

IMUN 2024 Research Report

Human Rights Commission Issue #1: The question of providing mental healthcare for youth.

Mental health is defined by “emotional, psychological and social well-being” according to the CDC, and mental healthcare is defined by “services devoted to the treatment of mental illnesses and the improvement of mental health in people with mental disorders or problems” (“Can robots”). A substantial part of the global youth population struggles with mental and psychosocial challenges, and it is estimated that, globally, twenty percent of children suffer from a mental illness (“Children and young”). In fact, the World Health Organization estimates “show an increase in anxiety and major depressive disorder of up to 28% globally” (“With mental”).

Mental healthcare is a critical topic for addressing youth health and “if left untreated, mental disorders can impede all aspects of health, including emotional well-being and social development” (“Child and Adolescent”), which leaves a lasting impact on the youth, and ultimately leaving them feeling “socially isolated, stigmatized, and unable to optimize their social, vocational, and interpersonal contributions to society” (“Child and Adolescent”). People with mental health disorders face stigma, discrimination, and infringement of human rights in communities and care systems all over the world and around the world, people with lower income most and disadvantaged members of society are at the highest risk of mental illness are the least likely to obtain proper care (“Mental disorders”). Obstacles to mental health treatments continue to be a problem worldwide, however, they are especially prevalent in low-and middle-income countries and “the barriers to accessibility include stigmatization, financial strain, acceptability, poor awareness, and sociocultural and religious influences” (“Exploring Barriers”).

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a new set of challenges for youth, resulting in a mental health crisis, although children and teens have been struggling with mental health issues for much longer. In the decade preceding the pandemic, rates of persistent sadness, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors among young people rose by approximately 40%, according to the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System ("Kids' mental"). Besides facing social isolation and academic disruptions, many children and teens lost caregivers to COVID-19, experienced parental job loss, or suffered physical or emotional abuse at home. These challenges, along with growing concerns about social media, mass violence, natural disasters, climate change, and political polarization, in addition to the usual challenges of growing up, can be overwhelming.

The question of providing mental healthcare for youth is an issue that requires the utmost significance. In this debate, it is important that delegates research the position of their own delegation and focus on the ways in which Member States can ensure quality mental healthcare availability to all youth, globally. Delegates should draft resolutions which would specify what methods Member States can adopt to improve mental health services. This includes, but is not limited to, integrating mental health services with other systems that support youth, such as education and social services, guaranteeing that stigma towards mental healthcare is dismantled and ensuring that young people and their families have a voice in the design and implementation of these services.

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