

Document Title: **Children and Young People with Mental Illness**
Document Type: **Bill of Rights**
Date Last Reviewed: **October 2017**
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WPA Bill of Rights for Children and Young People with Mental Illness

The World Psychiatric Association (WPA), a global organization representing nearly 250,000 psychiatrists, urges ALL Governments to ensure that children, adolescents and young adults with mental illness and/or mental disability are not the victims of discrimination or abuse due to their mental health status; they should be consistently treated as full citizens enjoying all rights and privileges on an equal basis with other citizens.

The WPA supports the efforts of the international community as expressed through various international human rights covenants and conventions and, particularly, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, CROC, or UNCRC) (1) The UNCRC applies to all children and young people under age 18. The civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children are addressed by the Convention which has been ratified by 196 countries; national legislative bodies have made the UNCRC principles part of the law in more than half of these countries.

The WPA reiterates that children and other young persons with mental illness/mental disability should have the same rights and privileges as well as access to services as those with physical illness. Similarly, children and other youth should have the capacity to hold rights and exercise their rights accordingly. These rights should include but not be limited to:

1. Right to wellbeing, health and safety
2. Right to access to primary and secondary prevention networks and services
3. Right to timely, accessible and affordable mental and other healthcare are at home, in school, in care or in custody, irrespective of financial or other circumstances.
4. Right to receive basic needs for food, housing, clothing and other necessities
5. Right to fullest protection of the law
6. Right to special protections for entitlements and justice necessary to address the unique circumstances of children and youth.
7. Right to be protected and free from all forms of abuse and cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment and punishment and for evolving capacities for decision making
8. Right to be protected from exploitation as labourers, sex workers and soldiers
9. Right to live and participate fully in the cultural and social life of the community
10. Right to training, education and extracurricular activities including play and exercise
11. Right to the fullest possible and appropriate inclusion in school and other activities and services in the community
12. Right to be provided with adequate support to exercise their rights
13. Right to determine their future and make their own life choices
14. Right to appropriate transitional arrangements to adult services
15. Right to confidentiality and privacy in treatment according to local regulations

The WPA is committed to educating policy makers and the general public to reduce stigma and foster changing attitudes in society and among those working with children and young people.

The WPA is prepared to join with professional organizations, NGO's, governments, and others to raise awareness of the special needs and provide services for children and youth with mental health needs in the community.

References

(1) UN Convention of Rights of the Child, UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights