



## **74<sup>th</sup> Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Provisional agenda item 4.4

### **Policy for Improving Mental Health**

**26-30 September 2022 (Washington, USA)**

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) supports the need to focus on mental health, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. ICN wants to highlight the mental health impact on the pandemic on nurses, as a key population of frontline workers with their mental health significantly impacted by the pandemic.

There has been a mass traumatization of the nursing workforce following the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses are at the front lines of addressing mental health needs in their practice, not just mental health specialist but all nurses providing holistic care. Nurses are the backbone of health systems, but without their own mental health needs met they are unable to provide high quality care to the populations they serve. This policy for improving mental health highlighted that many groups such as indigenous communities, migrants, older adults, and LGBTQ persons are at risk for poor mental health. In addition, since the pandemic certain groups including women, young people, people with preexisting mental health conditions, racial and ethnic minorities, and people living in conditions of vulnerability had worsening mental health outcomes. Since the pandemic, nurses as key frontline workers, have been hit hard with mental health outcomes. These mental health outcomes may be even worse for those nurses with intersectional identities such as female nurses, nurse migrants, indigenous community nurses, older adult nurses, young nurses, LGBTQ nurses, nurses with preexisting mental health conditions, nurses of racial or ethnic minorities and nurses living with conditions of vulnerability to COVID-19.

Due to nurse's role in addressing both physical and mental health, the mental health of nurses and health workforces cannot be ignored. ICN calls for nurses and health workforces mental health to be specifically address throughout all mental health interventions, because mentally healthy health workforces is needed to address population mental health.

The **International Council of Nurses** (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.