

Increase in Mental Health issues during the Pandemic

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Realizing the impact that COVID-19 may have on the mental health of the people, including children, the Government has taken a number of initiatives to provide psychosocial support during COVID-19. These initiatives include:

- i. Setting up of a 24/7 helpline to provide psychosocial support, by mental health professionals, to the entire affected population, divided into different target groups viz children, adult, elderly, women and healthcare workers.
- ii. Issuance of guidelines/ advisories on management of mental health issues, catering to different segments of the society.
- iii. Advocacy through various media platforms in the form of creative and audio-visual materials on managing stress and anxiety, and promoting an environment of support and care for all.
- iv. Issuance of detailed guidelines by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru- "Mental Health in the times of COVID-19 Pandemic - Guidance for General Medical and Specialized Mental Health Care Settings".
- v. All the guidelines, advisories and advocacy material can be accessed on Ministry of Health and Family Welfare website under "Behavioural Health – Psychosocial helpline" (<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/>)
- vi. Online capacity building of health workers by NIMHANS in providing psychosocial support and training through (iGOT)-Diksha platform.

Lack of sufficient mental health professionals is one of the challenges faced in the mental healthcare service delivery. The year-wise, State-wise details of mental health practitioners however is not maintained centrally.

With a view to augment the availability of qualified manpower in field of mental health, the Government, under NMHP, is implementing manpower development schemes for establishment of Centres of Excellence and strengthening/ establishment of Post Graduate (PG) Departments in mental health specialties. Till date, support has been provided for establishment of 25 Centres of Excellence and strengthening/ establishment of 47 Post Graduate (PG) Departments in mental health specialties in the country.

The Government is also augmenting the availability of manpower to deliver mental healthcare

services in the underserved areas of the country by providing online training courses to various categories of general healthcare medical and para medical professionals through the Digital Academies established at the three Central Mental Health Institutes namely National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bengaluru, Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur, Assam, and Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi.

The Minister of State (Health and Family Welfare), Sh Ashwini Kumar Choubey stated this in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha here today.

MV

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