

# mhGAP Intervention Guide

for mental, neurological and substance use disorders  
in non-specialized health settings



**World Health  
Organization**



Mental Health Gap Action Programme

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## **For more information, please contact:**

Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse  
World Health Organization  
Avenue Appia 20  
CH-1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

Email: [mhgap-info@who.int](mailto:mhgap-info@who.int)  
Website: [www.who.int/mental\\_health/mhgap](http://www.who.int/mental_health/mhgap)

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Version 1.0



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# Foreword



In 2008, WHO launched the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) to address the lack of care, especially in low- and middle-income countries, for people suffering from mental, neurological, and substance use disorders. Fourteen per cent of the global burden of disease is attributable to these disorders and almost three quarters of this burden occurs in low- and middle-income countries. The resources available in countries are insufficient – the vast majority of countries allocate less than 2% of their health budgets to mental health leading to a treatment gap of more than 75% in many low- and middle-income countries.

Taking action makes good economic sense. Mental, neurological and substance use disorders interfere, in substantial ways, with the ability of children to learn and the ability of adults to function in families, at work, and in society at large. Taking action is also a pro-poor strategy. These disorders are risk factors for, or consequences of, many other health problems, and are too often associated with poverty, marginalization and social disadvantage.

There is a widely shared but mistaken idea that improvements in mental health require sophisticated and expensive technologies and highly specialized staff. The reality is that most of the mental, neurological and substance use conditions that result in high morbidity and mortality can be managed by non-specialist health-care providers. What is required is increasing the capacity of the primary health care system for delivery of an integrated package of care by training, support and supervision.

It is against this background that I am pleased to present “*mhGAP Intervention Guide for mental, neurological and substance use disorders in non-specialized health settings*” as a technical tool for implementation of the mhGAP Programme. The Intervention Guide has been developed through a systematic review of evidence, followed by an international consultative and participatory process. It provides the full range of recommendations to facilitate high quality care at first- and second-level facilities by the non-specialist health-care providers in resource-poor settings. It presents integrated management of priority conditions using protocols for clinical decision-making.

I hope that the guide will be helpful for health-care providers, decision-makers, and programme managers in meeting the needs of people with mental, neurological and substance use disorders.

We have the knowledge. Our major challenge now is to translate this into action and to reach those people who are most in need.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Chan".

Dr Margaret Chan

Director-General  
World Health Organization

*Health systems around the world face enormous challenges in delivering care and protecting the human rights of people with mental, neurological and substance use disorders. The resources available are insufficient, inequitably distributed and inefficiently used. As a result, a large majority of people with these disorders receive no care at all.*

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Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, WHO; Benedetto Saraceno, former Director, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, WHO; Shekhar Saxena, Director, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, WHO.

## Project Coordination and Editing

Tarun Dua, Nicolas Clark, Edwige Faydi (†), Alexandra Fleischmann, Vladimir Poznyak, Mark van Ommeren, M Taghi Yasamy, Shekhar Saxena.

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### Interns

Scott Baker, Christina Broussard, Lynn Gauthier, Nelly Huynh, Amanda Ifie, Kushal Jain, Kelsey Klaver, Jessica Mears, Manasi Sharma, Aditi Singh, Kanna Sugiura, Stephen Tang, Keiko Wada, Aislinn Williams.

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Clive Adams, UK; Robert Ali, Australia; Alan Apter, Israel; Yael Apter, Israel; José Ayuso-Mateos\*, Spain; Corrado Barbui\*, Italy; Erin Barriball, Australia; Ettore Beghi, Italy; Gail Bell, UK; Gretchen Birbeck\*, USA; Jonathan Bisson, UK; Philip Boyce, Australia; Vladimir Carli, Sweden; Erico Castro-Costa, Brazil; Andrew Mohanraj Chandrasekaran§, Indonesia; Sonia Chehil, Canada; Andrea Cipriani, Italy; Colin Coxhead, Switzerland; Jair de Jesus Mari, Brazil; Carlos de Mendonça Lima, Portugal; Diego DeLeo, Australia; Christopher Dowrick, UK; Colin Drummond, UK; Julian Eaton§, Nigeria; Eric Emerson, UK; Cleusa P Ferri, UK; Alan Flisher†\*, South Africa; Eric Fombonne, Canada; Maria Lucia Formigoni§, Brazil; Melvyn Freeman\*, South Africa; Linda Gask, UK; Panteleimon Giannakopoulos\*, Switzerland; Richard P Hastings, UK; Allan Horwitz, USA; Takashi Izutsu, United Nations Population Fund; Lynne M Jones§, UK; Mario F Juruena, Brazil; Budi Anna Keliat§; Indonesia; Kairi Kolves, Australia; Shaji S Kunnukattil§, India; Stan Kutcher, Canada; Tuuli Lahti, Finland; Noeline Latt, Australia; Itzhak Levav\*, Israel; Nicholas Lintzeris, Australia; Jouko Lonqvist, Finland; Lars Mehlum, Norway; Nalaka Mendis, Sri Lanka; Ana-Claire Meyer, USA; Valerio Daisy Miguelina Acosta, Dominican Republic; Li Li Min, Brazil; Charles Newton§, Kenya; Isidore Obot\*, Nigeria; Lubomir Okruhlica§, Slovakia; Olayinka Omigbodun\*§, Nigeria; Timo Partonen, Finland; Vikram Patel\*, India and UK; Michael Phillips\*§, China; Pierre-Marie Preux, France; Martin Prince\*§, UK; Atif Rahman\*§, Pakistan and UK; Afarin Rahimi-Movaghar\*, Iran; Janet Robertson, UK; Josemir W Sander\*, UK; Sardarpour Gudarzi Shahrokh, Iran; John Saunders\*, Australia; Chiara Servili§, Italy; Pratap Sharan§, India; Lorenzo Tarsitani, Italy; Rangaswamy Thara\*§, India; Graham Thornicroft\*§, UK; Jürgen Üntzner\*, USA; Mark Vakkur, Switzerland; Peter Ventevogel\*§, Netherlands; Lakshmi Vijayakumar\*§, India; Eugenio Vitelli, Italy; Wen-zhi Wang§, China.

\* Member of the WHO mhGAP Guideline Development Group

§ Participant in a meeting hosted by the Rockefeller Foundation on “Development of Essential Package for Mental, Neurological and Substance Use Disorders within WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme”

† Deceased

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### Expert Reviewers

Gretel Acevedo de Pinzón, Panama; Atalay Alem, Ethiopia; Deifallah Allouzi, Jordan; Michael Anibueze, Nigeria; Joseph Asare, Ghana; Mohammad Asfour, Jordan; Sawitri Assanangkornchai, Thailand; Fahmy Bahgat, Egypt; Pierre Bastin, Belgium; Myron Belfer, USA; Vivek Benegal, India; José Bertolote, Brazil; Arvin Bhana, South Africa; Thomas Bornemann, USA; Yarida Boyd, Panama; Boris Budosan, Croatia; Odille Chang, Fiji; Sudipto Chatterjee, India; Hilary J Dennis, Lesotho; M Parameshvara Deva, Malaysia; Hervita Diatri, Indonesia; Ivan Doci, Slovakia; Joseph Edem-Hotah, Sierra Leone; Rabih El Chammy, Lebanon; Eric Emerson, UK; Saeed Farooq, Pakistan; Abebu Fekadu, Ethiopia; Sally Field, South Africa; Amadou Gallo Diop, Senegal; Pol Gerits, Belgium; Tsehaysina Getahun, Ethiopia; Rita Giacaman, West Bank and Gaza Strip; Melissa Gladstone, UK; Margaret Grigg, Australia; Oye Gureje, Nigeria; Simone Honikman, South Africa; Asma Humayun, Pakistan; Martsenkovsky Igor, Ukraine; Begoña Ariño Jackson, Spain; Rachel Jenkins, UK; Olubunmi Johnson, South Africa; Rajesh Kalaria, UK; Angelina Kakooza, Uganda; Devora Kestel, Argentina; Sharon Kleintjes, South Africa; Vijay Kumar, India; Hannah Kuper, UK; Ledia Lazëri, Albania; Antonio Lora, Italy; Lena Lundgren, USA; Ana Cecilia Marques Petta Roselli, Brazil; Tony Marson, UK; Edward Mbewe, Zambia; Driss Moussaoui, Morocco; Malik Hussain Mubbashar, Pakistan; Julius Muron, Uganda; Hideyuki Nakane, Japan; Juliet Nakku, Uganda; Friday Nsalamo, Zambia; Emilio Ovuga, Uganda; Fredrick Owiti, Kenya; Em Perera, Nepal; Inge Petersen, South Africa; Moh'd Bassam Qasem, Jordan; Shobha Raja, India; Rajat Ray, India; Telmo M Ronzani, Brazil; SP Sashidharan, UK; Sarah Skeen, South Africa; Jean-Pierre Soubrier, France; Abang Bennett Abang Taha, Brunei Darussalam; Ambros Uchtenhagen, Switzerland; Kristian Wahlbeck, Finland; Lawrence Wissow, USA; Lyudmyla Yur'yeva, Ukraine; Douglas Zatzick, USA; Anthony Zimba, Zambia.

## Production Team

**Editing:** Philip Jenkins, France

**Graphic design and layout:** Erica Lefstad and Christian Bäuerle, Germany

**Printing Coordination:** Pascale Broisin, WHO, Geneva

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