

## Module-8: Child protection during pandemics

### Session 3: Ensuring Wellbeing of children

Duration: 12:45 Minutes

Now we know how to provide psycho social support to children. We know that children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law need special support during a pandemic like COVID-19. The Hon'ble Supreme court has recently circulated the specific measures to ensure wellbeing of such children. Let's now understand it.

#### Measures to ensure wellbeing of children (CNCP and CCL)

- It is important to acknowledge that for children, it is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during an ongoing pandemic like COVID-19 disease.
- Reassure the children that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset.
- Encourage children to connect with each other and to talk with people they trust, about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- Avoid watching, reading, listening or discussing too much news about the COVID-19 and persuade children to divert their attention to other topics as well.
- Disruption of routine and closure of schools may be stressful for children. Try to continue with the regular routine maintained in the home, with minimal disruptions
- Spend time with children and help them to unwind, preferably doing activities they enjoy.
- Do not use corporal punishment /violence to discipline children.
- Guide students on how to support their peers and prevent exclusion and bullying.
- Work with the health staff/social workers/counsellors to identify and support children and staff who exhibit signs of distress in the CCI.
- In CCIs, there may be some children who are undergoing some kind of counselling or treatment for pre-existing mental health issues. Ensure continuance of the treatment/therapy of children in consultation with the therapist/psychiatrist.
- Ensure that no staff or child is subject to any form of stigmatizing words or behaviour arising due to coughing, sneezing, etc., as this violates the principles of 'equality and non-discrimination, 'dignity and worth'.
- Encourage and support children to take care of their bodies taking deep breaths, stretching, doing yoga/meditation, eating healthy, well-balanced meals, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, etc.
- Work with social service systems to ensure continuity of critical services that may take place in CCIs, such as health screenings, or therapies for children with special needs.
- Consider the specific needs of children with disabilities,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SC Guideline

You already know that there are many children engaging in productive activities during COVID-19. Creating a positive atmosphere will bring out their creativity such as making kitchen garden, making handicrafts, painting, learning cooking etc.

Now look at one of the best examples from Manipur where a 13 year old child has created something amazing during COVID-19. Let's watch this video. <Video plays>

### **Initiatives of the government of India on psycho-social support during COVID-19:**

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 including children.
- 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), "Mental Health in the times of COVID-19 Pandemic - Guidance for General Medical and Specialized Mental Health Care Settings". 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/>)
- v. Online capacity building of health workers by NIMHANS in providing psychosocial support and training through (iGOT)-Diksha platform.<sup>2</sup>

### **Dealing with Child Protection Issues during COVID-19: Examples from the States**

#### **West Bengal**

In West Bengal, UNICEF is supporting the Kolkata Police in planning and implementing programmes to ensure prevention of violence against women and children utilizing the Nirbhaya fund.

#### **Odisha**

In Odisha, UNICEF and the state police led a state-wide campaign on prevention of child sexual abuse demonstrating the significant role police has in prevention and response.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Chhattisgarh: Chakmak Campaign**

To ensure learning of children at home and to bring positivity and hope in the community (with paintings and creative work of children), a campaign called "Chakmak" (means firestone) was launched

<sup>2</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1654456>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/india/stories/re-imagining-role-police-covid-19-times>

in April-June 2020 jointly by UNICEF and the Department of Women and Child Development in the state. It ensured involvement of parents and grandparents in learning of children at home and promoted creative expression of children in terms of paintings, stories, knitting works, songs etc.

Campaign 'Chakmak' emerged as a platform for children of Chhattisgarh to express in creative ways and have fun at home and share joy and happiness with their family members.

Children painted thousands of paintings and created many creative works, as part of the campaign. Each week a list of activities and tasks were identified, and children were encouraged to share their paintings/work in the campaign's Facebook page called 'Chakmak Abhiyan'.

### Kerala

During the lockdown period 'Our Responsibility to Children' (ORC), a child protection programme initiated by Kerala Police has launched various initiatives to engage children in more productive ways and also to help lives of deprived ones. Let's learn about two major programmes in this regard.

1. **Kutty Desk:** - This program led by children provides telephonic guidance to their peers on various aspects such as how to keep personal hygiene and stay safe during the COVID threat and on how to spend time effectively and creatively during the lockdown. Being implemented across Kerala
2. **Play Hub:** Play hub is an infotainment program engaging children, to help them get rid of the boredom and tension due to social isolation. Children are encouraged to do dynamic and productive activities on a daily basis and with the help of parent, they are expected to make videos of their productive engagements. Programme is anchored by a puppet show.<sup>4</sup>

Let's now watch this video on Kutty Desk.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://orcindia.org/kuttydesk.html>