



SUPPORTING COUNTRIES TO ESTABLISH MECHANISMS TO MONITOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

The role of WHO

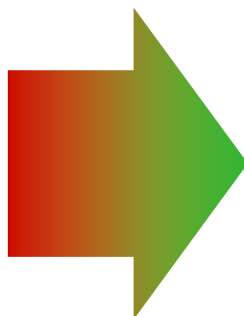
- ➔ **Human rights violations in mental health facilities are an everyday occurrence in many countries.** The lack of resources devoted to mental health, a “dehumanization” of people with mental disabilities and the poor level of knowledge and understanding about human rights means that mental health facilities are associated with a wide range of abuses. Unhygienic and inhuman living conditions are common in many facilities, as are inadequate, degrading and harmful treatment practices. Many people being unjustifiably admitted to facilities against their will and languish there for weeks, months and sometimes even years at a time. Informed consent to treatment is systematically ignored in many establishments and patients are administered (sometimes harmful or irreversible) treatment despite having the capacity to make treatment decisions. In other cases, people are neglected altogether and receive no treatment or care whatsoever. Basic rights such as the right to confidentiality, to access information, to privacy, to communication, are frequently violated.
- ➔ **Mechanisms to monitor human rights in mental health facilities are crucial.** Yet few countries have established such mechanisms.

Monitoring mechanisms are needed to:

- Ensure that *voluntary* admission and treatment is being promoted
- Review all cases of involuntary admission and treatment
- Make sure that involuntary procedures meet international human rights standards and are being respected
- Review appeals against involuntary admission and treatment orders

And also to:

- Conduct regular inspections of mental health facilities
- Monitor that living conditions are acceptable
- Ensure that people are receiving the treatment and care they need and that their human rights are being respected.





The Role of WHO

WHO is working to support countries in establishing mechanisms to monitor the rights of people with mental disabilities in mental health facilities.

➡ WHO TOOL KIT FOR MONITORING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES

WHO is developing an instrument for helping countries establish human rights monitoring mechanisms. The tool kit will comprise information and guidance on:

- Mechanisms for monitoring, promoting and protecting the rights of people with mental disabilities at the international, regional and national level;
- Setting up visiting boards, conducting inspections and assessing and evaluating human rights standards and conditions in mental health facilities;
- Setting up mental health review bodies and reviewing and assessing cases of involuntary admissions and treatment.

➡ TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES

Support to countries involves:

- Establishing national visiting boards and review bodies to monitor the rights of people in mental health facilities;
- Providing training and capacity building on how to assess, evaluate and report on human rights conditions in mental health facilities, using the Tool Kit;
- Providing guidance on implementation strategies to improve human rights and treatment conditions in mental health facilities.

References

- **WHO Tool Kit for Monitoring the Human Rights of People with Mental Disabilities:** the Tool Kit is currently under development. Once finalized it will be available at url: http://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/en/
- **Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment:** available at url: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cat-one.htm>





Useful Links

- **Training Tools and Exercises** designed to increase people's knowledge and skills the area of mental health, human rights and legislation. [click here](#)
- **Mental Health and Human Rights - Denied Citizens: Including the Excluded** webpage: [click here](#)
- **The WHO MIND Project** brochure: [click here](#)
- **WHO Health and Human Rights Website**: [click here](#)
<http://www.who.int/hhr/en/>
- For **Best Practices** examples, a selection of **Country Summaries** and official documents: [click here](#)

Other useful information sheets: [click here](#)

- Information sheet on WHO support to countries in developing human rights oriented mental health legislation
- Information sheet on monitoring the rights of people with mental disabilities
- Information sheet on Mental Health Legislation
- Information sheet on promoting the rights of people with mental disabilities

Citations

Supporting countries to establish mechanisms to monitor human rights in mental health facilities. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2007 (http://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/services/en/index.html, accessed 4 September 2007; Mental Health, Human Rights and Legislation Information Sheet, Sheet3).

Key Contacts

Mental Health Policy and Service Development Team,
Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, WHO Geneva:



Dr Michelle Funk, Coordinator (funkm@who.int)

Ms Natalie Drew & Dr Edwige Faydi,
Technical Officers (drewn@who.int; faydie@who.int)



Tel. +41 (22) 791 38 55 - Fax. +41 (22) 791 38 40

"Each State Party shall set up, designate or maintain at the domestic level one or several visiting bodies for the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"

Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002

