

The International Declaration on Youth Mental Health

A shared vision, principles and action plan for mental health service provision for young people aged 12–25 years



Imagine a world where...

- ❑ **Every young person** has a meaningful life and can fulfil their hopes and dreams
- ❑ All young people are respected, valued and supported by their families, friends and communities
- ❑ Young people feel empowered to exercise their right to participate in decisions that affect them
- ❑ Young people with mental ill-health get the support and care they need when and where they need it
- ❑ No young person with mental ill-health has to endure stigma, prejudice and discrimination
- ❑ The role of family and friends in supporting young people is valued and encouraged

Ten-year targets

1. Suicide rates for young people aged 12–25 years will have reduced by a minimum of 50% over the next ten years. This minimum target means that we do not accept that the death of any young person by suicide is inevitable.
2. Every young person will be educated in ways to stay mentally healthy, will be able to recognise signs of mental health difficulties and will know how to access mental health support if they need it
3. Youth mental health training will be a standard curriculum component of all health, youth and social care training programmes
4. All primary care services will use youth mental health assessment and intervention protocols
5. All young people and their families or carers will be able to access specialist mental health assessment and intervention in youth-friendly locations
6. Specialist assessment and intervention will be immediately accessible to every young person who urgently needs them
7. All young people aged 12–25 years who require specialist intervention will experience continuity of care as they move through the phases of adolescence and emerging adulthood. Transitions from one service to another will always involve a formal face-to-face transfer of care meeting involving the young person, his or her family/carers and each service involved in his or her care.
8. Two years after accessing specialist mental health support, 90% of young people will report being engaged in meaningful educational, vocational or social activity
9. Every newly developed specialist youth mental health service will demonstrate evidence of youth participation in the process of planning and developing those services
10. A minimum of 80% of young people will report satisfaction with their experience of mental health service provision
11. A minimum of 80% of families will report satisfaction that they felt respected and included as partners in care

Why an International Declaration on Youth Mental Health?

“International declarations that articulate core values, goals and standards have played an important role in enhancing the quality of care in a number of areas of medicine”

(Bertolote & McGorry 2005)

The World Health Organisation (2011)

recognises mental health as one of the main health issues affecting young people around the world today. At any one time up to one in four young people aged 12–25 years will be going through a period of mental ill-health and three-quarters of adults with mental health difficulties are likely to have developed those difficulties by the age of 24 *(Kessler et al 2005)*.

The International Declaration on Youth Mental Health (2011)

articulates core principles and targets for youth mental health service provision. The declaration aims to influence how people think about and respond to young people's mental health needs. It will be used to leverage support for the development of timely and appropriate youth mental health services internationally.

Background to the Declaration

The International Declaration on Youth Mental Health evolved from a Youth Mental Health Summit that took place in Killarney, Ireland on 19 May 2010. The Summit provided a forum for young people, family members, clinicians, researchers and policy makers to share practice innovation and research in the field of youth mental health and to discuss and debate the content of this declaration.

Over 80 people from Ireland, the UK, Australia, Canada, the USA, the Netherlands and New Zealand took part in the process and their feedback and input provided the basis of the declaration. The declaration includes a piece written by a young mental health advocate from Ireland and a number of young people from Ireland contributed their views on the declaration over the course of the writing period.

The Issue of Youth Mental Health: young people's views

If young people don't feel like they have someone to talk to or somewhere they can go to for support and expert care, how can they be helped? The unfortunate truth for many is that they can't, which can lead to very sad, and often tragic, endings for some. This has resulted in high rates of youth suicide and premature death and disability. There are far too many thwarted and unhappy lives.

Poor access to quality mental health services and supports is hindering many young people's ability to fully participate as active participants in society. Every time a young person is overcome by the challenges they face and has no one to turn to for the support they need, an opportunity to foster their spirit of resilience and the chance of recovery from mental ill-health is lost.

Young people are ready for change. We are ready to engage in services and organisations to make our voice heard. We want our participation in the process to be assured and valued. What better experts can there be than the people who live through these things every day? How can services be redesigned, or stigma reduced without the guidance of such experts? Internationally we have seen how well listening to young people works in organisations working to support young people's mental health in Australia, the UK and Ireland.

Every young person, no matter where they live, has the same right to access quality services and supports that can help them overcome their experience of mental ill-health. This is why this declaration is of international significance and must be supported by all who value the contribution that young people make to our communities. Improving mental health services and changing the way people think about youth mental health worldwide is our key to change.

International Declaration on Youth Mental Health, authored by the ACAMH Special Interest Group in Youth Mental Health, supported by Professor Patrick McGorry and Dr. David Shiers.

Endorsed and launched by the International Association for Youth Mental Health (IAYMH), October 2013.

Declaration Objectives

The declaration sets out a range of objectives under five action areas:

1. Public health target to reduce preventable mortality

Reduce mortality rates correlated with mental ill-health among the youth population.

2. Mental health literacy

Raise awareness among young people, families and communities of the determinants of mental health and the mental health needs of young people aged 12–25 years. Minimise any impediments to young people with mental ill-health integrating fully into their communities and society.

3. Recognition

Organise training for health and social care professionals in optimal approaches for detecting and responding to young people with mental health needs.

4. Access to specialist support

Create, enhance and evaluate comprehensive and dedicated youth mental health services provided by professionals with specialist knowledge in youth mental health and interventions for young people. Ensure that youth mental health services, including on-line services, are equitable, universally available and accessible to young people and their families when they need them.

5. Youth and family participation in service development

Provide opportunities for young people and their families to participate fully in the planning, design and delivery of youth mental health services and promote partnership with young people and families within primary and specialist mental health care services.

For more information
on the Declaration visit:
www.iaymh.org