

WEBINAR SERIES

COVID-19 and Children's Rights

2nd edition: "Children's Mental Health"

Programme



22 November 2021

Building a Europe
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Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child

(**CDEF**)

Webinar series on COVID-19 and Children's Rights

Second edition: 'Children's Mental Health'

When and where?

When: Monday 22 November 2021 - 10:30-12:00 (CET)

KUDO on-line platform: *link to be communicated at a later stage*

Working languages: French and English

Organised by: Secretariat of the CDEF

Any question can be sent to: children@coe.int

What is the topic of the webinar?

At its plenary session in November 2020, the CDEF approved the organisation of three practical webinars for CDEF members in 2021. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this series of webinars aims to provide a platform for exchanges on the most urgent issues related to children's rights and to facilitate a focused exchange on national good practices in terms of responses to specific challenges. The focus areas selected for these exchanges are: 1) **access to education**, 2) **protection from intra-family violence with a focus on children at risk**, and 3) **addressing children's mental health and their need for specialised support services**.

A first webinar entitled "[Overcoming Education Challenges](#)" was held in March 2021, while the 2nd and 3rd upcoming editions, which will take place on 22 November, will be focusing on children's mental health and intrafamily violence respectively.

The second webinar, to be held online on 22 November 2021, will bring together CDEF members, participants, observers and other experts for an in-depth exchange of views on the topic of "**Children's mental health care**" during the COVID-19 pandemic. The objectives will be to carry out of joint process of reflection and to develop guidance regarding:

- i. how to address the different ways in which children's mental health has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- ii. good practices established by States for the management and prevention of adverse mental health effects in children'
- iii. guidelines for respecting children's right to access to mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the well-being of children in many ways: isolation, fear, school closures, lack of socialization, illness or bereavement of family members, parental fatigue and stress, exposure to screens, lack of physical activity and others have had a significant impact on their mental health.

Health and social services follow-up was severely disrupted and the children faced immense emotional challenges. Some pre-existing situations of discomfort were exacerbated by the confinement measures. In addition, cyber-bullying, online sexual abuse and the circulation of images of abuse have increased significantly.

In consultations with children during the pandemic, many of them reported anxiety and even explicitly spoke of depression. WHO Regional Office for Europe's figures show that suicide is the leading cause of death among young people in low- and middle-income countries of the Region, and the second-leading cause in high-income countries, and that about 9 million European adolescents suffer from mental disorders. Every day 3 teenagers in Europe lose their lives due to mental health difficulties. According to Unicef, half of all mental disorders occur before the age of 15.

The webinar aims to take stock of the increasing needs that the pandemic has created, to discuss the care of children with pre-existing mental health problems and to reflect on the resources allocated during the COVID-19 crisis in order to anticipate future crises. The discussions also aim to explore the possible interest among the CDENF delegations for a mapping exercise of the situation of children's mental health services and what the focus of such an exercise should be.

The following themes were proposed to be addressed in a series of interactive discussions:

- i. access and care of children with mental disorders before the pandemic, and continuity of services;
- ii. new disorders that emerged during the pandemic, particularly as a result of containment measures;
- iii. the increase in suicides and self-harm;
- iv. the effects of replacing certain activities with greater exposure to screens.

A call for good practices, identifying interesting programmes or measures to be shared with other delegations, has been circulated among CDENF members, participants and observers after the 13-15 October 2021 meeting.

Programme - Monday 22 November 2021 - 10:30-12:00 (CET)

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| 10:30 | Welcome by the Secretariat |
| 10:35 | Opening by the moderator Ms Marie-Andriani Kostopoulou , Chair of the Steering Committee for the Rights of Child (CDENF) |
| 10:40 | COVID-19 and children's mental health: the main challenges Mr Dainius Pūras , Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health (2014 - 2020) Mr David Anthony , Chief of Strategic Planning, Convening and Emerging Issues, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti |
| 11:00 | When the virtual takes precedence over the real: new screen-related pathologies Ms Virginie Halley des Fontaines , Haut Conseil de la Santé Publique, France Mr Michael Stora , Observatory of the Digital World in Human Sciences, France |
| 11:15 | Children's voices during the pandemic Ms Ally Dunhill , Head of Advocacy, Eurochild Ms Kristen Hope Burchill , Research, Advocacy and Participation Advisor, Terre des Hommes |
| 11:35 | Round table (questions and answers) |
| 11:55 | Closing remarks by the moderator |

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