

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) National Promotion of Mental Health



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What is Mental Health? Mental health incorporates feelings, actions and thoughts. People who are emotionally healthy are capable to cope with the challenges faced in life, deal with anger, handle stressful situations, enjoy life, and maintain meaningful relationships with others. A mental illness is considerably serious to cause functional impairments. (1) The term mental health is more complex than addressing mental illness; to be precise these terms are deceptively and interchangeably used. For example, the National Service Framework for Mental Health mainly stated about services for individuals with mental illness. The World Health Organization defines mental health as: “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community.” (2)

Mental Health Policy. Mental health policy is a specifically written document of the government or Ministry of Health containing the goals for improving the mental health situation of the country, the priorities among those goals, and the main directions for attaining them. It may include the following components: Advocacy for mental health goals, promotion of mental well-being, prevention of mental disorders, treatment of mental disorders, and rehabilitation to help mentally ill individuals achieve optimum social and psychological functioning.(3)

UAE National Agenda are in line with Goal 3 of the Global Agenda 2030. The UAE experience and its clear endeavors represent a practical example of developing the best health care system in the world. The UAE national strategies reflect the future vision of the UAE government and decision-makers to activate the importance of mental health across the health sector, which will reflect on positive results. UAE has adopted integrated approaches and strategies for the mental disorders recognizing their prognosis, comorbidity and consequences, to move the health system towards more effective and integrated management, prevention, in addition to care. UAE classified mental health as a vital component of a balanced care system. The individual, family, and societal influences, both short and long term, are individual and aggregated . It is also well recognized that mental disorders cause great human sufferings and it has a profound impact, not only on the health sector, but on the societal security sector and the economic sector.

Mental Health Legislation. The federal laws in the UAE from 1981 that are specific to people with mental illnesses and disabilities [11] are as follows: “Federal Law 28 (1981) concerning the detention and treatment of people with a mental disorder” “Federal Law 29 (1981) concerning the rights of people with mental disability” “Federal Law No. 14 (1995) regarding drugs and psychotropic substances.

The United Arab Emirates has placed mental health among its main priorities. The indicators of the UAE National Agenda are in line with Goal 3 of the Global Agenda 2030, considering that health is one of the six national priorities of the UAE vision. The Ministry of Health and Community Protection seeks to enhance the health of the community by providing innovative and equitable health care services in accordance with international standards. Its also acts as a regulatory body for the health sector in the country through an integrated health legislative system. In addition to that The UAE Government is regularly undertaking new measures to address mental health issues and reduce the stigma associated with it. It has come up with many initiatives for Emiratis and expatriates by giving them access to mental health services and support as required.

The strategic objectives of National Policy for the Promotion of Mental Health. The National Policy for the Promotion of Mental Health in the UAE identifies five main strategic objectives.

- Enhancing the effectiveness of the promotion of awareness of mental health
- Developing, strengthening and expanding comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health services for patients of all ages
- Strengthening multi-sectorial collaboration to implement mental health promotion policy
- Promoting the prevention of mental disorders for people of all ages
- Strengthening capacities and improving information systems and conducting mental health research to develop their services

References

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