

**POLICY DOCUMENT**

**Document title: MENTAL HEALTH**

**Organization/s: CYC Board**

**Date of submission: 30/10/2024**

**Abstract - introduction: (120 - 150 words):**

Mental health is a fundamental right and a key parameter for the well-being, protection and development of individuals and society, affecting social cohesion and quality of life. At the same time, it ensures healthy development and resilience to the challenges of modern society.

The 5th Neobarometer of Youth Board of Cyprus (ONEK) shows that around 53% of youth consider that their mental health has been negatively affected. Mental health emerges as one of the most important issues, given that young people face many difficulties, such as financial insecurity and difficulties, job insecurity, difficulty in finding housing, lack of free time. This document aims to promote the mental wellbeing of our country's youth, based on the policy proposals created in the context of the consultations through the 'YiMinds' project run by CYC in cooperation with other European National Youth Councils.

Physical and mental health is an indisputable human right.

**Policy positions: (in bullet-point format)**

- We propose that the state should invest substantially in mental health, initially by strengthening state structures, schools, youth centres and

organisations in order to adopt mental health prevention and empowerment plans and activities (e.g. suicide prevention plans).

- We propose that the state establish needs-based counselling services in schools, community centres, youth information centres and online platforms to provide a point of contact for people seeking professional help.
- We recommend that the state, the relevant institutions invest in youth mental health education (e.g. conducting workshops, seminars and discussion groups) in secondary education, as well as participation in discussions on mental health.
- We propose that stigma be recognised by the state and addressed through actions to prevent it, as it is a major barrier that makes it difficult for young people to seek help for mental health issues.
- We recommend that the Ministry of Health provide comprehensive training, education and awareness-raising for youth workers and health professionals to recognise the signs of mental distress and provide appropriate support and referral.
- The creation by the state of a 24-hour psychological support hotline staffed by suitably qualified people.
- During the preparation of legislation and a national mental health strategy, invite stakeholders from civil society and youth organisations to participate in consultations and make proposals.
- The relevant state agencies conduct comprehensive studies, surveys and evaluations to better understand the prevalence, trends and determinants of mental health problems among youth.