Extract from the PAHO/WHO

Declaration of Caracas

The legislators, associations, health authorities, mental health professionals and jurists assembled at the Regional Conference on the Restructuring of Psychiatric Care in Latin America within the Local Health Systems Model,

DECLARE

1. That the restructuring of psychiatric care on the basis of Primary Health Care and within the framework of the Local Health Systems Model will promote alternative service models that are community-based and integrated into social and health care networks.

2. That the restructuring of psychiatric care in the Region implies a critical review of the dominant and centralizing role played by the mental hospital in mental health service delivery.

3. That the resources, care and treatment that are made available must:
   a) safeguard personal dignity and human and civil rights;
   b) be based on criteria that are rational and technically appropriate; and
   c) strive to maintain patients in their communities.

4. That national legislation must be redrafted if necessary so that:
   a) the human and civil rights of mental patients are safeguarded; and
   b) that the organization of community mental health services guarantees the protection of these rights.

5. That training in mental health and psychiatry should use a service model that is based on the community health center and encourages psychiatric admission in general hospitals, in accordance with the principles that underlie the restructuring movement.

6. That the organizations, associations, and other participants in this Conference hereby undertake to advocate and develop programs at the country level that will promote the desired restructuring, and at the same time commit themselves to monitoring and defending the human rights of mental patients in accordance with the national legislation and international agreements.

To this end, they call upon the Ministries of Health and Justice, the Parliaments, Social Security and other care-providing institutions, professional organizations, consumer associations, universities and other training facilities and the media to support the restructuring of psychiatric care, thus assuring this successful development for the benefit of the population in the Region.