

## Introduction

- The temperature of our earth has warmed more in the past two decades than it has in the past thousands of years (Dorn, 2019). This is due to human activity & fossil fuel industries that release greenhouse gases (Dorn, 2019).
- Impoverished people, minorities, older adults, children, women, and people with chronic illness & physical limitations are some of the vulnerable groups adversely affected by climate change repercussions (Levi & Patz, 2015).
- It is known that climate change and pollution affect an individual's physical health; however, it can have a significant impact on mental health as well.
- A healthy environment is necessary for all people to thrive (Dorn, 2019), however low income countries and individuals and disproportionately affected by negative climate changes in comparison to high income countries and individuals (Levi & Patz, 2015)
- Social workers will encounter climate change issues, but do they know how to properly assist clients with associated consequences?

## Our Focus

Education on climate change and its effect on mental health, especially for historically oppressed groups & vulnerable populations, would be a beneficial addition to the social work curriculum in order for social workers to properly promote environmental justice.

## Search Terms

- Climate change and mental health disorders
- Climate change and social work
- How climate changes affects oppressed groups
- Promoting environmental justice

# Mental health and Climate Change: How can Social Workers get Involved?

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## Results

- Extreme weather events are associated with the mental health disorders such as post traumatic stress disorder, grief, distress, anxiety, and children development (Dorn, 2019).
- Countries with the worst air quality have a 27% increase in bipolar disorder and a 6% increase in depression when compared to the national average (Gibbens, 2019)
- The increase in natural disasters negatively affect communities infrastructures and can lead to individuals in the community without proper housing and safety (Dorn, 2019). This is especially detrimental to low income areas.

## Connection to Social Work

- One of the Social Work Values is Competence (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017). Social workers should continue to educate themselves on issues that affect the clients they serve. It is our job to be competent in all areas of justice, including environmental justice.
- The proposed social work curriculum can provide future social workers with the knowledge to assist their vulnerable clients with mental health issues that have been caused by environmental factors.

## Macro Level Involvement

Social workers will learn about policies, laws, and how climate change affects historically oppressed populations.

## Mezzo Level Involvement

Social workers will learn how to help communities disproportionately affected by climate change.

## Micro Level Involvement

Social workers will how to utilize specific coping strategies for their clients when dealing with associated mental health issues. Social workers can also assist clients in small ways they can get involved with the environment changes promoting a sense of control. Ways clients can get involved are supporting clean companies, biking or walking as opposed to driving, and finding eco-friendly product alternatives (Clayton et al., 2017).



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