

Press Release from Health & Family Welfare Department

Health & Family Welfare Department Strengthens Community Mental Health Services through Training on Mental, Neurological and Substance Use (MNS) Disorders

Namchi, Dec 02, 2025: The State Mental Health Program in collaboration with the District Mental Health Program of Namchi District, Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, successfully conducted a two days (1st & 2nd December) comprehensive training program for Mid-Level Health Providers (MLHPs) from Primary Health Sub Centers, Counselors and Health Educators from the Primary Health Centers across Namchi District on the Mental, Neurological and Substance Use (MNS) Disorders Package, aimed at strengthening mental health care at the community level.

The training is part of the H&FWDs ongoing commitment to expand quality mental health services across all districts by empowering frontline health workers with practical skills in early screening, mental health promotion, referral linkages, and follow-up care.

Speaking on the initiative, PCC cum District Nodal Officer, DMHP, Namchi District Hospital Dr Urgen Sherpa highlighted that MLHPs—positioned at Health & Wellness Centres under the Ayushman Bharat initiative—play a crucial role in bridging the mental health treatment gap. He also emphasized self-care for the MLPHS in maintaining their own mental health while supporting the community.

Dr. Tara Gautam, Additional Director, NMHP emphasized that the training aims to equip participants with structured tools and training under the MNS Package to ensure that timely support is available even in remote communities.

Key Objectives of the Training

- Early identification and screening for common mental, neurological, and substance use disorders at the community level
- Strengthening mental health promotion, including awareness on stress management, positive coping skills, and stigma reduction
- Streamlined referral linkages between primary care, district hospitals, and specialized mental health services
- Follow-up and continuity of care for persons identified with mental health needs, ensuring adherence and support
- Building confidence among MLHPs to deliver person-centered and culturally sensitive mental health services

During the two-day training, MLHPs received hands-on sessions on the use of MNS clinical decision-support tools, counselling basics, risk assessment, crisis management, and documentation. Demonstrations, role plays, and case discussions were facilitated by Master Trainers trained by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, GoI in 2024 who included:

1. Dr. Rajeev Gurung, Psychiatrist, Center for Addiction Medicine
2. Dr. Tsephel Eden Bhutia, Psychiatrist, Namchi District Hospital
3. Dr. Sonam Ongmu Lasopa, Sr. Clinical Psychologist
4. Ms. Tsephel Yongda, Counselor, Namchi District Hospital

Subsequently, all ASHAs of Namchi District will undergo a one-day training focused on the identification of persons with possible mental health issues, raising awareness on mental health promotion, and supporting continuity of care at the community level. This training will enhance their ability to serve as vital first-contact support for individuals and families, strengthen early detection, and ensure sustained follow-up for those in need of mental health services.

The initiative is expected to reduce the mental health treatment gap, strengthen early diagnosis, and promote healthier communities. The H&FWD will continue supporting MLHPs through mentoring, refresher trainings, and digital tools for follow-up. This effort reaffirms the State's commitment to making mental health a core part of primary care and

marks an important step toward accessible, preventive, community-based mental health services in Sikkim.