



Research Unit
Press Information Bureau
Government of India

World Mental Health Day 2024: Enhancing Mental Well-Being at Work

(Ministry of Health and Family Welfare)

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World Mental Health Day, observed annually on October 10, was first initiated in 1992 by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH). This global observance aims to raise awareness about mental health issues and mobilize efforts in support of mental health care worldwide. Over the years, the day has grown into a significant platform for governments, organizations, and individuals to collaborate on initiatives that drive lasting change in mental health care. The importance of World Mental Health Day is underscored by the growing recognition of the profound impact mental health has on individuals, families, and communities.



The theme for 2024, *Mental Health at Work*, highlights the critical connection between mental health and the workplace. With an estimated 60% of the global population in some form of employment, addressing mental health at work has become imperative. **Safe and inclusive work environments can promote mental well-being, whereas poor working conditions can result in significant mental health risks.** The theme emphasizes the importance of taking collective action to ensure that workplaces foster mental health, protect against harm, and support those who need

help.

Mental Health in the Workplace: Key Factors and Considerations

- **Mental Health and Work Are Closely Related:** A positive and supportive work environment is critical for fostering mental well-being, providing employees with a sense of purpose, stability, and job satisfaction. On the other hand, adverse working conditions can negatively affect mental health, lowering productivity and morale. Employees tend to be more motivated in an inclusive and respectful workplace. Conversely, stress, discrimination, abuse, and micromanagement can create a hostile environment that diminishes motivation and job satisfaction.
- **Risks to Workers' Mental Health:** Employees face various risks to their mental health, such as poor working conditions, discrimination, and limited autonomy. Jobs that are low-paid or insecure often come with insufficient protections, making workers in these roles more vulnerable to psychosocial risks, which can further impact their overall well-being.
- **Impact on Employees:** Without adequate support, individuals dealing with mental health challenges can experience diminished self-confidence, reduced enjoyment at work, and frequent absences. The effects can extend beyond the workplace, impacting the ability to find or maintain employment. These challenges also affect family members and caregivers, adding further stress to their lives.
- **Broader Effects on Work and Society:** Mental health issues in the workplace are not isolated to individual workers; they have a wider societal impact. Poor mental health can result in reduced performance, absenteeism, and higher staff turnover. Globally, depression and anxiety alone contribute to the loss of approximately 12 billion workdays each year, underscoring the economic and social consequences of untreated mental health conditions.
- **Stigma and Barriers to Employment:** Stigma surrounding mental health is a significant barrier that prevents individuals from seeking help and maintaining employment. Workplace discrimination against those with mental health conditions can hinder their ability to thrive. Awareness programs, training, and engagement with employees who have mental health conditions can contribute to more inclusive, supportive work environments that break down these barriers.
- **Supporting Workers to Thrive:** Employers play a crucial role in ensuring that workers with mental health conditions can succeed in the workplace. Reasonable accommodations, such as regular supportive meetings, scheduled breaks, and a gradual reintroduction to tasks, help employees manage their conditions and stay productive. Offering simple supports like medication storage can also make a significant difference.
- **Training Managers to Support Mental Health:** Employers should invest in training for managers to identify and address mental health stressors in the workplace. Trained managers are better equipped to foster a positive and supportive work environment, which is key to reducing stress and promoting mental well-being among staff.
- **Government Action and Collaboration:** For meaningful change, governments, employers,

and representative organizations must collaborate on creating policies that prevent mental health risks and promote mental well-being. Such efforts should aim to create workplaces where mental health is prioritized, and protective measures are in place for employees.

- **Taking Care of Your Own Mental Health:** While governments and employers are responsible for promoting mental health at work, individuals can also take steps to support their own well-being. Learning stress management techniques and staying mindful of changes in mental health are important. If necessary, reaching out to a trusted person or mental health professional can provide essential support.

Mental Health: Policy Recommendations by Economic Survey 2023-24

India, home to one of the largest populations in the world, faces unique challenges in addressing mental health issues. With a history of underfunded mental health services and significant stigma surrounding mental illness, the country has taken significant steps toward improving mental health care infrastructure and policies.

For the first time ever, the Economic Survey 2023-24 tabled by the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on July 22, 2024, talked about mental health, its significance and implications on policy recommendations. Acknowledging mental health as a principally impactful driver of individual and national development, the Survey notes that **as per the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015-16, 10.6% adults in India suffered from mental disorders while treatment gap for mental disorders ranged between 70% and 92% for different disorders.** Further, the prevalence of mental morbidity was higher in urban metro regions (13.5%) as compared to rural areas (6.9%) and urban non-metro areas (4.3%). Citing NCERT's Mental Health and Well-being of School Students Survey, the Survey highlights an increasing prevalence of poor mental health among adolescents exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 11% of students reported as feeling anxious, 14% as feeling extreme emotion and 43% experiencing mood swings.

The survey points out that at an aggregate economic level, **mental health disorders are associated with significant productivity losses due to absenteeism, decreased productivity, disability, increased healthcare costs, etc.** There is also evidence of poverty affecting the risk of mental health via stressful living conditions, financial instability, and a lack of opportunities for upward mobility, which contribute to heightened psychological distress.

Policy Recommendations on Mental Health

The Economic survey emphasizes the need for effective implementation to accelerate progress in mental healthcare, addressing existing gaps to ensure maximum impact. Key policy recommendations include:

- Re-doubling efforts to increase the number of psychiatrists, from 0.75 psychiatrists per lakh population in 2021 to the WHO norm of 3 per lakh population
- Developing comprehensive guidelines for the excellence centers' services alongside mental healthcare professionals and users to understand their needs.
- Assessing the effectiveness of the programmes by gathering feedback from the users,

professionals, and stakeholders to make necessary changes and meet the needs of a wider population.

- Nurturing peer support networks, self-help groups, and community-based rehabilitation programmes can help de-stigmatization of mental disorders and develop a sense of belonging.
- Partnering with NGOs to scale up efforts, share knowledge, and leverage resources to enhance future policies, to aid in identifying areas of improvement.
- Involving individuals with personal experience with mental health problems in decision-making, service planning, and advocacy efforts can increase the person-centricity and recovery orientation of mental healthcare services.
- Sensitization of mental health at the preschool, Anganwadi level to provide precious early identification of disorders.
- Standardization of guidelines for mental-health services across government and private sector.
- Effective pathways for integrating mental health interventions in schools including developing an age-appropriate mental health curriculum for teachers and students, encouraging early intervention and positive language in schools, promoting community-level interactions, and balancing the role of technology.
- A bottom-up, whole-of-community approach in addressing the topic of mental health and breaking the stigma.
- For public health officials, tackling mental health by acknowledging and addressing the fundamental reluctance at personal level.

Key Initiatives: Efforts by Government for a Better Tomorrow

The Government of India, through the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, conducted the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) in 2016. According to the survey, approximately 10.6% of adults over the age of 18 suffer from mental disorders.

To address this, the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP), a key component of the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), has been rolled out in 767 districts, with support provided to States/UTs under the National Health Mission. The DMHP aims to deliver services such as suicide prevention, workplace stress management, life skills training, and counseling for schools and colleges. Facilities at district hospitals, Community Health Centres (CHCs), and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) offer outpatient services, counselling, psycho-social interventions, continued care for severe mental disorders, drugs, outreach programs, and ambulance services. Additionally, a 10-bed in-patient facility is available at the district level. Furthermore, **over 1.73 lakh Sub Health Centres (SHCs) and PHCs have been upgraded to Ayushman Arogya Mandirs**, integrating mental health services into their care packages.

To further enhance mental healthcare capacity, the government has expanded the NMHP's tertiary care component. This includes sanctioning, **25 Centres of Excellence have been sanctioned to increase the intake of students in PG departments in mental health specialities as well as to provide tertiary level treatment facilities. Additionally, 47 postgraduate departments in mental health have been strengthened across 19 government medical colleges, with mental health services also provisioned in 22 newly established AIIMS.** Across India, there are 47 government-

run mental hospitals, including three central mental institutions: 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.

In a significant initiative, the government launched the National Tele Mental Health Programme (NTMHP) on October 10, 2022, to improve access to quality mental health counselling and care. **A total of 53 Tele MANAS Cells are operational across 36 states /union territories. As of October 08, 2024, more than 14.5 lakh calls have been handled on the helpline number.**

Conclusion

World Mental Health Day serves as a critical reminder of the importance of mental health care in our lives and workplaces. With mental health and work being so closely linked, it is essential for governments, employers, and stakeholders to take action in creating safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where mental well-being can thrive. Global initiatives, driven by organizations like WHO and WFMH, are making progress, but there is still much work to be done in raising awareness, reducing stigma, and improving access to mental health services.

India's recent efforts to address mental health challenges through policies, surveys, and programs are commendable. By increasing mental health resources and integrating services into primary healthcare, India is making strides toward reducing the treatment gap and addressing the country's mental health burden. As these efforts continue, the focus must remain on creating inclusive systems that enable individuals to thrive both at work and in society. In the coming years, continued collaboration between governments, organizations, and individuals is essential to ensure that mental health care is accessible, effective, and free from stigma. This will help create a future where mental health is recognized as a fundamental right, and everyone can participate fully in both work and life.

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