- For separated children, (family) links must be verified and assessed, in order to identify potential risks.

Why focus on girls?
Because of their specific travelling dynamics, girls may not immediately be seen as unaccompanied or separated. Unaccompanied and separated girls are a heterogeneous group: some may be pregnant, travelling with spouses, children, extended family, others may be on their own but moving with groups, some may have falsified documents that make them older, many might be trafficked.

What to do if you suspect a girl is unaccompanied or separated:

**Write it all down:** take details of her name, location and phone number, if possible

**Call the relevant authorities/organizations immediately:** always keep a note of their contact information

They should have trained staff who can safely follow up with the girl and her companions to determine whether she is unaccompanied or separated.