

Press Release from Health & Family Welfare Department,
Government of Sikkim

Master Trainers Training Program on Suicide Prevention Launched Under Sikkim INSPIRES by
Health & Family Welfare Department

Gangtok, 18 June 2026: The Health & Family Welfare Department (H&FWD), Government of Sikkim, today inaugurated a three-day Master Trainers Training Program on Suicide Prevention under the Sikkim INSPIRES initiative in collaboration with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru.

The program brings together psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric social workers, and counselors from all districts of Sikkim to strengthen capacities in suicide risk identification, assessment, intervention, and referral.

The inaugural session commenced with a welcome address by Dr. Sonam Ongmu Lasopa, Senior Clinical Psychologist and Nodal Officer, Sikkim INSPIRES, H&FWD. The program was inaugurated by Dr. Pema Seden Lepcha, Principal Director, H&FWD, who reaffirmed the Government's commitment to strengthening mental health services and suicide prevention efforts and promote mental well-being across the State. In her address, the Principal Director highlighted that sustained efforts under the District Mental Health Program, community outreach initiatives, school mental health activities, crisis intervention services, and capacity-building programs have contributed to a 15.8% reduction in Sikkim's suicide rate between 2022 and 2024. She reiterated the Government's resolve to further.

The session was also addressed by Dr. Geetha Desai, Professor of Psychiatry, NIMHANS, who emphasized that suicide prevention requires early identification, timely intervention, and a compassionate, community-based approach. She highlighted the critical role of trained health workers in recognizing distress, providing support, and facilitating access to appropriate care as the first point of contact.

During the event, the Facilitator's Manual for Suicide Prevention in Sikkim for Health Workers was officially released. The vote of thanks was proposed by Ms. Pratisha Sharma, Under Secretary and Sub-Nodal Officer, Sikkim INSPIRES, Health & Family Welfare Department. The training is being facilitated by Dr. Geetha Desai, Professor of Psychiatry, NIMHANS; Dr. Veena S., Professor of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS; and Dr. Sonam Ongmu Lasopa, Senior Clinical Psychologist and Nodal Officer, Sikkim INSPIRES, H&FWD.

Following the training, participants will serve as Master Trainers and subsequently conduct training for Mid-Level Health Providers, Health Educators, frontline health workers, and ASHAs across Health and Wellness Centers, and community settings throughout the State. This cascading training model is expected to create a sustainable network of trained personnel capable of providing early support, timely referral, and follow-up care for individuals experiencing emotional distress.

The Health & Family Welfare Department reaffirms its commitment to building a compassionate, responsive, and accessible mental healthcare system and ensuring that every individual in need has access to timely support, hope, and care, ultimately contributing to a further reduction in suicide-related morbidity and mortality in Sikkim