

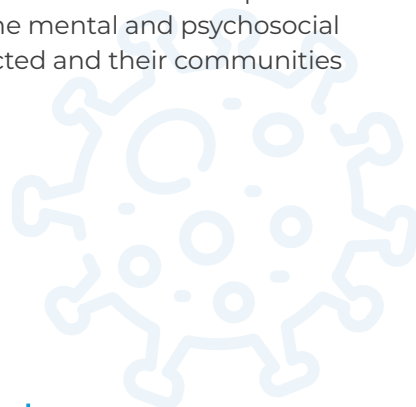


## Addressing the **mental health** needs of vulnerable populations in the COVID-19 response in the WHO European Region

### Situation

The mental health consequences of COVID-19 pandemic are already strongly apparent, ranging from stress associated with risk of infection, quarantine or self-isolation, through to the traumatic experiences of sudden loss of lives and livelihoods within families and communities. While these psychosocial concerns and stressors are affecting the whole population, particular attention is needed to respond to the mental health and psychosocial support needs of certain vulnerable groups, including health care and other frontline workers, informal or self-employed workers, migrants and refugees, women and children exposed to abuse or violence, and people with pre-existing mental or physical health conditions or disabilities (whether living in the community, places of detention or in long-term care facilities).

While many uncertainties remain about how the pandemic will progress, the impact on the mental and psychosocial well-being of those most affected and their communities will be large and enduring.



### Ongoing Actions

(to address special needs)

The WHO Regional Office for Europe Mental Health Programme is engaged intensively and proactively in efforts to mitigate the mental health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the framework of the Vulnerable Populations group, the following three areas of action are currently being prioritized:

- distribution of timely psychosocial information and guidance, both for the general population and for specific vulnerable groups with a view to promoting psychological resilience, healing and post-traumatic growth;
- supporting countries in setting up online psychosocial support services for people with pre-existing or newly presenting mental health conditions or disabilities, frontline workers and COVID-19 affected or bereaved, families;
- identification of and response to challenges faced by mental health service providers in providing continued, safe and quality care for specific vulnerable populations including people living with dementia and residents of long-term care facilities.





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### Challenges addressed through the Vulnerable Populations group

- Raising awareness about the consequences of prolonged stress, insecurity and uncertainty.
- Ensuring accessibility of mental health services via online digital platforms.
- Protecting standards of care and human rights in places of detention, psychiatric hospitals and long-term care facilities through shared learning.

### WHO/Inter-agency guidance published/in process and upcoming

WHO, the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee and other international partners have already developed a set of COVID-specific guidance and information materials on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) response for health workers, those in long-term care or with disabilities, as well as children and older adults.

#### WHO

**Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak**

#### IASC

**Interim Briefing Note Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak**

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