



SOUTH AFRICAN HEALTH REVIEW

2024

Strengthening Mental Health Care

Information presented in this *Review* is based on best available data derived from numerous sources. Discrepancies between different sources reflect the current quality of data. All data should thus be interpreted carefully and with recognition of potential inaccuracy.

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Foreword

Mental health has become one of the most pressing public health challenges in South Africa and around the world. Within our national context, entrenched socio-economic disparities, cultural dynamics, and systemic service delivery constraints continue to drive inequities in mental health — particularly among vulnerable and underserved populations.

Although South Africa has enacted progressive mental health legislation and developed strategic frameworks, the implementation of these policies remains inconsistent. The majority of health facilities lack adequate resources, and there is a critical shortage of trained mental health professionals, especially in rural and under-resourced areas. As a result, policy aspirations have yet to materialise into a comprehensive, community-based mental health system that is accessible to all.

It is within this context that I am honoured to introduce the 27th edition of the *South African Health Review*, which is devoted entirely to the advancement of mental health services in South Africa. This edition seeks to raise awareness, inspire action, and galvanise investment in a sector that urgently requires transformation.

The contributions in this volume critically examine the disconnect between policy and practice, and underscore how stigma, fragmented care pathways, and insufficient prioritisation continue to hinder access to mental health support. Authors present innovative models of care — including community-led recovery initiatives, task-sharing strategies, and integrated primary care approaches — that offer promising solutions for reaching marginalised communities.

On behalf of the Health Systems Trust Board, I extend my sincere appreciation to the SAHR production team, contributing authors, peer reviewers, and the Editorial Advisory Committee. Your dedication and commitment to excellence have greatly enriched this publication.

I am confident that this landmark edition will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, healthcare professionals, researchers, and community advocates alike. May it contribute meaningfully to the development of a more equitable, effective, and person-centred mental health system — one that truly meets the needs of individuals, families, and communities across our nation.



Mr Leo Deodutt
Chairperson of the Board of Trustees
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