

## **Right to Health Care-Initiative**

**Common standpoint on asylum seekers and other undocumented persons:**

### **Right to the same health care, on the same basis, as for other residents**

Sweden is a country with a long tradition of solidarity with vulnerable groups. Sweden has also made a commitment to respect the fundamental human rights. One of these is the right to health care. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, Paul Hunt, has brought attention to the situation today in Sweden of undocumented persons<sup>1</sup> and asylum seekers. Paul Hunt deems that these groups are not provided with the right to health care, and encourages the Government to reconsider its position with a view to offering all asylum-seekers and undocumented persons the same health care, on the same basis, as Swedish residents. We would especially like to raise awareness of undocumented persons.

Undocumented persons in Sweden have the right to emergency care only, and must pay the actual costs for this care. This means that a group of people who are marginalized, live in exclusion, and who often do not have the financial means to pay for health care, can be denied such care if they cannot pay. It's not worthy of an equitable and democratic society like Sweden to restrict vulnerable people's right to health care.

Under the current regulation<sup>2</sup>, not even all children in Sweden are guaranteed health care, for example undocumented children who have not previously sought asylum. The situation as it looks today goes against the Convention on the Rights of the Child's demand that the right to health care shall apply to every child without discrimination. Children also suffer when the adults in their lives are denied health care.

The discrimination of undocumented persons and asylum seekers also means that Swedish health care personnel are put in an unreasonable dilemma, when forced to diverge from the principle of giving health care on the basis of the needs of patients. This is contrary to the basic ethical principles of health care professionals.

We encourage the Swedish Government to take it's responsibility in giving undocumented persons and asylum seekers the right to the same health care, on essentially the same basis, as for Swedish residents. Legislation that treats differently or excludes certain groups is not consistent with the fundamental human rights of equality and nondiscrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> people who reside in Sweden without official permission to do so

<sup>2</sup> the agreement between the state and Organization of County Councils on health care for asylum seekers, among others.