

## Promoting mental health in a changing climate: children and young people as a priority population group

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Children and young people are among the priority population groups that are disproportionately affected by mental health impacts of climate change. As the direct and indirect impacts of climate change intensify, it can be anticipated that the negative consequences for mental health will only increase.

However, there are only a limited number of studies exploring the impact of climate change on children's and young people's mental health. The lack of a strong evidence base poses a major barrier to establishing a mental health system and programs which are fit for purpose.

Overcoming these challenges will require a holistic policy approach which also empowers and supports children and young people to cope and adapt to the realities of climate change and provides them with a stake in decision-making about future climate-related policies and actions.

### Recommendations

- Government must invest in establishing a comprehensive evidence base regarding the impact of climate change on mental health in children and young people. To facilitate the development of targeted mental health programs, data collection and analysis should be supported by co-design with children and young people, and a systems-dynamics approach to program development.
- The development and implementation of training for mental health professionals to recognise and respond to climate related mental health issues is needed. This is vital to make the mental health system more responsive to the needs of children and young people, and to encourage access to mental health services.
- Improving the capacity for children and young people to cope with climate change requires equipping them with accurate information and developing their resilience. National guidelines on managing misinformation on social media should be developed to minimise the harm of misinformation. A focus on climate resilience and active citizenship in the education curriculum, and the development of community-based safe spaces for climate-related concerns, should be prioritised to help children and young people reach their potential.
- Being disproportionately affected by climate change, children and young people have a right to participate in decision making processes. To empower them, establishment of a youth advisory group that provides government the opportunity to consider children and young people's perspectives and recommendations relating to climate change concerns should be pursued.

