

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3636  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 24<sup>th</sup> MARCH, 2026**

**DIGITAL ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG CHILDREN**

**3636. SHRI S NIRANJAN REDDY:**

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken note of the Economic Survey 2025–26 highlighting the rise of digital addiction and screen-related mental health issues among children and adolescents;
- (b) the steps taken or proposed to implement structured interventions such as cyber-safety education, peer-mentor programmes, mandatory physical activity in schools and parental awareness programmes to address the issue;
- (c) whether Government proposes to expand the Tele-MANAS programme beyond crisis counselling to specifically address digital addiction and related mental health concerns; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER  
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND  
FAMILY WELFARE  
(SHRI PRATAPRAO JADHAV)**

(a) to (d) To address the burden of mental disorders, the Government of India is implementing the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in the country. The District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) component of the NMHP has been sanctioned for implementation in 767 districts for which support is provided to States/UTs through the National Health Mission. Facilities made available under DMHP at the Community Health Centre (CHC) and Primary Health Centre (PHC) levels for all including elderly, inter- alia, include outpatient services, assessment, counselling/ psycho-social interventions, continuing care and support to persons with severe mental disorders, drugs, outreach services, ambulance services etc. In addition to above services there is a provision of 10 bedded in-patient facility at the district level.

Under DMHP, targeted interventions are conducted for school and college students. Under Targeted interventions, the following activities are carried out in the districts across the country:

- i. Life skills education & counselling in schools - 100 teachers to be trained as Master trainers from each block having 25-30 schools.
- ii. College counselling services - training of college teachers to work as counsellors.
- iii. Counselling of Out of school children having mental health problems/ Adolescent mental health program
- iv. Suicide prevention services Workplace Stress Management Programs

As part of targeted interventions done for the students under DMHP in FY 2025-26, the counselling services were provided to 65278 students through 5111 counselling sessions conducted in schools and colleges in the FY 2025-26 (till 30.09.2025).

The Government is also taking steps to strengthen mental healthcare services at primary healthcare level. The Government has upgraded more than 1.81 lakh Sub Health Centres (SHCs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) to Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. Mental health services have been added in the packages of services under Comprehensive Primary Health Care provided at these Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. Operational guidelines and training manuals for various cadres on Mental, Neurological, and Substance Use Disorders (MNS) at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have been released under the ambit of Ayushman Bharat.

“Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health” is incorporated as a dedicated module under Ayushman Bharat School Health & Wellness Programme. Health and Wellness Ambassadors (Teachers) are trained on mental health along with other thematic areas of the programme, take interactive sessions with the students and percolate the messages through weekly sessions promoting joyful learning.

The Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare through its interventions viz. Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHC), Peer Education Programme and Adolescent Health and Wellness Days (AH&WD) creates awareness on mental health issues and provides counselling services. Peer Educators form groups of 15-20 boys and girls in the community and conduct weekly one to two hour participatory sessions on adolescent health including mental health and wellbeing.

Ministry of Education (MoE), has launched an initiative, Manodarpan, with the aim to provide psychosocial support to students, their families and teachers across the country, for mental health and well-being. All activities undertaken under the Manodarpan initiative are aimed towards supporting the mental health and well-being of students from schools, colleges and universities, including those students who are preparing for competitive examinations.

University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued Guidelines for Promotion of Physical Fitness, Sports, Student’s Health, Welfare, Psychological and Emotional Well-being at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on 13.04.2023, which provides for promotion of physical fitness and sports activities for students; creation of safeguards against academic pressure, peer pressure, behavioral issues, stress, career concerns, depression and other issues on the mental health of students; to teach positive thinking and emotions in the student community; and to promote a positive and supportive network for students.

The Government has launched a “National Tele Mental Health Programme” (NTMHP) on 10th October, 2022, that functions as the digital arm of the District Mental Health Programme to provide universal access to equitable, accessible, affordable and quality mental health care through 24 x 7 tele-mental health counselling services. For this, a toll-free number (14416) has been set up across the country.

As on 03.03.2026, 36 States/ UTs have set up 53 Tele MANAS Cells. Tele-MANAS services are available in 20 languages based on language opted by States. More than 34.34 lakh calls have been handled on the helpline number since inception.

The Government has also launched Tele MANAS Mobile Application on the occasion of World Mental Health Day - October 10, 2024. Tele-MANAS Mobile Application is a comprehensive mobile platform that has been developed to provide support for mental health issues ranging from well being to mental disorders. The Government has also launched the video consultation facility under Tele-MANAS, as another upgrade to the already existing audio calling facility.

Tele MANAS, along with its crisis psychological support, also functions as a comprehensive mental health care service. Emerging mental health concerns, including digital addiction, are addressed through its multi-tiered service delivery system. At the first level, trained counsellors identify early symptoms of digital addiction and provide preliminary counselling and guidance. Cases requiring further evaluation are seamlessly escalated to qualified Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) for detailed assessment and appropriate management. Further, Tele MANAS acts as a referral and feeder mechanism for in-person services, including District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) services and other mental health care facilities, wherever required.

Tele-MANAS counsellors undergo structured training and continuous professional development programmes, which include Advanced training sessions on emerging mental health concerns such as digital addiction and related mental health concerns.

Social media campaigns and specific IEC content on digital addiction have been done to promote healthy digital practices and encourage timely help-seeking through the Tele MANAS services.

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