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International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP) Statement for consideration by the WHO Regional Council for Europe 63.

The International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP) expresses appreciation to those who have worked for the development of the European Mental Health Action Plan

This statement provides the views of IACAPAP, as an NGO in official standing with the WHO, from a child and adolescent mental health policy perspective addressing overall child mental health concerns and in the specific context of the European Mental Health Action Plan

We call particular attention to the landmark Global NCD Action Plan approved by the 66th World Health Assembly. This document provides a benchmark for considering the importance of mental disorders and their impact on health and society. We call particular attention to the recognition of the importance of child mental health as it relates to the onset of adult mental disorders and the increasing concern with child mental disorders, such as autism whose epidemiology, etiology and treatment are now the focus of global attention.

It is also important to note the importance attached to the designation of child and adolescent mental disorders as a priority condition by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse under the direction of Dr. Shekhar Saxena and we are hopeful that WHO-EURO will also identify child and adolescent mental disorders as priority conditions. As stated under item 8 of the European Action plan "Mental health problems are..... a major burden to economies, demanding policy action'. With over 50% of adult mental disorders beginning before the age of 14, and with now well documented costs to society from untreated child and adolescent mental disorders, the time is now to confront these conditions with policy and program development. IACAPAP stands ready to assist in these initiatives. IACAPAP is an umbrella for many child and adolescent mental health national associations in Europe and elsewhere and has published the first online comprehensive, free textbook on child and adolescent mental disorders (www.iacapap.org).

Having a "developmental perspective" and understanding "intergenerational factors" influencing mental health will greatly aid the development of "rational" programs for youth. John Heckman, a Nobel winning-economist at the University of Chicago, demonstrated that early intervention provides the greatest return on health and mental health investment. In connection with this point and 'health promotion perspective', research on resilience of children and adolescents should be increased and supported.

We would like to see specific mention made of "child mental health policy" when considering policy development. While many countries develop mental health policy, more often policy development leaves out child mental health and the very special policy needs associated with child mental health and child mental disorders. There are solid data to suggest that the development of specific child mental health policy development lags behind adult mental health policy development in member states. Either as a stand-alone item or in association with other items we would like to see specific mention of the impact of maternal depression on the development of children. Colleagues in other NGOs (World Association for Infant Mental Health-WAIMH and International Society for Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology-ISAPP) would like to see specific mention made of

infant mental health and adolescent mental health which are important aspects of overall child and adolescent mental health.

Under the item 29 of Objective 1, it will be important to place special emphasis on the development of programs to increase healthy attachment patterns in early childhood for the promotion of mental health, because attachment research has shown that secure attachment is a major protective factor for mental health. In accord with this, mental health promotion in adolescence should be stated clearly as well as the prevention of suicide and bullying, because adolescence is one of the most vulnerable and highest-risk age groups for mental health problems which will extend into adulthood.

Strengthening child and adolescent rights within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will be crucial as well as considering the potential impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as mentioned under Objective 2 item 31 of the European Action Plan. In addition, the development of advocacy groups for child and adolescent mental health should be promoted throughout Europe.

Under Objective 3, it will be very important to provide primary care workers with programs to increase their awareness of child and adolescent mental health and disorders. In childhood and adolescence, mental problems usually arise in the form of variations from normal development, thus primary care workers need to know normal development to differentiate disorders from expectable behaviors. Mental health services for children and adolescents should be planned in an integrative way meeting not only treatment needs but also developmental needs, such as, speech therapy, special education, and others

To ensure appropriate qualifications for service providers, collaboration with the UEMS Section and Board on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry as well as Section on Psychiatry will be necessary (Objective 4, item 57c).

Under Objective 5 it should be noted that physical illnesses of children and adolescents suffering from mental disorders, especially the developmental disorders, are usually not considered because the children cannot verbalize their complaints but rather physical discomfort through behavioral irritability which is usually interpreted as part of their mental condition by physicians.

Objective 6 states the importance of well coordinated partnerships. Thus, partnering with the regional NGO's working on mental health, such as, the European Psychiatric Association and European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (ESCAP) will allow for contributions to further develop policy and programs relevant to the European Mental Health Action Plan

When forming partnerships with stakeholders, as mentioned under Objective 7, contacting parents as well as children and adolescents themselves will be needed to determine the needs of this age group.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to have input into RC 63 WHO EURO.

Sincerely,



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