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NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

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Strengthening coordination of projects related to mental health and psychosocial support and substance use in Lebanon in line with national strategies: Circular number 64-12/07/17

As the Ministry of Public Health values the efforts exerted from all persons and stakeholders that are contributing to improving mental health in Lebanon, and as work on the national level requires the efforts of all stakeholders in this field and the close coordination between them in order to build the national system for mental health and substance use response, and in order to avoid duplication and wasting of resources, the Ministry of Public Health issued a circular on July 12, 2017 related to projects in MHPSS and substance use in Lebanon with the aim of strengthening coordination between all actors in this field in line with the national mental health strategy and the inter-ministerial substance use response strategy.

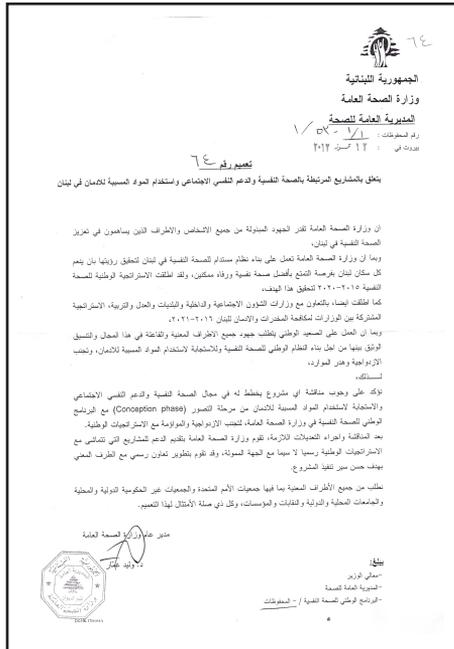
In this circular, the MOPH emphasizes the necessity to coordinate with the ministry for any new project in the field of MHPSS and substance use response and of discussing the project from the conception phase, with the National Mental Health Programme at the MOPH, to avoid any duplication and to ensure the alignment with the national strategies.

After discussions and relevant amendments, the MOPH will provide official support to the projects that are in line with the national strategies, including with funding organizations, and it may develop an official collaboration with the second party with the aim of ensuring the effective implementation of the project.

This is relevant to all actors including UN agencies, international and national NGOs, international and national universities, orders, syndicates, associations and other stakeholder. This will contribute to better coordination of efforts and optimization of the resources while ensuring effective response to the needs and the building of a sustainable system in the country.

The circular can be downloaded in both English and Arabic on:

<http://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/files/Programs%26Projects/MentalHealthProgram/MOPH%20circular%20%2364%20related%20to%20projects%20in%20the%20field%20of%20MHPSS%20and%20SU-English.pdf>



Scaling up Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Persons affected by the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon

As part of developing a systematic approach to national capacity-building, the National Mental Health Programme in partnership with Teachers College, Columbia University funded by Grand Challenges Canada held a 4-days training workshop on Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) for practicing clinicians and psychiatric nurses in July 2017 with the aim to scale up IPT for persons affected by the Syrian crisis.



Building on the first training that was conducted in 2016, the 9 professionals who were previously trained on IPT, were trained to become supervisors, and a total of 37 new health professionals working within NGOs and community-based organizations were trained by expert IPT providers.

The training was followed by an evaluation study to:

- Explore the feasibility and acceptability of IPT in community and primary care centers

This evaluation was done through a qualitative study design based on Focus Group discussions with the health professionals that participated in the training. During the study, the attitudes and perspectives of participants towards evidence-based psychotherapies were explored. The study also aimed to understand potential barriers/facilitators in implementing IPT in the field.

- Assess the effectiveness of IPT on patients residing in Lebanon

This evaluation will be done by systematically tracking outcomes on a patient level. Trained professionals will recruit patients and collect data on a weekly basis. The follow up with patients will be directly supervised by the master trainers and supervisors.

This initial workshop will be followed by 4-days advanced workshop in January 2018.



Setting the minimum qualifications for professionals working in mental health in the humanitarian field in Lebanon: national standard recruitment criteria

Recruitment criteria for professionals working in mental health in the humanitarian field in Lebanon were developed as per an objective in the 2016 action plan of the MHPSS task force, the coordination mechanism chaired by the MOPH which aims at coordinating the MHPSS response and addressing gaps and challenges in MHPSS work. The aim of these criteria is to ensure that professionals with the minimum needed qualifications are employed. This was based on a high demand from organisations to have a reference document for recruitment criteria.

After review of the recruitment criteria currently in use by task force organizations, and review of national and international standards and guidelines, including the IASC guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings, the recruitment criteria were drafted for the following mental health professionals:

- Psychiatrist
- Clinical Psychologist or Psychotherapist
- Mental Health Nurse
- Mental health case manager
- Social Worker working in a mental health setting
- Community mental health worker
- Mental health outreach worker
- Mental health programme technical adviser
- Mental health programme coordinator

The recruitment criteria cover the following areas:

- Education
- Experience
- General Skills
 - Required professional skills and knowledge
 - Required skills that candidates have already or are willing to build their capacity and knowledge in
 - Competencies
- Computer skills
- Language

The criteria are a key tool that can be used as a reference by all organisations to ensure that the professionals hired have the minimum needed qualifications.

The criteria can be downloaded on the following link:

<http://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/0112815/recruitment-criteria-for-professionals-working-in-mental-health-in-humanitarian-settings>

04

Participating in the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

The NMHP featured a presentation in a UN side-event at the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals held in May 2017 in the UN headquarters in New York. A 3-min video featuring a statement by the head of the NMHP and an interactive presentation about the pilot project of an electronic guided self-help intervention in Lebanon were featured as part of a panel around “Artificial intelligence & Technology Tools for Mental Health, Well-being, and Resilience”. It was highlighted that the MOPH in Lebanon is for “innovation” but is also keen on ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups. The MOPH therefore emphasizes the need to follow the critical steps to ensure ethical approval from an accredited local ethical committee on any study being done in the field of mental health and psychosocial support to ensure the protection of subjects involved.

05

Publication about the development of the inter-ministerial substance use response strategy for Lebanon in the Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal

Hajal, S., Kik, N., El Chammy, R., & Ammar, W. (2017). Developing an inter-ministerial substance use response strategy for Lebanon: process, content and lessons learned. Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal, 23(3), 257.

Evidence on substance use in Lebanon shows an increase in usage, limited availability and accessibility to evidence-based services, and high level of stigma and discrimination. In line with the “Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015–2020”, the Ministry of Public Health initiated the process of developing a strategy focused on substance use response to address these challenges in collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, Interior and Municipalities, Justice and Social Affairs.

This article presents the development process of the “Inter-ministerial Substance Use Response Strategy in Lebanon 2016-2021” and an overview of the main features of the Strategy and domains of action. It also sheds light on lessons learned for national strategy development in line with good governance principles. Key principles that were adopted throughout the process contributed to the successful development of the strategy:

- 1) Building on evidence and international frameworks,
- 2) Maximizing the participation of all stakeholders,
- 3) Prioritizing national consensus,
- 4) Maintaining flexibility and maximizing transparency.

To read more, download the publication on the following link: <http://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/files/Programs%26Projects/MentalHealthProgram/Developing%20an%20inter-ministerial%20substance%20use%20response%20strategy%20for%20Lebanon%20process%20content%20and%20lessons%20learned.pdf>

All NMHP newsletters are accessible on the NMHP webpage on the MoPH website on the following link: <http://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/6/553/the-national-mental-health-program>

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