

Resolution on Centering Mental Health & Well-Being in an International Public Health Convention on Emergency Preparedness

The Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice is committed to applying a human rights framework in policy development and system-level changes to population health and well-being. We bring together the expertise of interdisciplinary professionals working at the intersection of human rights, social justice, and behavioral health to inform policy, practice, and research with an emphasis on prevention and health promotion. As the global community recognizes lessons from the impact of—and response to—the COVID-19 pandemic, we strongly advocate for an international public health convention on emergency preparedness that centers mental health and well-being.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, people around the world have been faced with unprecedented times. Initially understood through physical illness, the impact on health care systems, and the economic impact on individuals and society, policies enacted (such as school and workplace closures, stay-at-home orders, and isolation from significant others) have all resulted in a crucial loss of daily routines, learning, and social connectedness. Such changes will continue to have a profound impact on people's lives and well-being. The entirety of the pandemic's impact will not be fully understood for many years. However, what the data do present is clear evidence for why preparedness for future emergencies and disasters must include principles and strategies that center mental health and human rights at every stage.

We know that:

- 1 in 4 people will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives
- Almost all people affected by emergencies will experience psychological distress

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in:

- Over 5 million people losing their lives globally to date
- An increase in the prevalence of substance use disorders, affecting the well-being of over 36 million people in the past year alone
- More than 76 million new cases globally of depressive disorders in 2020 alone
- An example of successful global collaboration through COVAX with the development and production of COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccines

Internationally coordinated emergency preparedness plans are necessary for protecting the health and human rights of individuals and communities around the world. It is indisputable that new global public health emergencies will emerge and threaten the well-being of individuals and populations. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the impact of insufficient policies in global preparedness and the vast inequities within and between populations around the world. Nations have an opportunity to make decisions based in shared interests and global interconnectedness by developing holistic guidance that recognizes the significance of well-being. A similar example in 2019 brought together global leaders to focus on Universal Health Coverage, which included the concepts of health promotion and well-being.

Developing an international public health convention on emergency preparedness is widely supported by multiple organizations, including the World Health Organization. It is vital to maintain international networks of experts who can advise on protecting population health and overall well-being. A convention will provide a framework which can be implemented to prepare countries for emergencies through coordinated strategies to reduce losses and create conditions that support health and well-being.

Emergency preparedness also reduces fear and anxiety that accompany disasters. In short, mental health must be integrated and adopted into all recommendations related to emergency (e.g., disaster, pandemic) preparedness for the future. The absence of this integration significantly threatens future responses by failing to underpin strategies that are based on the mental health and well-being of individuals, families, and their communities.

To address these issues, the Global Alliance is calling for an international public health convention on emergency preparedness. In order for this convention to be successful, it must:

- Be inclusive of mental health and well-being as a core tenet of the convention objectives
- Integrate the principles of human rights into all recommendations
- Include interdisciplinary approaches that are grounded in science
- Incorporate measures of accountability for each nation and its leaders that ensure equitable health promotion and disease prevention
- Provide tools and resources to nations for emergency preparedness

<p>Additional Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duff, J. H., Liu, A., Saavedra, J., Batycki, J. N., Morancy, K., Stocking, B., ... & Szapocznik, J. (2021). A global public health convention for the 21st century. <i>The Lancet Public Health</i>. • Global Alliance Resolution on the Inclusion of Mental Health in Universal Health Coverage (September 2019) • Global Alliance Statement: Listening Session - USD HHS Emergency Preparedness (August 2021) • Global prevalence and burden of depressive and anxiety disorders in 204 countries and territories in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic - The Lancet • Movement for Global Mental Health • The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response • World Federation for Mental Health • World Health Organization: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic on Disaster Risk Reduction 	<p>Relevant Articles from <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gil-Rivas, V., Handrup, C., Tanner, E., & Walker, D. (2019). Global mental health: A call to action. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000373 • Kimbrough-Melton, R. J. (2013). Health for all: The promise of the affordable health care act for racially and ethnically diverse populations. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ajop.12042 • McLeigh, J. D., & Sianko, N. (2010). What should be done to promote mental health around the world? http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01074.x • Oppenheim, J., Stewart, W., Zoubak, E., Donato, I., Huang, L., & Hudock, W. (2016). Launching forward: The integration of behavioral health in primary care as a key strategy for promoting young child wellness. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000149
<p style="text-align: center;">How Can You Help?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join the Global Mental Health Task Force! Learn more at www.bhjustice.org/task-forces/gmh/ • Educate the public and stakeholders through formal platforms and social media on the importance of an international public health convention that is inclusive of mental health • Join an international organization or coalition that focuses on mental health and human rights 	

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