

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE CASE MANAGEMENT

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Some more comments on project target groups and on the management of cases

What kind of mental health problems should we address?

As far as types of mental health problems are concerned, I would be reluctant to place any limits on this. I am not sure how to decide that you could provide help for some kinds of problems and not others. The subjective distress or level of dysfunction caused by a problem is not necessarily a function of the kind of problem it is in psychiatric terms.

Research shows that virtually every kind of mental health problem is more prevalent in prisons than in the community as a whole. If there are data on the mental health problems of prisoners in Romania, and very limited resources, then perhaps a decision would be made to focus on only some types of problems and set up a service that dealt only with one kind of problem.

The prison administration would need to think carefully about why such a decision was made. My own inclination is that to begin with at least, it is neither possible nor appropriate to set inclusion and exclusion criteria.

I am attaching a recent journal article which describes the international and other legal frameworks on the health of prisoners, including mental health, which I hope will be of interest. Basically, prisoners should be able to access the same range of services for mental health problems as anyone else.

The way cases are managed, and the levels of care that need to be provided

This depends a lot on the numbers and proportions of prisoners with different kinds of problems. Case management is not a specific or exact way to do things: it means that the

way things are done corresponds to the needs of the case, and the system of delivery allows different things to be done with different people. The practitioners who are involved carry out assessments and make decisions about the appropriate thing to do in each case. Broadly speaking, the greater a person's need, the more services he or she will require. If problems are mild or short-lived, intervention will be minimal. With multiple problems or high severity, much more will be required. Case management simply means that the service can address the range of needs presented by the population you are trying to serve.

So, it may not be easy to find documents on case management procedures. Often, they are internal policy documents as they focus on day-to-day decisions, and what is available publicly may outline services at a more general level. And they are usually written for a specific population on the basis of what is known about the distribution of need. So they might not be applicable anywhere else.