Mental Health Policy and Service Guidance Package

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

"A focus on quality helps to ensure that scarce resources are used in an efficient and effective way. Without quality there will be no trust in the effectiveness of the system."

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Preface

This module is part of the WHO Mental Health Policy and Service guidance package, which provides practical information to assist countries to improve the mental health of their populations.

What is the purpose of the guidance package?

The purpose of the guidance package is to assist policy-makers and planners to:

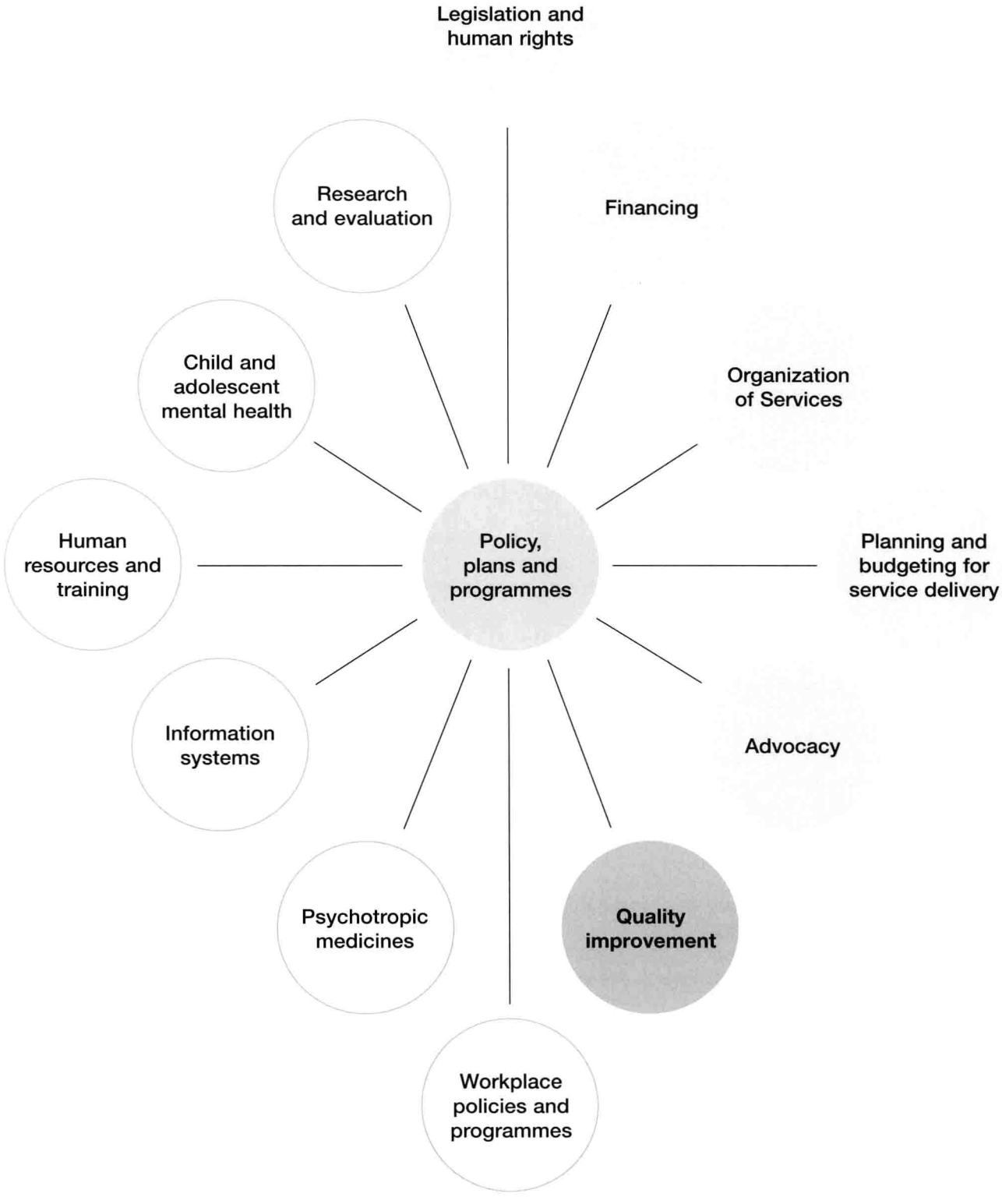
- develop policies and comprehensive strategies for improving the mental health of populations;
- use existing resources to achieve the greatest possible benefits;
- provide effective services to those in need;
- assist the reintegration of persons with mental disorders into all aspects of community life, thus improving their overall quality of life.

What is in the package?

The package consists of a series of interrelated user-friendly modules that are designed to address the wide variety of needs and priorities in policy development and service planning. The topic of each module represents a core aspect of mental health. The starting point is the module entitled The Mental Health Context, which outlines the global context of mental health and summarizes the content of all the modules. This module should give readers an understanding of the global context of mental health, and should enable them to select specific modules that will be useful to them in their own situations. Mental Health Policy, Plans and Programmes is a central module, providing detailed information about the process of developing policy and implementing it through plans and programmes. Following a reading of this module, countries may wish to focus on specific aspects of mental health covered in other modules.

The guidance package includes the following modules:

> The Mental Health Context
> Mental Health Policy, Plans and Programmes
> Mental Health Financing
> Mental Health Legislation and Human Rights
> Advocacy for Mental Health
> Organization of Services for Mental Health
> Quality Improvement for Mental Health
> Planning and Budgeting to Deliver Services for Mental Health



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The following modules are not yet available but will be included in the final guidance package:

- Improving Access and Use of Psychotropic Medicines
- Mental Health Information Systems
- Human Resources and Training for Mental Health
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- Research and Evaluation of Mental Health Policy and Services
- Workplace Mental Health Policies and Programmes

Who is the guidance package for?

The modules will be of interest to:

- policy-makers and health planners;
- government departments at federal, state/regional and local levels;
- mental health professionals;
- groups representing people with mental disorders;
- representatives or associations of families and carers of people with mental disorders;
- advocacy organizations representing the interests of people with mental disorders and their relatives and families;
- nongovernmental organizations involved or interested in the provision of mental health services.

How to use the modules

- They can be used **individually or as a package**. They are cross-referenced with each other for ease of use. Countries may wish to go through each of the modules systematically or may use a specific module when the emphasis is on a particular area of mental health. For example, countries wishing to address mental health legislation may find the module entitled Mental Health Legislation and Human Rights useful for this purpose.

- They can be used as a **training package** for mental health policy-makers, planners and others involved in organizing, delivering and funding mental health services. They can be used as educational materials in university or college courses. Professional organizations may choose to use the package as an aid to training for persons working in mental health.

- They can be used as a framework for **technical consultancy** by a wide range of international and national organizations that provide support to countries wishing to reform their mental health policy and/or services.

- They can be used as **advocacy tools** by consumer, family and advocacy organizations. The modules contain useful information for public education and for increasing awareness among politicians, opinion-makers, other health professionals and the general public about mental disorders and mental health services.

Format of the modules

Each module clearly outlines its aims and the target audience for which it is intended. The modules are presented in a step-by-step format so as to assist countries in using and implementing the guidance provided. The guidance is not intended to be prescriptive or to be interpreted in a rigid way: countries are encouraged to adapt the material in accordance with their own needs and circumstances. Practical examples are given throughout.

There is extensive cross-referencing between the modules.Readers of one module may need to consult another (as indicated in the text) should they wish further guidance.

All the modules should be read in the light of WHO's policy of providing most mental health care through general health services and community settings. Mental health is necessarily an intersectoral issue involving the education, employment, housing, social services and criminal justice sectors. It is important to engage in serious consultation with consumer and family organizations in the development of policy and the delivery of services.

Dr Michelle Funk

Dr Benedetto Saraceno

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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Everyone in need should have access to basic mental health care. This key principle, identified by the World Health Organization, requires that mental health care be affordable, equitable, geographically accessible, available on a voluntary basis and of adequate quality.

What is quality?

In mental health care, quality is a measure of whether services increase the likelihood of desired mental health outcomes and are consistent with current evidence-based practice. This definition incorporates two components. For people with mental disorders, their families and the population as a whole, it emphasizes that services should produce positive outcomes. For practitioners, service planners and policy makers, it emphasizes the best use of current knowledge and technology.

Improved quality means that mental health services should:

- preserve the dignity of people with mental disorders;
- provide accepted and relevant clinical and non-clinical care aimed at reducing the impact of the disorder and improving the quality of life of people with mental disorders;
- use interventions which help people with mental disorders to cope by themselves with their mental health disabilities;
- make more efficient and effective use of scarce mental health resources; and
- ensure that quality of care is improved in all areas, including mental health promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in primary health care, outpatient, inpatient and community residential facilities.

In many countries, services for people with mental disorders remain minimal and do not measure up to these principles. Community-based care is not available in 37% of all countries. Certain essential psychotropic drugs are not available at primary care level in almost 20% of countries, with marked variability within and between countries. About 70% of all people have access to less than one psychiatrist per 100,000 population.

In a context where resources are inadequate and mental health is emerging as a newfound priority, a concern for quality seems premature if not a luxury. Quality may seem more of an issue for well-established, well-resourced systems than for systems which are in the process of establishing themselves.

Why is quality important for mental health care?

Quality is important for all mental health systems, from a variety of perspectives. From the perspective of a person with a mental disorder, quality ensures that they receive the care they require and their symptoms and quality of life improve. From the perspective of a family member, quality provides support and helps preserve family integrity. From the perspective of a service provider or programme manager, quality ensures effectiveness and efficiency. From the perspective of a policy maker, quality is the key to improving the mental health of the population, ensuring value for monies expended and accountability.

These are essential requirements of any mental health service, whether the service is in its infancy, with minimal resources, or well established, with plentiful resources. Quality of care is important, not only to reform past neglect, as seen in historical

abuses of human rights in psychiatric institutions, but to ensure the development of effective and efficient care in the future. Building the quality of mental health care, even in circumstances of minimal services, provides a strong foundation for future service development.

Aims of this module

This module aims to:

(1) ensure that quality is placed firmly on the policy agenda for mental health care;
(2) provide practical guidance for the implementation of quality improvement mechanisms in mental health services at the national and local levels.

The introduction provides a rationale for the importance and value of quality in mental health care. It also provides a conceptual introduction to the issue of quality improvement and some of the approaches that have been developed in order to improve quality. A step-by-step programme is then presented which should assist countries to improve the quality of mental health care.

Step 1: Align policy for quality improvement.
Step 2: Design a standards document.
Step 3: Establish accreditation procedures.
Step 4: Monitor the mental health service by using the quality mechanisms.
Step 5: Integrate quality improvement into the ongoing management and delivery of services.
Step 6: Consider systematic reform for the improvement of services.
Step 7: Review the quality mechanisms.

The steps in improving quality are cyclical. Once policy, standards and accreditation procedures are established, improving the quality of care requires the ongoing monitoring of services and the integration of quality improvement strategies into management and delivery. On a less frequent basis it is necessary to review of the policy, standards and accreditation procedures themselves (step 7). This allows policy, standards and accreditation to be adapted in accordance with what is learnt from the quality improvement process.

Step 1. Align policy for quality improvement

Policy-makers have a key role in the quest for quality. They are in a position to establish the broad parameters of quality through consultation, partnerships, legislation, funding and planning.

- **Consultation**. Consultation is necessary with all mental health stakeholders, both in the development of policy and in all subsequent quality improvement steps. Consultation has three critical functions: obtaining input from various stakeholders, sharing information across stakeholder groups and building a common understanding. The development of such an understanding is an essential task of policy-makers. The development of quality improvement mechanisms presents unique opportunity to draw all mental health stakeholders together in order to carve out a vision of service delivery.

- **Partnerships**. Active steps should be taken by policy-makers to develop partnerships with professional groups, academic institutions, advocacy groups and other health and social service sectors. These partnerships form the backbone of the quality improvement process and enable long-term sustainability.

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