

2nd Network Meeting of the Health Programme

Prevention in the Field of Child and Adolescent Mental Health – Polish Ministry of Health



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Mental health of children and youth in Poland

- It is estimated that the mental disorders affects approx. 10% of the population of children and adolescents, which means that in Poland over 600,000 people under the age of 18 require professional care
- Mental disorders appearing in childhood and adolescence are the result of many factors, they are related to social and economic conditions, relationships in family, school and peer groups, stress and exposure to psychoactive substances
- The clinical picture of disorders is also changing - aggressive and self-destructive behaviors are becoming the dominant symptoms more and more often

Types of mental health of children and youth

- mental disorders involving among others low self-esteem, lack of assertiveness, lack of critical thinking, lack of ability to live in society
- suicidal tendencies, depression, self harm
- prevention of mental health problems and improvement of mental well-being of society
- therapeutic support programs for people with mental disorders (psychological support, individual counseling, support groups, workshops on self-esteem)



Available help in mental health of children and youth

- **Professional help at various levels of care:**
 - The profession of child psychiatrist is practiced by 482 people in Poland (as of February 28, 2021)
 - outpatient or inpatient psychiatric care,
 - psychological and pedagogical counseling centers,
 - social therapy and educational centers,
 - social assistance centers / community centers,
 - crisis intervention centers, family diagnostic and consultation centers,
 - social integration centers, support centers for victims of domestic violence

Negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic

Negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents:

- isolation from family members, school environment and peers
- increasing social disparities (students from poverty environments particularly strongly affected by both the social and health effects of the closure of educational institutions)
- fear for the health and life of relatives (including fear of infecting relatives)
- limiting physical activity (by not being able to participate in sports activities)
- difficult access to psychological care (due to lack of access to assistance received in schools, limited access to services)

Treatment of mental disorders

The treatment of mental disorders is provided under the services called „Psychiatric care and addiction treatment" and since 2018, when the first Mental Health Center was created under pilot programs

The treatment may take form of:

- Stationary treatment: general hospital treatment, specialist hospital treatment, long-term hospital treatment and nursing care, court hospital treatment, advice in the emergency room
- Daily treatment: general day therapy, specialist day therapy
- Outpatient and community activities: medical advice, psychological advice, individual psychotherapy, community visits, group / family interactions, visits by a community therapist

Healthy Future. Strategic framework for the development of the health care system for 2021-2027, with a perspective until 2030

Psychiatric wards for children and adolescents

- carried out in stationary conditions
- the patient is under the 24-hour care of a psychiatrist - a specialist in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry - and nursing staff. Kids also benefit from psychotherapy, occupational therapy and other forms of help tailored to the patient's needs (e.g. group therapy, communication training or psychoeducation)
- Target group: psychiatric services provided in stationary conditions are provided to children and adolescents enrolled in secondary schools until their graduation
- Hospitalization may be as emergency (based on a psychiatrist's decision) or elective (based on a referral). Emergency situations include life and health threats, such as, for example, the patient's attempted suicide or the death threat



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Psychiatric day wards for children and adolescents

- Services are extremely important in the case of children and adolescents - they enable the implementation of intensive diagnostic and therapeutic activities without the need to isolate the patient from the family environment and peer group.
- As part of their stay in the day ward, patients benefit from the care of a psychiatrist, nursing care, psychotherapy, occupational and group therapy.
- Compulsory education may take place in the ward (as part of the hospital school)
- Target group: children and adolescents up to 18 years of age with mental disorders, with significant, threatening or permanent disturbances in life functioning (division of the psychiatric rehabilitation day ward for children up to 13 and into adolescents).

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Outpatient psychiatric and psychological services for children and adolescents

- As part of the mental health clinic, the patient has the opportunity to take advantage of free consultations (in the field of diagnosis, therapy), home visits and psychotherapy sessions (individual, group or family).
- A referral is not required for a visit to a psychiatrist for children and adolescents, as well as for psychological, psychotherapeutic or environmental services.
- In mental health clinics, an individual therapeutic plan is set up individually and adequately to the psychophysical condition of the patient, taking into account pharmacological treatment, psychoeducation, psychological assistance, and various forms of psychotherapy.

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Investments in human resources - improvement of the human resources situation and the quality of education in the mental health care system

- development of specialists - apart from psychiatrists - dealing with the protection of the mental health of the youngest. Thanks to assistance provided by psychologists, psychotherapists and community therapists it will be possible to organize care in such a way that only people who need a psychiatric diagnosis or pharmacological therapy will be directed to psychiatrists
- The aim is to educate new specialists who will obtain a qualification in clinical psychology or psychotherapy of children and adolescents or environmental therapy of children and adolescents.



Thank you for your attention!