

# Curriculum Guide

to support the operationalization  
of the Refugee and Migrant Health:  
Global Competency  
Standards for Health Workers



**WHO Health and Migration Programme**

The WHO Health and Migration Programme brings together WHO's technical departments, regional and country offices, as well as partners, to secure the health rights of refugees and migrants and achieve universal health coverage. To this end, the Programme has five core functions: to provide global leadership, high-level advocacy, coordination and policy on health and migration; to set norms and standards to support decision-making; to monitor trends, strengthen health information systems and promote tools and strategies; to provide specialized technical assistance, response and capacity-building support to address public health challenges associated with human mobility; and to promote global multilateral action and collaboration.



World Health  
Organization

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# Foreword

Refugees and migrants may have complex and interrelated health needs, which require culturally responsive care that recognizes the impact of migration on both physical and mental health. Yet all too often their access to care is limited or difficult, and the quality and appropriateness of the care they receive is inadequate. The challenges they face include language and cultural differences, discrimination and limited availability of accessible, affordable, and appropriate health-care services – all made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These challenges shape their interactions with the health system and with health workers. Health workers providing care to refugees and migrants can make a real difference. They should be aware of how the migration experience itself influences physical and mental health. Responding to the needs of refugees and migrants requires a tailored response from everyone involved.

The significance of adopting a culturally responsive and holistic approach to health care for refugees and migrants cannot be overstated. Providing them with effective and culturally responsive health care is the concern of all health workers and health administrators, regardless of context and position within the health-care system.

The WHO Refugee and Migrant Health: Global Competency Standards for Health Workers (the Standards) were developed to promote the provision of people-centred health care to people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The Standards have also provided a background for the development of a new Knowledge Guide, which further identifies the behaviours, knowledge, skills and attitudes that embody culturally responsive health care for refugees and migrants.

Now this Curriculum Guide has been developed in conjunction with these publications for the

use of institutions, organizations and individuals engaged in the education and training of health-care workers and administrators. The Curriculum Guide translates the knowledge, skills and attitudes set out in the Knowledge Guide into curricula and shows how to assess the achievement of the relevant learning outcomes and Competency Standards. It provides a flexible template for designing a curriculum suitable for incorporation into pre-service learning, as well as for in-service learning.

These documents will play both an important role in strengthening primary health care and advancing progress towards universal health coverage for all, including refugees and migrants, which is an absolute WHO priority. They will also help to promote consistent standards of practice for health workers providing services to refugees and migrants. The aim is improved people-centred health care for refugees and migrants, enabling them to live happier, healthier lives.

I hope also, in 2021 which is the International Year of Health and Care Workers, that these publications will help a wider recognition of the skill, dedication and sacrifice of millions of health-care workers, as has been so plainly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we thank them for their critical role in ensuring our health and prosperity.



**Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab**

Deputy Director-General  
World Health Organization

# Preface

WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work concentrates on working towards universal health coverage and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, using inclusive health systems that put people at their centre.

Ensuring the health and well-being of refugees and migrants is a key priority within this endeavour, and the WHO Global Action Plan, Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants 2019–2023, aims to both promote refugee and migrant health and leave no one behind.

Refugees and migrants have the fundamental right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. They may have specific health needs and vulnerabilities that require people-centred, effective and high-quality care that incorporates cultural sensitivity and also recognizes the

The health workforce providing care to refugees and migrants is key to responding to these challenges. All within the health workforce should be aware of how the migration experience – which can involve poor transit conditions, restrictive entry and integration policies, exclusion and acculturation stress – influences the health status of individuals and their health needs. Providing effective and culturally responsive health care to refugees and migrants should be the concern of all.

The significance of adopting a culturally responsive holistic approach to health service delivery cannot be overstated. Cultural responsiveness means that health workers will accurately apply their knowledge of refugee and migrant health to best adapt health services in ways that meet the individual's needs and context.

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