

On World Mental Health Day, the International Federation of Social Workers calls for Mental Health for All



On 10th October, World Mental Health Day, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) supports this year's call for greater investment in and greater access to mental health care.

Mental health is a neglected global health topic. According to the WHO, less than 2% of government health expenditure worldwide is invested in mental health (Mental Health Atlas 2017). In addition, the majority of these modest funds go to psychiatric clinics and not to community-based psychiatric services. Even though the latter would mostly be more adequate, this would reach more people and those affected could stay in their social environment. Mental illness has increased dramatically over the past 20 years. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, statistics continue to rise. Today, mental illness is a leading cause of incapacity for work. This leads to disintegration and enormous production losses.

IFSW also advocates larger investments in prevention. Efforts to avoid stigmatisation and inhumane treatment of mentally ill people must be promoted worldwide.

Social Work and Mental Health

Social workers are partners for the medical and therapeutic professions. They do not focus on the individual's illness, but on social factors. Social workers look at the sick person's entire life situation (work, living conditions, social network, finances, residence status, other services involved, etc.). This broadened perspective makes them so valuable to interdisciplinary teams in the healthcare sector. Social workers look for social stressors that can provide important explanations for the sick person's behaviour. If the social stress level is successfully reduced, this has a relaxing effect and promotes the overall recovery process.

Social work is multifaceted. Through social interventions such as work integration, requests for financial support, applications for retraining, initiation of self-help groups, involvement of family, friends, volunteers, other social services, schools, police, courts, etc., social workers build a bridge between health, economic, justicial, education and social services. Social workers want to promote strategies that create communities and an environment in which people with mental illness feel safe and can control their lives again.

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