

Mitigating the consequences of COVID-19 on mental health

Assessment (not audit)

Published: 12.7.2021



[FULL REPORT \(LT\)](#)



[SUMMARY \(EN\)](#)



What we assessed and why

In order to assess the planning and implementation of actions taken to mitigate the long-term negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the availability of mental health services, we carried out an assessment of measures taken to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19 on mental health.

What we found

The availability of the services of an adult psychiatrist or medical psychologist did not change significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but waiting times for the services of 23 % of medical psychologists and 33% of adult psychiatrists increased to over seven calendar days. The availability of the services of a child or adolescent psychiatrist decreased by 23 % during the pandemic. The survey results showed that 65.7 % of respondents had not been informed about the availability of psychological assistance during the pandemic, 55 % of the population surveyed did not know that free psychology services were available at the Mental Health Centre, while 69 % did not know that the services were available at the municipal public health office.

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania has begun to implement measures intended to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health. A plan was approved, but the highest risk groups were not identified, nor was funding planned for all of the measures. 56 % of the plan's measures were implemented in 2020. As the plan did not lay down criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the measures, the impact of their implementation was not measured. The plan was improved during our assessment, but there was no larger set of measures for children and young people, nor a more precise plan for the use of funds. While the 2021 update provides criteria for assessing implementation, these focus on measuring the implementation process rather than the outcomes. It will therefore not be possible to determine whether the measures had been effective.

Not all the measures for 2020 were implemented as planned, notably:

- the extended inclusion of psychologists on the list of personal health services paid for by the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund did not lead to an increase in the number of psychologists working in mental health centres;



- no psychosocial rehabilitation services were developed as this measure was suspended;
- providing access to psychological support for health professionals was postponed until 2021.

What we concluded

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the length of waiting lists to see an adult psychiatrist or medical psychologist for mental health services remained unchanged, while waiting lists to see child and adolescent psychiatrists decreased by 23 %. Too little attention was paid to informing the public about the availability of such services.

The planning and implementation of measures intended to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health need improvement.