

## Module 9:

# ICT based Counselling for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Unaccompanied Minors

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# THERAPY 2.0 Training Course: 9 Modules

1. Introduction

2. The spectrum of technology-enhanced information & communication

3. Characteristics of computer-mediated communication in counselling and therapy

4. Legal aspects

5. Ethical aspects of the e-tools / e-consulting

6. Economic and financial aspects

7. Technical competences for an online advisor, counsellor or therapist

8. Psychological aspects and competences in online interventions

9. ICT based counselling for asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied minors

# Module overview

- Many asylum seekers, refugees and Unacompanied Minors suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder.
- This can be a serious obstacle to integration.
- Online offers are an opportunity to reach them for counselling and therapy.
- The module explains the challenges counsellors and therapists have to cope with.
- The module details what kind of qualification is needed for counsellors and therapists in online counselling for these clients.
- The role of smartphones as consulting tools is described.

# Module objectives

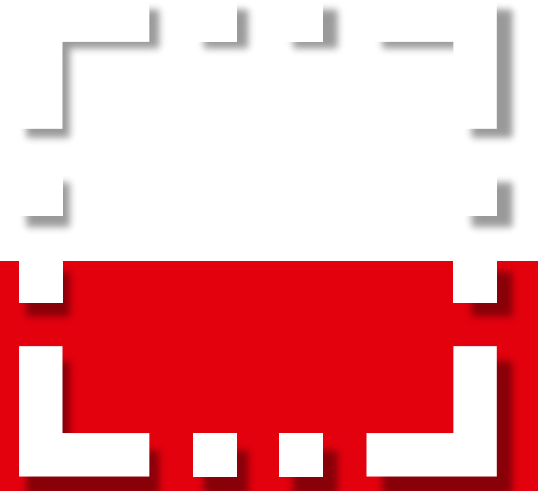


Upon completion of this course, the learner should be able to

- ✓ understand the special requirements of asylum seekers, refugees and Unaccompanied Minors;
- ✓ handle the insecurity of their stay as a decisive factor for the success or failure of the counselling or treatment;
- ✓ understand the professional requirements for online offers;
- ✓ be aware of the relevance of intercultural barriers and language barriers.

# Module outline

- Introduction
- Unit 9.1: special requirements of asylum seekers, refugees and Unaccompanied Minors
- Unit 9.2: online offers as an opportunity for reaching these clients
- Unit 9.3: professional requirements for online offers
- Check your knowledge



# Introduction

## Section Outline

- What's the state-of-the-art in research, practice and public perception in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) of asylum seekers, refugees and Unaccompanied Minors?
- Some background information for you

CONTENT



## What's the state-of-the-art in research on PTSD with refugees?

Have a look at these websites:

- <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn28136-refugees-at-risk-of-measles-and-post-traumatic-stress-disorder/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19816834>
- <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0171030>

## Some reflective questions for you...

Why are the targeted groups specifically in danger of PTSD?

How are they treated?

Why is it difficult to reach them?



# Unit 9.1: Special requirements of asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied minors

## Section Outline

- Counselling and therapy of the target group might have different preconditions – why?
- Reflecting on that will sensitize you for a special clients' group
- Even if you are an experienced and very well qualified counsellor/therapist, you might realize, that this clients' group needs more and other preparation to be treated properly

CONTENT



The graphic to the right might show you a familiar situation from your practice. This face-to-face communication setting means for a client

- s/he comes to your practice or consulting room
- having an appointment at an agreed time.

Here client and counsellor/therapist have a protected environment for talking about problems and the need for help.





*Think about refugees and asylum seekers and what you know about their reasons for coming to your country: Do you think such a setting is realistic?*



*Please think about or discuss in plenary: Why or why not? Are you aware that there might be gender differences concerning women/girls and men/boys?*



*After discussing the question, please note down what in your opinion are the special conditions you as a counsellor /therapist are faced with in working with a refugee, asylum seeker or an Unacompanied Minor.*

*Please note down how you would organise / prepare a session with a refugee, an asylum seeker or a minor who is going to be your client.*



## Important aspects

- *Our targeted groups might not feel comfortable in a face-to-face setting in a practice*
- *An appointment might be difficult due to circumstances out of the cultural background or because of short-notice obligations of the persons*
- *Gender aspects might play a role which might directly interfere with the success of your counselling or therapy*

## ■ Unit 9.2: online offers for reaching these clients

### Section Outline

- As you are now aware of the special requirements of your clients' group, you might agree that it is a challenging task to reach this group
- Online offers can be an option
- Advantages and disadvantages have to be considered in order to find out what is the best treatment for a client
  - Benefits might be on the individual, social, professional or economic level
  - The identification of benefits helps in raising public and professional awareness

CONTENT



The picture to the right is close to reality where for more and more people the smartphone has got social functions – specifically for young people. Being online is part of their life. Reaching them online is easier than reaching them in person.

Why not use this for counselling if such a person is your client?



## Some reflective questions for you...

What might be the advantages / disadvantages of online counselling and therapy?

Are there illnesses where you won't agree to an online treatment?

Would you feel comfortable in implementing online offers?

Are there other groups / environments who / which might benefit?





*Note down the benefits and limits of an online counselling and therapy for the clients' group as well as for you as the counsellor or therapist. What might interfere with benefits? Discuss it with colleagues, employess and friends.*

*Draw up a conclusion for yourself: What does predominate for you – the benefits or the disadvantages?*



## Important aspects

### Advantages

- *The majority of the clients' group can be reached by online offers.*
- *They are used to the functions of the devices and know how to use them.*
- *They do not have to come into an uncomfortable environment like a practice.*
- *They can follow counselling/therapy even if they are not any more close to your place.*

### Challenges

- *The language barrier has to be handled (by interpreters or technical support)*
- *You need professional expertise to handle online counselling/therapy.*



## ■ Unit 9.3: Professional requirements for online offers

### Section Outline

- Special conditions of the clients' group might require special expertise
- This expertise is not necessarily a professional one, it might be a technical or social one
- Acquiring this expertise might broaden your professional spectrum and give you a competitive edge

CONTENT



## Some reflective questions for you...

Do you think that you have the expertise to cope with the requirements of the clients?

What kind of expertise might be missing?

Do you know how to gain this missing expertise?

## Summary of professional skills needed

Your reflection on additional skills needed specifically for online counselling and therapy for asylum seekers, refugees and Unaccompanied Minors might have identified the following skills:

- Legal knowledge on the situation of this clients' group
- Social competences in order to work in an intercultural environment with persons with a probably completely different social upbringing
- Technical competences in order to upscale your working environment and to organise and implement an online intervention
- Knowledge on professional networks with expertise and experiences in online interventions



9 ICT based Counselling for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Unaccompanied Minors

Now have a look at your individual expertise:



*Note down what kind of expertise and skills do you have to gain?*

*Check how you can get this expertise and skills: by registering to respective courses, e.g. by your professional representation? By commissioning e.g. a computer specialist? By meeting representatives of refugee care organisations? By reading specialist literature?*





## Qualification in business terms

- Please consider also the business aspects of gaining additional knowledge
- As a counsellor or therapist you are part of a big “market” with a strong competitive edge
- The extension of your knowledge might also bring an extension of your economic and social opportunities
- You might consider a special “business plan” for your new expertise including marketing and communication aspects



## Important aspects

- *Acquiring the relevant knowledge and skills might need a personal training programme for you – get ready by identifying in depth your knowledge gaps first*
- *Get in touch with persons and networks who/which can offer this knowledge (by joining them on conferences, by applying for a membership...)*
- *Think about a strategic approach in terms of future business opportunities and if your practice / your employees are prepared for that*



## ■ Check your knowledge

### Section Outline

- The following section wraps up the most important aspects for online counselling and therapy for the clients' groups
- Just read through it in order to be sure not to have missed the most important aspects

CONTENT



## Check your knowledge

- Only a small percentage of 5% of the refugees, asylum seekers and Unaccompanied Minors get counselling or therapy although they suffer from a big variety of mental problems.
- The traditional face-to-face consultation in a practice might not be the best option for helping this group of clients to overcome their mental suffering as a practice might be intimidating.
- Intercultural, legal or social aspects might be serious challenges to a counselling or therapy: The counsellor or therapist e.g. will have to cope with language barriers; legal obligations might restrict or hinder regular meetings face to face due to reallocation.



## Check your knowledge

- The situation of women and girls needs awareness of cultural differences and sensitivity. Women and girls are more than men faced with threats during flights. Their cultural background might not allow them to speak openly to a (male) doctor. Their husbands/male family members do not allow the doctor to be alone with the female client. Handling this situation might need support from other experts and interpreters.
- Male Unaccompanied Minors and young men without their strong family bonds often face the pressure and expectations of families in their home countries. Without social bonds which take care of their education and personal development their life might get a continuous conflict zone. Do not hesitate to get additional support from social workers and police if necessary.



## Check your knowledge

- Online counselling and therapy might be of huge benefit for our clients' groups, but be aware that there might be limitations as well.
- In general, the counsellor/therapist needs more background information on the cultural and social background of the client and also skills to prepare and organise an online session.
- The online counselling allows the client to choose a place where s/he feels comfortable. It also allows to get treatment independent of localisation in case there was a reallocation to another place.
- Online counselling and therapy needs special qualification and skills of the counsellor/therapist on many aspects which have to be considered seriously.



## Check your knowledge

- Smartphones are the most important device for an online counselling/therapy of Unaccompanied Minors, which means that the counsellor/therapist has to be able to handle respective functions of the device in a way which guarantees a stable session from the technical point of view (e.g. sufficient energy, switching between different functions...).
- Additionally, s/he has to know how to handle difficult situations which might occur (keeping the client from switching off, reactions on a small screen...).





## References

- For results of the **Therapy 2.0** survey of 252 professionals in seven European countries on qualification needs for counsellors and therapists in online-interventions please see <https://www.ecounselling4youth.eu/needs/>
- Kröger, Christoph e.a.: „Posttraumatische und depressive Symptomatik bei Asylsuchenden“, Screening in einer Landesaufnahmestelle - Posttraumatic Stress and Depressive Symptoms amongst Asylum Seekers Screening in a State Refugee Reception Center, Stuttgart 2016
- Report of the nationwide working group “Psychosocial Centers for Refugees and Torture Victims” (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Psychosozialer Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer), in: Deutsches Ärzteblatt 3/2017, S. 101; siehe auch: [http://www.baff-zentren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Versorgungsbericht\\_3-Auflage\\_BAaF.pdf](http://www.baff-zentren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Versorgungsbericht_3-Auflage_BAaF.pdf)

## Imprint

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# Therapy 2.0 Partnership

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## End of module



# Congratulations!

You have completed this module!