

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3819
ANSWERED ON 24.03.2025

Mental Health Counsellors in Government Schools

3819. Shri K C Venugopal:

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has any data on the number of Government schools across the country having qualified mental health counsellors to address the alarming rise in stress, anxiety and suicides among students and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has issued any specific guidelines to appoint mental health counsellors in all the schools of the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the mechanisms put in place for monitoring their recruitment and effectiveness in improving the student well-being; and
- (d) whether the Government has any plans to set aside budgetary allocation and timeline for ensuring that every Government school is equipped with such support services?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(SHRI JAYANT CHAUDHARY)

(a) to (d): Education is a subject in the concurrent list of the Constitution and the majority of schools are under the administrative control of the respective State Government/UT administration. However, recognising the importance of education, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has come into existence, which emphasises the need to create awareness about the mental health issues, reducing stress and promoting joyful learning. States and UTs are supported under Samagra Shiksha based on their proposals towards strengthening of existing Government schools for creation & augmentation of infrastructure facilities and also other activities such as career guidance, mental health, self-defence etc. Though it is not mandatory to keep

counsellors, States/UTs and all management schools, including private schools, are **encouraged** to provide this facility as per the requirement. States/UTs are free to have their own guidelines for recruitments and also use Samagra Shiksha funds or their own funds.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 takes a holistic view about the nourishment of children and their mental wellbeing which is required for optimal learning. NEP suggests multifarious ways to achieve the same. For the nourishment of the children, PM POSHAN Scheme is being implemented under which hot cooked meals are provided to the students studying in Balvatika and classes I to VIII in the Government and Government-aided schools. About 11.20 crore students studying in 10.36 lakh schools have been **benefitting** under the scheme. During 2023-24, health check-up of about 10.83 crore students has been carried out by States and UTs under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK). About 10.11 crore students received Iron & Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation under Anaemia Mukta Bharat and about 10.69 crore students received deworming medicines under National Deworming Day (NDD) during 2023-24. IFA and de-worming **tablets** helps in ensuring better health and good learning outcomes.

As per the perspective of NEP 2020, NCERT has developed and launched National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022 and National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. Both the NCFs integrate the mental well-being of students in different aspects such as syllabi development, development of content in learning and teaching material, pedagogical practices etc. The framework also lays emphasis on the role of all stakeholders, teachers, school functionaries, parents and community members to ensure that every student is provided with mental and emotional support. The framework also stresses the importance of socio-emotional stimulation in the early years of life of students and provides guidelines towards integration of age-appropriate aspects of socio-emotional development in its curricular goals, core competencies and learning outcomes.

For mental health and wellbeing, the Government has launched an initiative, Manodarpan, under ‘Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan’ on 21st July, 2020, with the aim to provide psychosocial support to students, their families and teachers across the country, ensuring their mental health and well-being. A National toll-free tele-helpline (844-844-0632) for reaching out to students from schools, colleges and universities across the country seeking support on mental health concerns and other psychosocial issues. The services offered on the helpline are free of cost. Manodarpan also provides Directory of Counsellors working at both school and college/university level on (<https://manodarpan.education.gov.in>) as a resource for students. There are 64 counsellors presently working in Tele-Helpline. Also, live interactive sessions called as ‘Sahyog’ are organised for students on PM eVidya channels, with practicing

counsellors and are held from Monday to Friday (from 05:00 pm - 05:30 pm) across different regions. These sessions can be viewed on PM eVidya Channels and 'NCERT Official' YouTube Channels (<https://www.youtube.com/@NCERTOFFICIAL/streams>). The total 'Sahyog' sessions held so far are 1027. 206 live interactive webinars named 'Paricharcha' are organised every Friday (from 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm). These sessions address various mental health and emotional well-being concerns of students, parents and teachers. Several conferences, orientations and sessions have been held for school administrators and teachers to sensitise and orient them on factors causing stress and anxiety among students including critical aspects such as examinations, academics, results and other emotionally challenging situations and build their understanding and enabling them towards managing these situations.

Manodarpan has developed and disseminated various materials to raise awareness and advocacy for mental health in schools through flyers such as bullying, self-awareness, coping skills and positive emotions and a desk calendar etc. every year. Awareness programs and capacity building of stakeholders in schools are some of the regular activities under the initiative. Manodarpan facilitates celebration of Mental Health Day and Mental Health Week every year across the country in schools since 2020. This celebration includes various activities, such as group discussion, storytelling, outdoor activities, relaxation activities, creation of an individual well-being plan, sharing of gratitude note, creation of a positivity board, interactive awareness session, assembly on mental health etc. in schools.

Several capacity building/ awareness programs are conducted with stakeholders such as school administrators, heads of schools, teachers, teacher counsellors etc. Some such programs comprise consultative meets at regional level, capacity building programme for teachers of from different States/UTs. In these training programs, various mental health and well-being concerns such as self-harm, substance abuse, bullying, etc. which have a direct link with feelings of stress, anxiety and depression among young people are dealt with. These capacity building programs aim to build awareness and skills among teachers to help young people deal with these concerns.

Hon'ble Prime Minister conceptualised a unique interactive programme - Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC) wherein students, parents, teachers across the nation and also from overseas interact with him to discuss and overcome the stress, emerging out of examinations in order to celebrate life as an Utsav. In PPC programme 2025, maximum participation has been ensured from students across diverse socio-economic backgrounds, especially those from rural and remote areas through a combination of outreach efforts by coordinating at all levels with the State and Centre Government. Extensive activities related to PPC, such as reduction in exam stress through activities encouraging physical and emotional well-being, were carried out throughout Bharat,

over a period of 10 days from 13th January - 23rd January, 2025. On 23rd January, 2025, coinciding with the Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in almost all Districts across the country, viewing of the series 'Bharat Hain Hum' - a motivational and inspirational series on several freedom fighters was shown to students and quiz on the same was held. All of these activities resulted in the total participation of over 5 crore in the 8th edition of PPC 2025. Mental health and its related issues including emotional well-being was one of the major topics covered by Hon'ble PM during the recently held PPC which was disseminated on electronic and digital platforms across the country. It may be stated that apart from the session of Hon'ble PM, two separate sessions were held on mental health and overcoming them from experts in two of the 7 other episodes that followed in PPC.

In addition to address the rise in stress, anxiety etc among students' various initiatives are taken by many schools - like sensitization through talks in morning assembly, adolescence education programmes, yoga, games and sports, scouts and guides, NCC, Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat. Students are also involved in setting up School Nutrition Gardens (SNGs) in the school through which they are connected to nature.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has launched Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States (Tele MANAS) a toll-free mental health helpline that provides support and assistance to those struggling with mental health issues. Through this initiative, access to trained and accredited mental health counsellors is available 24X7 across the country on the helpline number (14416) or 1800-891-4416, to cater mental health. This service is available in 20 languages. The National Tele Mental Health Programme (Tele-MANAS), launched in October 2022, provides tele-counselling services across 36 States/UTs, handling nearly 20 lakh calls. The government is also training healthcare professionals via Digital Academies at key mental health institutes, having trained over 42,000 professionals.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is also addressing mental health issues through the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), with its District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) active in 767 districts. DMHP offers services like outpatient care, counselling, medication, outreach, and inpatient facilities at the district level. to provide suicide prevention services, work place stress management, life skills training and counselling in schools and colleges. Additionally, the government has upgraded over 1.75 lakh primary healthcare centers into Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, integrating mental health services into primary care. Under the Ayushman Bharat School Health & Wellness Programme, teachers are trained to promote emotional wellbeing among students.
