



# New Pathways New Hope

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National Mental Health Policy of India

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India  
October 2014

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डॉ. हर्ष वर्धन  
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स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्री  
भारत सरकार  
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### Message

Indian culture from time immemorial recognises the relationship between mind, body and soul and its impact on mental health. In today's world, lifestyle changes, along with social and economic inequalities have increased the individual and societal stress, making us more vulnerable to mental ill health.

2. The bi-directional relationship of mental ill health and poverty is evidenced in many reports, including the World Disability report, 2010, that places persons with disabilities at the bottom of the pyramid. This alerts us to what could well become a health crisis, with consequences that urge us to view this phenomenon as both a health and a development imperative.

3. Taking cognizance of this issue, and the negative impact that it could precipitate in the lives of vulnerable people, our Government proposes to take firm action. Towards this end, we are introducing a progressive Mental Health Policy that outlines a clear plan to tackle this problem. Our strong intent to promote equity and justice is reinforced in our commitment to alleviate distress, build capabilities and reach marginalized groups.

4. This policy attempts to build a robust response to a complex problem that affects multiple dimensions of life. Most importantly, India's first National Mental Health Policy is embedded in a value system that upholds a participatory and rights based approach and aims to promote quality in service provision and effectiveness in delivery.

5. I congratulate the members of the Policy Group for their continued engagement in developing this document. With this vision, our Government aspires to reach the last mile and provide care in a context that respects dignity and life. Our efforts will remain dedicated towards this goal.

6. I hope all stakeholders will come together to ensure the success of this policy.

(Dr. Harsh Vardhan)

लव वर्मा  
सचिव  
LOV VERMA  
Secretary



भारत सरकार  
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग  
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Government of India  
Department of Health and Family Welfare  
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

### Foreword

On the occasion of the World Mental Health Day, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India is announcing the first National Mental Health Policy of India. This policy is an attempt to decrease the treatment gap, disease burden and extent of disability due to mental illness. The policy takes into account Indian socio-cultural realities and is embedded in a value system that promotes integrated and evidence based care, governance and effective provision of quality services. Further, it addresses needs of persons with mental illnesses, their care-providers and other stake holders.

There is evidence worldwide that mental disorders are amongst the leading causes for disability burden. They impose high economic costs and impact quality of life of persons affected with mental health problems. The health system of the country does not, as yet, have a comprehensive response system to address mental health issues.

Integration of mental health with general health, inter-sectoral coordination that focuses on both illness and disability, promotion of human rights, reforms in mental hospitals, response to the needs of vulnerable groups including women, children, homeless persons with mental illness, and support for caregivers and families are some of the features of the Mental Health Policy, presented in subsequent chapters.

The policy is formulated pursuant to recommendations of an expert group, after deliberations and consultations both within the group and with other stakeholders. I thank all the members of the policy group- Sailendra Kumar Deuri, Akhileshwar Sahay, Alok Sarin, Anirudh Kala, Nirmala Srinivasan, Sanjeev Jain, Soumithra Pathare, Thelma Narayan, Vikram Patel, Vikram Gupta and Vandana Gopikumar.

I express my gratitude to my predecessor in office, Mr. Keshav Desiraju for his valuable contribution, Ms. Sujaya Krishnan, the then Joint Secretary, in charge of Mental Health, Director General of Health Services Dr. Jagdish Prasad, Additional Secretaries, Mr. C. K Mishra and Dr. Arun Kumar Panda, Joint Secretary Mr. Anshu Prakash and Deputy Director General Dr. S.K. Singh for bringing this policy document to a logical conclusion.

I trust and hope that this Policy will pave the path for coordinated and collaborative care in the mental health sector.

(Lov Verma)

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# Terminology

*Mental Health* is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which the individuals realize their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to make a positive contribution to their community. Mental health refers to a broad array of activities directly or indirectly related to mental well-being. This is in keeping with World Health Organisation's definition of health: A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease. Mental health is also related to promotion of mental well-being, prevention of mental disorders, and treatment and rehabilitation of people affected by mental disorders.

*Mental health problems* refers to conditions ranging from psych-social distress affecting a large number of people to mental illness and mental disability affecting a relatively small number of people.

*Mental illness* refers to specific conditions such as Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Depression or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

*Mental disability* refers to disability associated with mental illness. While mental illness is a medical construct, disability is better understood using a medico-social model and the two terms are not used synonymously in this document. Not all persons with mental illness will have a disability, although many will experience it due to various barriers which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

*Persons with mental illness and person(s) with mental health problems* refers to persons who have mental illness and mental health problems respectively. It is necessary to emphasize that mental health illness or mental health problem does not constitute a person's identity and that a person and an illness and/or problem are distinct from each other.

*Persons affected by mental illness* include person(s) with mental illness and significant others such as family members and care-givers.

*Recovery* is defined as a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellbeing, live a self-directed life and strive to reach their full potential.

# Preamble

Both incidence and severity of mental illnesses are on the rise. The World Health Organisation estimates that at any given time 10% of global population suffers from some form of mental illness and one in four persons will be affected at least once in their life time. Further, estimates suggest that by 2020, depression, the most common mental disorder, will be the second leading cause of disability worldwide, trailing only ischemic heart disease. The accurate figures for India are not available.

Mental illness is a key predictor for an increase in suicide and suicide attempts that affect a cross section of society particularly the youth and distressed. Poverty, deprivation and other vulnerabilities further exacerbate the ground situation.

Untreated mental illness results in stigma, marginalization and discrimination often worsening one's quality of life. This leads to a substantial loss of social and human capital, adversely impacting a large number of individuals and families.

While the National Mental Health Programme addresses this concern partially, a holistic approach to alleviating distress is necessary. The access to mental health care is not universal and significant treatment gaps are experienced by many, as a result of which individuals cannot pursue life to the fullest.

Owing to the enormity of the problem, it is considered prudent to have a strategic, integrated and holistic policy that will guide future course of action including a pan India scaling up of existing Mental Health Program. This policy will pave the path to address the mental health problems as they exist currently, and to understand the mental health issues in context of our country. This policy allows stakeholders to initiate action across a wide spectrum of mental health issues to enhance our understanding of its different contours, refine our response system and showcase to the world a comprehensive mental health response. In that sense, this policy is intended to be dynamic; all encompassing and growing with regular review and feedback from people.