



## **Statement by the Society of Pediatric Psychology on the war in Ukraine**

March 25, 2022

Today, the President of the Society of Pediatric Psychology (SPP) Laura Simons, PhD, together with the Chairs of the Regional Interest Group of SPP, the European Paediatric Psychology Network (EPPN), Line Caes, PhD and lecturer at the University of Stirling, Scotland, and Rikard Wicksell, PhD, associate professor at Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden offer the following statement in response to the war in Ukraine:

Along with the world, members of the EPPN and SPP have read numerous stories and seen heartbreaking images of the war in Ukraine. And new stories are added by the day. Of particular concern is how this unprovoked and brutal attack on the Ukrainian people is causing direct and indirect harm on children's physical, mental, and behavioral health.

One of the many concerning effects is the large group of young refugees forced to leave hospitals and health care centers where they were undergoing treatment for various medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, arthritis, autism, developmental disorders, or chronic pain. Escaping war while battling a life threatening or debilitating condition is unimaginable, yet this is the reality for many children and adolescents leaving Ukraine under the worst circumstances.

As thousands of children and families are forced to flee their homes to neighboring countries, the board members of EPPN, with the support of SPP, have initiated discussions on how we can support these families.

The question is simple: How can the expertise in paediatric psychology be of service to refugees and those remaining in Ukraine, as well as to paediatric health care providers in both Ukraine and surrounding countries?

The answer, however, is far from simple. We are currently trying to assess the demands and resources that can be used to support.

We have begun to compile relevant materials including information on how to support the mental, physical, and behavioral health of refugees during both this acute phase and in the long term, guidelines regarding assessment and support for complex psychological factors impacting the wellbeing of families affected by the war, and strategies to assist health care staff through education and training.

Furthermore, given the many European countries that are currently opening their borders and their arms to the Ukrainian people, we anticipate a need to translate resources or provide support in several different languages.

On Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, a first meeting was held to identify needs related to paediatric psychology as well as resources that can be made accessible by SPP and EPPN members. We welcome anyone who is able to participate in these efforts and join future meetings. Please feel free to share material or connect with us by emailing the secretary of EPPN, Lauren Potthoff, PhD, at [lpotthoff@luriechildrens.org](mailto:lpotthoff@luriechildrens.org).

At this point, we are also connecting with other organisations that may be well positioned to provide support.

In the face of this terrible war, we find optimism in the shared actions of a united world: the sympathy, the compassion, the willingness to help. Knowing the capacity and resources among our members, it is an easy decision to join the global community in their efforts to support the people of Ukraine.