

**DRAFT**

## The Melbourne Charter for Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Mental and Behavioural Disorders

<b>Scope</b>	<p>The Melbourne Charter identifies principles and actions required to address the modifiable determinants of mental health and mental and behavioural disorders.</p>
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The Melbourne Charter asserts that mental health is an indivisible part of general health and is essential for the well being and functioning of individuals, communities and societies.</p> <p>The Melbourne Charter affirms that mental health has universal relevance and that the promotion of mental health and prevention of mental disorders should be a touchstone of global and national development.</p>
<b>Who is it for?</b>	<p>The Melbourne Charter is for all people, groups and organisations that are central to the achievement of mental health and the prevention of mental and behavioural disorders, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• governments and decision-makers at all levels;</li><li>• civil society;</li><li>• people affected by mental disorders and emotional health problems;</li><li>• the business sector and philanthropy; and</li><li>• international, national and local health and non-health organisations.</li></ul>
<b>Mental health</b>	<p>Mental health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO 2001).</p> <p>Mental health is determined by multiple and interacting social, psychological and biological factors, just as are health and illness in general.</p> <p>Poor mental health is associated with social disadvantage, human rights abuses and poor health and productivity, as well as increased risk of mental disorders. Positive mental health can influence the onset, course and outcomes of both physical and mental disorders.</p>
<b>Mental and behavioural disorders</b>	<p>Mental disorders are conditions that are characterised by alterations in thinking, mood, or behaviour (or a combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.</p> <p>14% of the global disease burden is due to mental disorders (Lancet, 2007). More than 450 million people suffer from mental and behavioural disorders during their lifetime, which impacts not only on them but those that care for them.</p> <p>Mental and behavioural disorders are the most important contributors to morbidity among the non-communicable diseases – more than heart disease, stroke and cancer. There is high co-morbidity among mental disorders and they are interrelated with physical illnesses and social issues such as isolation and exclusion from social and working life.</p>
<b>Promoting Mental Health</b>	<p>The United Nations recognises that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without discrimination. Mental health is an integral part of health and actions promoting mental health and preventing mental disorders are of universal relevance.</p> <p>Mental health promotion aims to promote positive mental health by increasing psychological wellbeing, competence and resilience, and by creating supportive living conditions and environments (WHO 2004). It focuses on those modifiable determinants, which can be altered in order to promote positive mental health and reduce the likelihood of mental disorder.</p>

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At the population level modifiable determinants include a range of psychosocial and environmental factors including living conditions, education, income, employment, access to community resources, social support and personal competencies.

The *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* and other WHO directives provide the founding principles for action to promote mental health; whereby:

- Actions are situated in everyday contexts and involve the population as a whole in the context of their everyday life, rather than a focus on people at risk from specific mental disorders;
- The primary focus is on the social, cultural, physical and socio-economic environments that determine the mental health of populations and individuals;
- Action includes a combination of advocacy, communication, policy and legislation, community participation, skill development and evidence-building strategies;
- These strategies are based on the principles of public participation, engagement and empowerment;
- Action extends beyond the health sector and involves action within a range of different sectors, such as education, housing, employment and justice;
- The most effective approach is integrated across different policy domains, targets clusters of related problems and common determinants, early stages of problems and populations at multiple risk; and
- Preventing mental disorders is one of the aims and outcomes of a mental health promotion strategy.

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**Preventing mental and behavioural disorders**

The prevention of mental and behavioural disorder involves “reducing incidence, prevalence, recurrence of mental disorders, the time spent with symptoms, or the risk condition for a mental illness, preventing or delaying recurrences and also decreasing the impact of illness in the affected person, their families and society” (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994).

Preventing mental disorders extends action from the universal, as described above, where the intervention is desirable for everyone, to incorporate selective and indicated preventive measures.

Selective prevention can be applied to sub-groups known as being at higher risk of such disorders. Indicated prevention targets those who are at high risk and who show some signs linked to the development of a mental disorder, but with insufficient criteria to merit a medical diagnosis (ibid).

The promotion and prevention measures are complemented by person-centered measures for symptom identification, standard treatment, longer-term support and recovery.

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**Focusing on promoting mental health and preventing mental and behavioural disorders**

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**Global context**

Worldwide, mental health and mental disorders are often a neglected aspect of human wellbeing, with resources for promoting and maintaining positive mental health inadequate, insufficient, and inequitably distributed within countries, particularly in low-income and middle-income countries.

Global economic and social changes such as demographic shifts, widening inequalities between rich and poor, technological advances, and climate change will all impact variously on a populations’ mental health. Poverty is one of the greatest threats to the mental health. Another threat to population mental health is conflict and violence, both between individuals and between communities and countries. The resulting mental distress and disorders are substantial.

With wide-ranging, long-lasting and immense economic, social and individual

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hardships arising from poor mental health and mental disorders the only sustainable method for improving health and reducing the burden is mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention.

**Critical factors for national policy responses**

The critical social, environmental and economic determinants of mental health and mental disorders are common across nations. The presence of multiple risk factors, the lack of protective factors and the interplay of these, culminates in greater likelihood of poor mental health and mental disorder developing.

At these macro levels the risk and protective factors that should be considered include:

RISK FACTORS	PROTECTIVE FACTORS
Access to drugs and alcohol	Affordable housing
Displacement	Education
Lack of education, transport, housing	Empowerment
Neighbourhood disorganisation	Ethnic minorities integration
Peer rejection	Positive interpersonal interactions
Poor social circumstances	Safe employment
Poor nutrition	Social participation
Poverty	Social responsibility and tolerance
Racial injustice and discrimination	Social services
Social disadvantage	Social support and community networks
Urbanisation	
Violence and delinquency	
War	
Work stress	
Unemployment	

*Spirituality*

Tackling generic social and economic risk and protective factors can generate a broad spectrum of preventive effects. Individual and family-related risk and protective factors can be biological, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and interpersonal or related to the family context.

**Priority sub-groups**

Population mental health is for the whole population and involves giving priority to some groups in a population that are affected differently by these risk and protective factors. People marginalised or disadvantaged due to their mental or physical health, religion, ethnicity, gender, income and or age are particularly vulnerable.

**Strategies for promoting mental health and preventing mental and behavioural disorders**

**Effective interventions**

There are established and effective strategies for promoting mental health and preventing mental disorders, which should be fully utilised. Those interventions that tackle risk and protective factors that are common to a range of related social and individual problems, are most cost-effective. However, public health policies need to cover multiple prevention interventions to take on the multiple causal pathways for sub-groups at risk.

Successful and integrated public health programmes for mental health rely on combining five interrelated strategies:

- Building health public policy;
- Creating supportive environments;
- Strengthening community action;
- Developing personal skills; and
- Reorienting health services (*Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*).

Effective programmes are underpinned by investing in evidence-informed policy development and implementation, and skilled workforces.

**Required actions**

Mental health and the prevention of mental disorders must be made to be everybody's business and responsibility.

National governments should prioritise evidence-informed mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention policies to complement mental health care.

Stigma, discrimination and inequities exacerbating or arising from poor mental health must be eliminated.

Special attention must be given to the relative impact of public health and social policies on the most vulnerable in communities.

All policy-making should actively engage those who are most closely affected.

**The Way Forward****Actions for decision-makers**

The Melbourne Charter calls national governments to:

- make the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental and behavioural disorders a core responsibility for all levels of government;
- prioritise public investments within and outside the health sector that will improve their population's mental health;
- invest in partnerships across sectors that will promote mental health and prevent mental disorders;
- regulate and legislate to ensure a high level of protection from harm and enable equal opportunity for optimal mental health for all people, with particular attention to the most vulnerable;
- ensure evidence-informed policy development,
- invest in a skilled workforce across public sectors to provide leadership, effective practice, and sharing of evidence;
- deliver accessible, high quality services for mental health; and
- ensure the private sector complies with local national and international regulations and agreements that promote and protect mental health.

**Actions for people working to promote mental health**

The Melbourne Charter calls on those working to improve the mental health of population to:

- advocate for mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention based on human rights and as core component of the global development agenda;
- act to eliminate stigma, discrimination and inequities arising from and or exacerbating poor mental health;
- engage, partner and build alliances with public, private, non-governmental, community-based and international organisations to create sustainable actions;
- build greater community understanding of mental health and mental health problems;
- empower communities and individuals, particularly the most vulnerable, by ensuring they have rights, resources and opportunities to enable them to shape and initiate mental health promotion; and
- encourage the corporate sector to share responsibility by ensuring health and safety in their workplace, and to promote the health and well-being of their employees, their families and communities.

**SOURCES**

*No health without mental health* Professor Martin Prince, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, UK

*Reducing Risks for Mental Disorders: Frontiers for Preventive Intervention Research*, Mrazek & Haggerty, National Academy Press, Washington DC, , 1994

WHO 2004a *Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice: summary report*. Geneva, World Health Organisation.

WHO 2004b *Prevention of mental disorders : effective interventions and policy options: summary report /*

a report of the World Health Organisation Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse ; in collaboration with the Prevention Research Centre of the Universities of Nijmegen and Maastricht.