



Culture of Care

Considering Racial Equity and Risk Assessment in Mental Health Services

A Fair and Personalised Approach to
Risk Evaluation

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Introduction

- Mental health services should help everyone fairly, but **racial bias** can affect care.
- Risk assessments guide decisions about treatment, but they don't always consider **racialised experiences**.
- A personalised risk approach can help provide **better and fairer assessments**.



How Racial Bias Affects Risk Assessment

- Some racial groups are **over-risked** (wrongly seen as more dangerous).
- Others are **under-risked** (their needs are overlooked).
- Mental health conditions can look different across racial groups, but **assessments** may not account for these differences.



How to Update Risk Assessment Methods

1. **Include Cultural and Social Factors:**

- Consider a person's background, family structure, and past experiences.
- Look at how racism and social inequality affect mental health.

2. **Use Culturally Adapted Screening Tools:**

- Develop assessments that reflect different racial experiences.
- Example: Depression in some cultures appears as physical pain rather than sadness.

3. **Train Professionals on Racial Bias:**

- Educate clinicians on recognising and removing bias in assessments.
- Ensure mental health workers understand diverse cultural expressions of distress.

A Personalised Risk Approach – What It Means

- Risk assessments should **treat each person as an individual** rather than rely on broad statistics.
- Instead of just asking standard questions, clinicians or staff should:
 - Consider a **person's unique history** and environment.
 - Discuss their experiences with **racism, discrimination**, and/or past **trauma**.
 - **Look beyond labels** like “high risk” and consider what support they truly need.



Benefits of a Personalised Risk Approach

- **Fairer Assessments:** Reduces the chance of bias in risk evaluations.
- **Better Care:** Ensures that people get the support they need.
- **Stronger Trust in Mental Health Services:** Helps communities feel safe seeking mental health care.



Real-Life Example – A Case Study

- **Example Scenario:**

- A Black teenage boy is assessed as high risk because of past aggression, despite recent progress in therapy.
- A White teenage boy with similar issues is assessed as low risk and given counselling instead of hospitalisation.
- The result? The Black teen is institutionalised unnecessarily, while the White teen receives better support.



How We Can Make a Difference

- Advocate for fair risk assessment tools that consider racial differences.
- Push for ongoing staff training on cultural awareness.
- Encourage community involvement in shaping mental health policies.



Conclusion – Moving Forward Together

- Risk assessments should help, not harm.
- A personalised approach leads to better, fairer mental health care.
- Every step towards racial equity improves the system for everyone.

Final Question for Discussion:

- How can we, in our roles, help make mental health risk assessments fairer?