

Children and youth with mental health problems still occupy a very small space in the Brazilian scientific literature. However over the last years the Ministry of Health has put forth efforts for making mental health care services available to this population by implementing a community-based mental care network according to the guidelines of the Psychiatric Reform aimed at modifying the care and management model for mental care practices.

This new direction notwithstanding, the mental health policies for children and youth are still poorly structured and disseminated in the public health area, and the care network actually delivering care to the population of children and youth with mental and behavioral disorders still consists mainly of beneficent and private institutions.

The current apparatus of the Brazilian Health System specialized in delivering care to children and youth with mental disorders are the Psychosocial Care Centers for Children – CAPSi. In addition, there are efforts for incorporating mental care into the primary care network of the country, encouraging preventive and health promotion practices.

However, even with these decisive actions and with the great step forward made recently, the construction of a public policy directed to children and youth remains one of the greatest challenges in the field of mental health. There is still much to be done besides the implantation of new CAPSi; other mechanisms and tools involved with the infanto-juvenile population have to be triggered: outpatient clinics, the primary care network, qualification of social workers, tutor councils, judicial and education authorities.

Moreover, the comprehension of the professionals dealing with children and adolescents about the mental disorders in this stage of life is still precarious, principally in view of the multiple forms of violence existing in the Brazilian society.

The question of violence in childhood associated with mental health problems needs to be discussed with even more urgency in the health area. We must reflect about the complex nature of the mental and behavioral problems besides emphasizing the possibility of these problems facilitating a series of damages to the health of these beings still in full development.

This special number of *Ciência e Saúde Coletiva* presents eighteen articles from authors that study and have long experience in the issue at hand, offering to the reader an ample and deep-reaching view of the relation between violence and emotional and behavioral problems in childhood and youth.

This way, on one hand we point out the difficulties and gaps in the studies and practices in mental health and violence in childhood and youth; on the other hand we seek to show that through summing up knowledge and uniting efforts it is possible and necessary to construct a more encompassing care system, sensitive to the needs of the Brazilian children and youth.

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Guest editors