

Helsedirektoratet / Norwegian Directorate of Health

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The Norwegian Directorate of Health is a specialised directorate and authoritative agency under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Care Services. It collaborates with the following Norwegian ministries: the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion; the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development; the Ministry of Justice and the Police; the Ministry of Defence; and the Ministry of Labour. The main aims of the Directorate are to improve the quality of health and social services, reduce differences in health and living standards, promote factors that improve public health, and improve the basis for full social inclusion.

It contributes actively to international efforts in the field of health and recognizes that the challenges related to health and living standards can best be resolved in collaboration with other countries. Such challenges include the prevention of infection, emergency preparedness, and violence and substance abuse prevention. In collaboration with a number of Norwegian ministries, the Directorate has been actively developing violence prevention policy. Norway is currently working on a Third Action Plan against Domestic Violence 2008-2011 and is closely following up on the Strategic Plan against Physical and Sexual Abuse of Children. In addition, there are three other action plans addressing violence prevention: the Action Plan against Forced Marriages, the Action Plan Combating Female Genital Mutilation, and the Action Plan against Human Trafficking.

Capacity building for violence prevention has been a priority in recent years: the Norwegian Center for Studies on Violence and Traumatic Stress was established in 2004 at the University of Oslo at the initiative of several Ministries, followed by five Regional Centers for Violence, Trauma and Suicide prevention. Furthermore, there are local reception units in each of the 19 counties in the country for women, men, and children who have been exposed to rape and domestic violence. A number of “children’s houses” have also been established for children exposed to violence and sexual abuse. These provide medical, psychotherapy, and legal services under the same roof.

There is a strong emphasis on the part of the Directorate on research that informs policy decisions and actions, interministerial commitment, and primary prevention – such as anti-bullying campaigns, mental health in schools, parent training programmes.

VPA focal person



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Freja Ulvestad Kärki is specialist in clinical psychology in the fields of child, youth, and adult psychology and holds a position as a senior adviser in the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse in the Norwegian Directorate of Health. She is responsible for violence, trauma, and suicide prevention in addition to refugee mental health and psycho-social services in major catastrophes and accidents. Her international tasks include being the WHO Focal Person for Violence Prevention in Norway, as well as the WHO National Counterpart for Mental Health.