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## PRESS RELEASE

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN SAMOA.**

The Ministry of Health is pleased to announce the formal establishment of the National Mental Health Committee in order to address the growing concern of mental health issues in Samoa. The Committee will provide guidance and recommendations to the Ministry of Health on mental health policies and initiatives, to ensure that mental health and wellbeing receive equal priority to that of physical health.

The Mental Health Committee consists of a diverse group of mental health professionals, experts, and stakeholders, with extensive experience in the field of mental health. They will work collaboratively with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders towards the development of a robust mental health care system, identify gaps in mental health services and establish effective strategies to address the high rates of mental health issues in the country.

According to the World Health Organization, one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. It is a significant public health concern that requires immediate and effective interventions. This is further worsened by factors such as poverty, social inequality, and lack of access to quality services.

According to a statement made by the Director General /CEO of the Ministry of Health, Aiono Dr. Alec Ekeroma, "We recognize that mental health is a critical aspect of health care, and it's about time we put in place measures that will ensure that citizens can access affordable and quality mental health services. The launch of the Mental Health Committee is part of our ongoing commitment to promote mental wellbeing and reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues in our society."

The Mental Health Committee aims to achieve the following objectives:

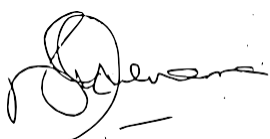
- Provide recommendations to the Ministry of Health on policies and initiatives that promote mental health and wellbeing;
- Gather and analyze data on the prevalence and burden of mental illness in the country;
- Develop, implement, and evaluate programs that focus on prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of individuals living with mental illness;
- Foster collaboration between the Ministry of Health, other government bodies, and non-governmental organizations to improve access to mental health services;
- Encourage research efforts in mental health to contribute to the development of innovative and evidence-based approaches to mental health issues.

Members of the mental health committee have acknowledged the critical nature of their work, noting that the committee's ability to improve mental health care services ultimately affects the lives of many. The Committee members comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Police, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Attorney General, Goshen Trust, Faataua ole Ola and the Youth Council reaffirmed their commitment to promote community- centered, evidence-based programs in providing quality mental health care.

The Ministry of Health invites all stakeholders, including the media, civil society organizations, and health service providers, to support the Mental Health Committee's efforts towards achieving a mentally healthy society.

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For more information, contact the Office of the Director General



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Aiono Dr. Alec Ekeroma

**DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH – MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

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<sup>i</sup> WHO. (2021). Mental Disorders. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>.