

Press Release from Office of the Press Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim
A National First: Sikkim's Integrated State Strategy Calling for Unified Action in Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The challenges posed by mental health difficulties and the distressing rise in suicides continue to weigh heavily on societies across the world. In Sikkim, these concerns have touched families, communities, and institutions alike, reminding us that emotional suffering is often silent yet deeply felt. Addressing such a delicate and far-reaching issue requires understanding, compassion, and above all, a shared resolve. It calls for a coordinated effort that extends beyond the Government and specialists reaching every household, neighbourhood, school, workplace, and public space. Recognising the depth of this need, the Government of Sikkim, under the leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Prem Singh Tamang Golay, has placed mental health and suicide prevention among its most urgent priorities.

After months of extensive consultations and scientific assessment, Sikkim Inspires, in close collaboration with the Health and Family Welfare Department, the Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy, and the Indian Law Society Pune, has completed a landmark document titled 'Sikkim Integrated Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025–2030'. This is the first initiative of its nature in the country to be formally conceptualised and prepared by a State Government. The Strategy, rooted in research and guided by evidence-based practices, was released on 16 May 2025 during the State Day celebration by His Excellency the Governor of Sikkim, Shri Om Prakash Mathur, and the Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Prem Singh Tamang Golay. Its release marks an important moment in the State's deepening commitment to a humane and science-driven approach to mental well-being.

To better understand the foundations and future direction of this initiative, Shri Yougan Tamang, Press Secretary to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, visited the Sikkim Inspires office at the Planning and Development Department today. In discussions with Smt. Rohini Pradhan, Programme Director, and Smt. Roshnila Gurung, Assistant Director, he was briefed in detail on the core elements of the Strategy. The document lays out a comprehensive, inter-sectoral approach to addressing mental health and preventing suicides connecting the work of health systems, community networks, law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, and families.

Smt. Rohini Pradhan explained that the Strategy is the outcome of an intensive process that began in September 2024. Over nine months, teams reached out to a wide range of individuals and groups across the state. These engagements included focused group discussions, structured interviews, community consultations, and first-hand conversations with people who have lived through mental health challenges or the loss of loved ones. Every insight gathered during this period contributed to a clearer understanding of the State's needs and the areas where intervention could make a significant difference.

The Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy and the Indian Law Society will continue to offer technical guidance to the Government of Sikkim as the State moves from planning to execution. Among the most central interventions proposed for the next four years is Atmiyata, a community-led model of care that has demonstrated notable evidence in improving mental health access in underserved regions. Atmiyata seeks to use the strength of existing social ties to ensure that emotional support, mental health first-aid, and guidance reach individuals where they live easily, respectfully, and without cost. Initially, the intervention will be undertaken in two rural and two urban blocks within Namchi district. Its long-term projection includes reducing the mental health treatment gap by 30 percent and extending its presence to all districts within three years.

Beyond community interventions, the Strategy outlines a broad spectrum of actions: reinforcing coordination among state institutions for suicide prevention and timely response;

attending specifically to the emotional needs of adolescents through family-centred programmes; developing thoughtful and responsible public and media engagement on mental health; and implementing initiatives tailored to young adults aged 18 to 29 within higher educational settings. Each aspect is grounded in scientific understanding and informed by local realities.

Reflecting on these efforts, Shri Yougan Tamang stated, “We can no longer look away from the painful truth of mental health issues and suicides in Sikkim. This is not an issue that can be placed upon the shoulders of one individual, one department, or one institution. It belongs to us all. The Hon’ble Chief Minister recognised this early on and gave clear direction to Sikkim Inspires and the Health and Family Welfare Department to bring forward a comprehensive and actionable plan. The Strategy that has emerged is not merely a document, it is the result of months of sincere listening, rigorous inquiry, and an honest attempt to understand the lived realities of our people. I extend my appreciation to the entire team involved in this demanding yet meaningful work.”

He further shared, “Sikkim has become the first state in India to take such a deeply researched and integrated step in the field of mental health and suicide prevention. While the work ahead is immense, the interventions have already begun, and their reach will gradually expand. I wish to acknowledge the vision of the Hon’ble Chief Minister in recognising the urgency of this issue and ensuring that it receives the attention it deserves. I appeal to every citizen of Sikkim to treat this concern as a shared responsibility. Let us stand together, for such matters cannot be carried by a single hand or a single heart. Through our collective compassion and our readiness to listen and support one another, we can create communities where despair does not go unnoticed and where hope can be restored.”