

Declaration of Venice 1996:

Principles for Organizing Mental Health Systems for Children and Adolescents

The International Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP) is the international organization of national societies committed to child and adolescent psychiatry, psychology and allied professions. For more than 60 years, IACAPAP has been an international advocate for children and families. A major goal of IACAPAP is to facilitate the provision of preventive and treatment services and to enhance the work of mental health professionals.

Mental health systems within nations and regions have over-arching goals:

- to support families, teachers, social agencies, criminal justice systems, pediatricians, maternal and infant health services, and others in the community in the vital social task of raising children who function optimally;
- to provide access to services and programs, as soon as they are needed, for children who are first exhibiting signs of disorders and troubles;
- to deliver services that are as effective and safe as possible to all children - regardless of their abilities to pay, race, ethnicity, legal status, nationality or other personal characteristics - in order to reduce suffering, limit disability, and help promote the individual's fullest possible participation within the community.

To meet these goals, the mental health systems of nations and regions should include:

- a cadre of well trained, committed professionals;
- a range of settings for prevention, evaluation and treatment that are acceptable and used by families and that are non-stigmatizing;
- access to services for all families and children in need;
- suitable methods for financing;
- quality assurance and monitoring;
- evaluation and research; and
- ethical oversight, advocacy, and protection of the rights of children, including the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the rights of children.

IACAPAP asserts the importance to nations and individuals of well funded, high quality, ethically delivered, accessible, mental health services for children, adolescents and their families. To assure the creation and maintenance of optimal mental health systems, government, private organizations, professionals, families and advocates need to work together with shared commitment and values.

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