HSC Public Health Agency

Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention

TRAINING FRAMEWORK

August 2025 Version 2

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Public Health Agency's (PHA) Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention Training Framework (The Framework) was developed to provide information for individuals and organisations on mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention training in Northern Ireland.

The Framework was developed in collaboration with families bereaved by suicide, carers, Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT), education, clergy, sports bodies, community and voluntary organisations and trainers involved in the delivery of mental health and suicide prevention training.

The Framework promotes training and education to reduce stigma and encourage open conversations around mental health. It aims to improve awareness and understanding of the distinction between mental health, mental ill health and emotional wellbeing by equipping people with the tools to recognise early warning signs in themselves and others. It also builds confidence in responding to emotional distress and crises.

Importantly it promotes training that raises awareness of available support and services, empowering individuals to seek help for themselves or guide others towards the assistance they need.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Framework seeks to support the development of mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention knowledge and skills and aligns with:

Protect Life 2 (PL2): A Strategy for Self-Harm and Suicide in Northern Ireland (2019-2027)
- **Theme Two:** Awareness and Prevention
- **Action 2.3:** Delivery of capacity building activity to strengthen awareness of, and response to suicide and self-harm

Mental Health Strategy (2021-2031) (MHS)
- **Theme 1:** Promoting mental wellbeing, resilience and good mental health across society

PURPOSE

- Explain the different training levels (called "Tiers")
- Help people find the right training for their needs
- Build knowledge and skills
- Promote consistent, high-quality training
- Support local planning and link with existing strategies

PRINCIPLES

Training should:

- Be person-centred and supportive of others
- Be accessible and fair to everyone
- Use up-to-date, evidence-based content
- Support learning across all parts of society
- Include self-care in all programmes
- Use outcomes and evaluation for ongoing improvement

FRAMEWORK AIMS

To support the delivery of PL2 and the MHS by:

- Increasing awareness and understanding of the distinction between mental health, mental ill health and emotional wellbeing
- Reducing stigma
- Promoting self-care
- Increasing understanding of factors that impact mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide ideation
- Increase understanding of the signs and symptoms of mental ill health or suicide ideation
- Increase awareness and understanding of talking about suicide in a safe way
- Comply with and promote **PHA Quality Standards for Services Promoting Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention**

HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK

For individuals

Use the Framework to find the training that best matches your learning goals.

Before signing up to attend a training course, check what each Tier offers and choose the outcomes most suitable for your needs. You don't need to complete all Tiers, just those most relevant to your goals, role or interests.

For workplaces

Use the Framework to identify effective and meaningful training to support workplace policies and practice.

Further guidance on supporting mental health in the workplace is available through **NICE Guidelines** and the **HSENI**.

For training providers

Use the Framework to determine the Tier of training being offered, the target audience, content, learning methods and training outcomes.

Glossary

A glossary of terms used within this document is provided at the end for reference.
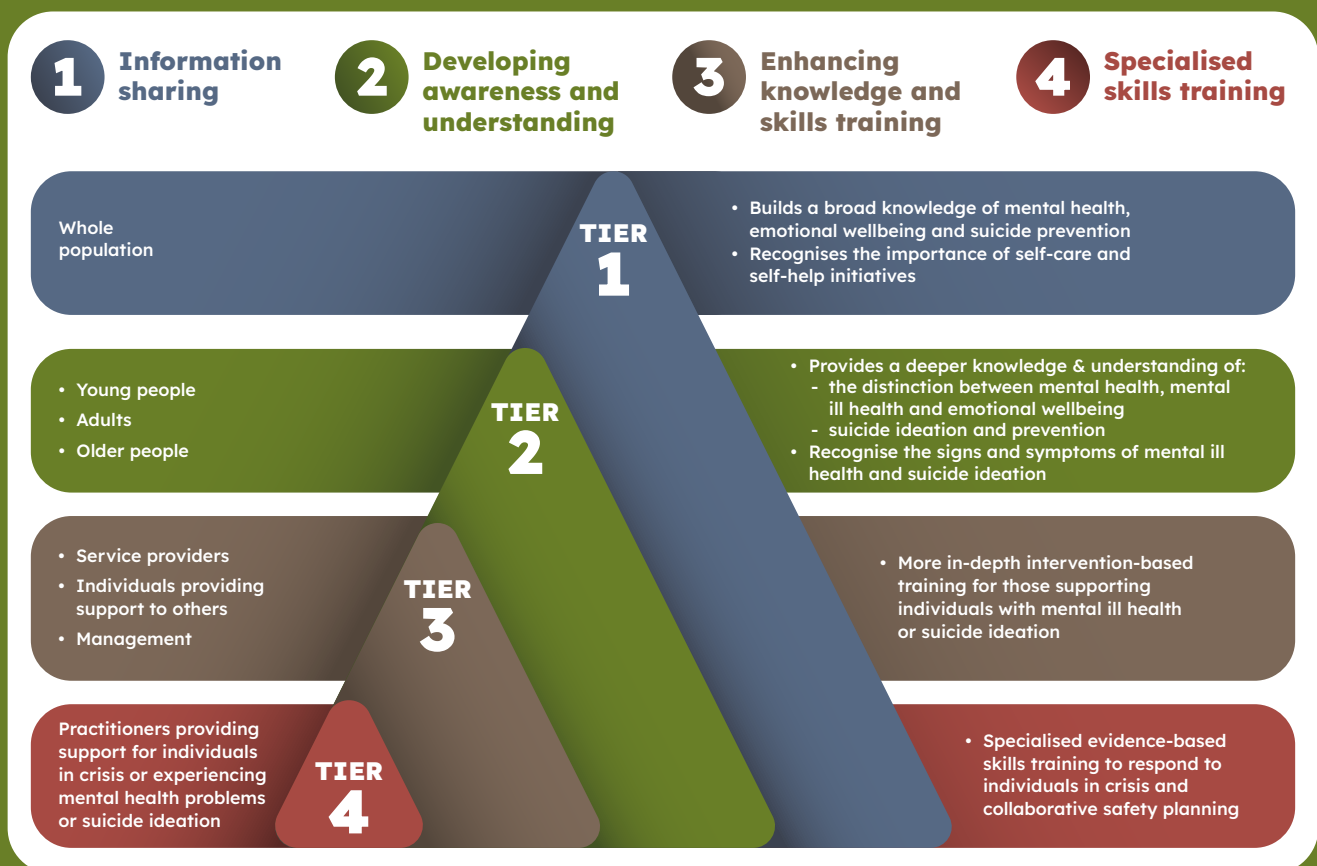
QUALITY STANDARDS

PHA values the role of training in promoting mental health and preventing suicide. All training and training providers funded by the PHA must meet agreed quality standards to ensure it is safe, accurate and supportive for everyone involved.

To learn more about these standards, visit: **standards.pharesourcehub.co.uk**
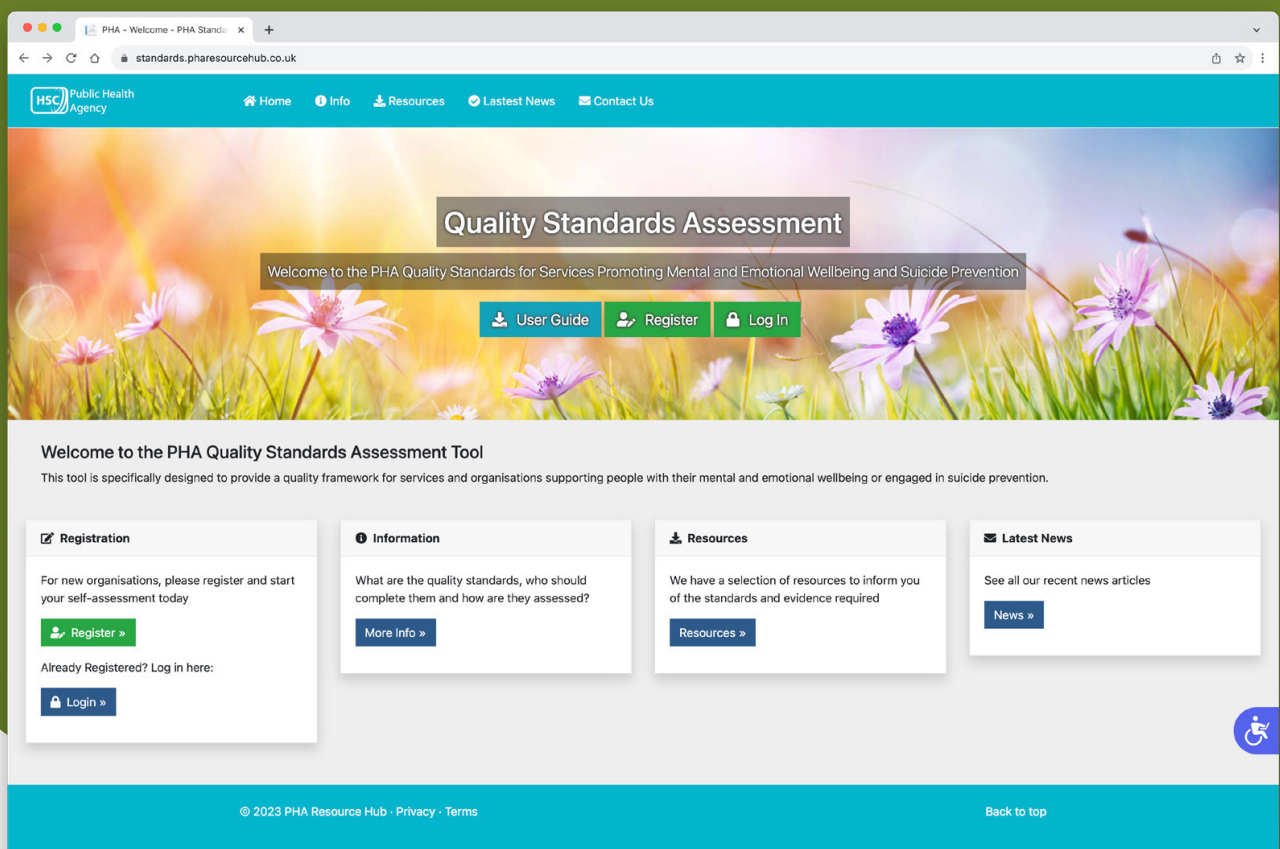
TRAINING TIERS OVERVIEW

A tiered approach is used to ensure training related to mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention is meaningful and offers opportunities for progression. All Tiers seek to reduce stigma and increase knowledge and awareness of support services.

1 Information sharing

2 Developing awareness and understanding

3 Enhancing knowledge and skills training

4 Specialised skills training

TIER 1

Whole population

- Builds a broad knowledge of mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention
- Recognises the importance of self-care and self-help initiatives

TIER 2

- Young people
- Adults
- Older people

- Provides a deeper knowledge & understanding of:
  - the distinction between mental health, mental ill health and emotional wellbeing
  - suicide ideation and prevention
- Recognise the signs and symptoms of mental ill health and suicide ideation

TIER 3

- Service providers
- Individuals providing support to others
- Management

- More in-depth intervention-based training for those supporting individuals with mental ill health or suicide ideation

TIER 4

Practitioners providing support for individuals in crisis or experiencing mental health problems or suicide ideation

- Specialised evidence-based skills training to respond to individuals in crisis and collaborative safety planning

Courses can be adapted to suit different ages, learning styles and needs, while keeping the same learning goals and outcomes.

Training should always be delivered in a safe and respectful way.

TIER 1 INFORMATION SHARING

Focus:

- ✓ Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- ✓ Mental health initiatives e.g. **Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing**
- ✓ Coping strategies, resilience and self-care
- ✓ Available support services and how to access them
- ✓ Available resources

Tier 1: Information Sharing		
Participants	**Methods of learning**	**Outcomes**
Whole population approach **May vary by content**	• Literature • Online • Social media • Publicity campaigns • Group sessions • Apps	• Improved awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing • Improved public awareness of services • Reduced stigma in help seeking • Knowledge and understanding of the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing • Improved self-care skills

Minding your head is PHA's public website for mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention. The website provides information, advice and support to help people in Northern Ireland look after and improve their mental health and wellbeing, and find out what to do in a mental health or suicide ideation crisis. Minding your head also includes a directory of services available in Northern Ireland to support mental health and suicide prevention.

TIER 2 DEVELOPING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Mental health awareness courses

Focus:

- ✓ Positive mental health, poor mental health, mental ill health and emotional wellbeing

- ✓ Factors that can impact mental health for individuals and those who support them in the home, community or wider society

- ✓ Coping strategies, resilience and self-care

- ✓ Available support services and how to access them

- ✓ Available resources

Tier 2: Mental health awareness		
Participants	**Methods of learning**	**Outcomes**
Children and young people **Adults** **Older people** **May vary by content and target group**	• In-person group session • Online group session • E-learning • Discussion • Presentation • Includes practical examples and scenarios	• Increased awareness and understanding of the distinction between mental health, mental ill health and emotional wellbeing • Increased awareness of developing personal resilience, coping strategies and self-care • Improved awareness of services and how to access them • Reduced stigma in accessing and using services • Reduced stigma in help seeking • Improved self-care skills

TIER 2 DEVELOPING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Suicide prevention awareness courses

Focus:

- ✓ Suicide ideation and prevention
- ✓ Signs that someone might be feeling suicidal
- ✓ Things that can help with suicidal thoughts
- ✓ How to discuss suicide safely
- ✓ How to encourage others to talk openly about suicidal thoughts and to seek help
- ✓ Coping strategies, resilience and self-care
- ✓ Available support services and how to access them

Tier 2: Suicide prevention awareness		
Participants	**Methods of learning**	**Outcomes**
Young people **Adults** **Older people** **May vary by content and target group**	• In-person group sessions • Online group sessions • E-learning • Discussion • Presentation • Includes practical examples and scenarios	• Increased awareness of suicide ideation • Increased confidence to talk openly and safely about suicide • Increased awareness of developing personal resilience, coping strategies and self-care • Improved awareness of services and how to access them • Reduced stigma in accessing and using services • Reduced stigma in help seeking • Improved self-care skills

TIER 2 DEVELOPING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Supplementary courses[1]

Focus:

✓ Factors that impact mental health and emotional wellbeing e.g. drugs; alcohol; self-harm; bereavement by suicide; and sexual health

Tier 2: Supplementary courses		
Participants	**Methods of learning**	**Outcomes**
Young people **Adults** **Older people** **May vary by content and target group**	• In-person group sessions • Online group sessions • E-learning • Discussion • Presentation • Includes practical examples and scenarios	• Increased knowledge and understanding of factors and influences that can impact mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide ideation • Increased knowledge and understanding of how an individual's feelings and perception may affect their behaviour • Increased awareness of developing personal resilience; coping strategies and self-care • Improved awareness of services and how to access them • Reduced stigma in accessing and using services • Reduced stigma in help seeking • Improved self-care skills

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1 Please note this list of courses is not exhaustive. Programmes and methods of learning may be altered based on need/demand or additional strategic priorities.

TIER 3 ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TRAINING

Focus:

✓ Advanced, evidence-based skills training to respond to individuals in distress by:

- Responding appropriately and confidently to a person displaying the signs and symptoms of poor mental health, mental illness and/or suicide ideation
- Signposting to appropriate professional help

Tier 3: Skills training		
Participants	**Methods of learning**	**Outcomes**
Adults **Older people** **Young people**[2] **May vary by content and target group**	• Facilitated training • In-person group sessions • Blended learning • Discussion • Presentation • Case studies • Skills practice • Group work	**Increased knowledge of:** • Mental health, poor mental health, mental illnesses and/or suicidal ideation and the distinction between them • Improved awareness of services and how to access them **Increased skills in:** • Non-judgemental listening • Facilitation • Identifying and responding to individuals experiencing emotional difficulties • Developing healthy coping strategies and self-care skills **Increased confidence to:** • Safely approach an individual (using skills learnt through training) displaying signs and symptoms of a mental ill health and/or suicide ideation • Support an individual to seek appropriate help

2   Some Tier 3 skills training may not be appropriate for those under 18yrs of age.

TIER 4 SPECIALISED SKILLS TRAINING

Focus:

✓ Specialised evidence-based skills training to respond to individuals in crisis by:

- Appropriately intervening and helping an individual who is experiencing a mental health and/or suicidal crisis
- Helping others in immediate distress

Tier 4: Specialised skills-based training		
Participants	**Methods of learning**	**Outcomes**
Adults **Older people** **May vary by content and target group**	Group facilitated, in-person training which includes: • Discussion • Presentation • Case studies • Skills practice • Group work	**Increased understanding of:** • The impact of individual and societal attitudes on mental health, crisis and suicide interventions • Suicidal behaviour, prevalence and risk factors • The signs and symptoms of a mental health or suicide crisis and how to effectively support an individual to stay safe **Enhanced knowledge, skills and confidence to be able to**: • Recognise and respond appropriately to individuals in crisis or with suicide ideation • Mitigate risk • Support the development of a personalised safety plan in collaboration with the individual experiencing a crisis / suicide ideation • Assisting an individual in crisis to seek appropriate help • Incorporate self-care skills into daily living

TRAUMA INFORMED TRAINING

Being 'trauma-informed' means being able to recognise when someone may be affected by trauma, collaboratively adjusting how we work to take this into account and responding in a way that supports recovery, does no harm, and recognises and supports people's resilience[3].

When adversity and trauma is recognised in our workplaces & organisations, this can help in understanding our own responses and needs, and those of the people we work with. There is an increasing body of evidence that directly links a trauma informed approach to improving the quality of care, for both staff and service users.

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) provide a range of FREE awareness raising training modules and resources on understanding the impact of adversity and trauma to support practitioners across Northern Ireland.

Training includes:

• Level 1 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
• Level 2 Developing Trauma Sensitive Practice
• Online introductory modules are also available for all sectors on a range of trauma related topics including attachment, brain development and staff wellbeing

Trauma specific services

A variety of FREE specialist and enhanced trauma training for staff who routinely support individuals who have experienced trauma is also available. This is an evolving context which requires services to identify which training is most relevant to their areas of provision.

Details of how to access training provided by SBNI can be found on **their website**.

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3   **nationaltraumatrainingframework-execsummary-web.pdf**

RECOVERY COLLEGES

Recovery Colleges offer a range of FREE e-learning and in person courses and resources from prevention to early intervention as well as supporting people on their journey of self-management. Courses are open to anyone aged 16 or over with an interest in mental health and wellbeing including service users, individuals with lived or living experience, family members, carers and staff.

Recovery Colleges courses are co-designed and delivered by people with lived experience of mental health difficulties (peer trainers) alongside those with professional experience and knowledge. They combine professional knowledge with real-life insights, helping to break down barriers and create opportunities for shared learning to inspire hope, opportunity and control in an individual's personal recovery journey.

Please note, at the time of writing, courses listed in the Recovery College directories have not been externally evaluated.

Further information on courses available through each of the 5 Health and Social Care Trust Recovery Colleges can be accessed on the **Innovation Recovery website**.

TOWARDS ZERO SUICIDE

Workforce development in Health and Social Care (HSC) & prison settings

Towards Zero Suicide represents an ambition and commitment across statutory mental health services to improve outcomes in suicide prevention and eliminate gaps within the delivery of care. This structured approach is aligned with the international Zero Suicide in Healthcare Framework, and the 10 safety recommendations identified by the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Harm (NCISH).

The Towards Zero Suicide programme is primarily focused on improving outcomes of patients presenting with suicide ideation and/or behaviour to adult mental health services in the five Health & Social Care Trusts and healthcare in prisons, with some quality improvement work extended into other settings where patients first present in crisis e.g. Emergency Departments. Workforce development training in suicide prevention is available within each Trust setting for HSC staff to attend.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Continuous learning for courses at Tier 3 and Tier 4 may be required depending on the specific course or licensing agreements.

This aims to ensure that knowledge base and skills in mental health, suicide prevention and supplementary course material remains evidence based, relevant and up to date.

Evidence of completing a full training course at Tier 3 or Tier 4 will be required prior to attendance at a continuous learning course.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Awareness	Knowledge or perception of a situation or fact.
Blended learning	A combination of learning that is in-person group sessions and online.
Community	People living in one particular area or People who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality.
Coping strategies	Activities to learn about ways of coping, building resilience and what influences the way we cope with events in our lives.
Crisis	A crisis can be an acute, time-limited episode experienced as overwhelming emotional reactions to an event or circumstances, which may impact on an individual's ability to cope or manage. This can be identified by others as well as by the person. Anyone can experience a crisis at some point in their life. What may be a crisis for one person may not be for another.
E-learning	Learning accessed online using a digital platform.
Evidence based practice	Using the best, research-proven evidence-based practice and treatments in day to day care and service delivery.
Evidence based research	Integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from a systematic approach.
Intervention	A direct effort to prevent a person or persons from attempting to take their own life or lives intentionally.
Mental health (positive)	A state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Term	Definition
Mental illness	Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions - disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behaviour. Examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviours.
NICE – National Institute of Health and Care Excellence	An independent organisation that provides advice and guidelines on the health and clinical cost and effectiveness of drugs and treatments.
Outcomes	The outcomes that will be considered when assessing the impact on the health or the recipient are suicide rates/ suicide rates among target communities. The outcomes that will be considered when assessing help-seeking behaviour among communities. The outcomes that will be considered when assessing skills and behaviour of practitioner, peer and public i.e. changes in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills and behaviour.
PHA	Public Health Agency
Poor mental health	Associated with rapid social change, stressful work conditions, gender discrimination, social exclusion, unhealthy lifestyle, risks of violence, physical ill-health and human rights violations.
Prevalence	The proportion of a population who have a specific characteristic in a given time period.
Recovery	This term has developed a specific meaning in mental health that is not the same as, although it is related to, clinical recovery. It has been defined as A deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and/or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life, even with limitations caused by the illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life (DH 2011).
Resilience	The ability to cope with adverse circumstances, either as an individual or in a community.

Term	Definition
Self-care	The actions people take for themselves, their children and their families to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health: • meet social and psychological needs; prevent illness or accidents; care for minor ailments and long-term conditions. • maintain health and wellbeing after an acute illness or discharge from hospital. • (Self-care – A real choice: Self-care support – A practical option, published by Department of Health 2005).
Service Provider	An individual or organisation that delivers health and wellbeing services.
Skills training	The process and learning that provides the methods and techniques to improve performance.
Specialised	Someone or something that is specialised, trained for a particular occupation, activity or area of knowledge.
Stigma	Discrimination, based upon society's fear and ignorance about an illness or a problem. It causes people to be marginalised and mistreated and therefore leads to social isolation, health inequalities and many forms of discrimination.
Suicidal crisis	A situation where there could be a risk that suicide is attempted.
Suicidal ideation	Suicidal ideas or overwhelming desire to die by suicide.
Suicide prevention	Diminishing the risk of suicide.
Tier	Level of training.
Emotional wellbeing	A positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection with people, communities and the wider environment.
Young people	The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages 10 and 19. This age range falls within WHO's definition of young people, which refers to individuals between ages 10 and 24.