

Policy Brief

SAMA

Safeguarding adolescent
emotional well-being in India

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Delivering the National Education Policy Social Workers in Schools

The NEP 2020 recognises the importance of safeguarding the socio-emotional wellbeing of students by recommending social workers in schools.

NEP says that **well trained social workers** will continuously engage with students, parents and communities to address psychosocial learning barriers.

Whilst welcome, delivering this policy objective is complex.

There are questions about:

- How to prepare schools for the arrival and work of a social worker.
- How to define the boundaries of a social worker's role.
- How to ensure a learning community for social workers.
- How to resource the social worker to capitalise on their potential to improve school wellbeing.

Key messages

Delivering the NEP objective for social workers in schools requires planning, resources and development pathways.

To support this objective, Project SAMA can share learning about:

- What is important when introducing a role like a social worker into schools.
- How such a role can support whole school wellbeing via a manualised program.

“The fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it are: life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience...” - NEP 2020

Project SAMA recruited lay workers to reside in schools to deliver the SAMA whole school programs.

We called them SAMA Snehitharus (SS)

How did we train the lay counsellors?

We recruited 11 young adults to be SAMA Snehitharus (SS)

Trained our SS in NIMHANS over 2 weeks focused on learning the SAMA program, adolescent mental health and well-being, safeguarding and record-keeping.

Introduced the role of the SS to schools before their arrival.

Our SS delivered 3 integrated SAMA programs in schools

There was a multi-tier supervision, reporting framework and defined referral pathways that helped SS to seek assistance as needed



Key Experiences of the SAMA Snehitharus

“Teachers were good from the beginning till the end. They have been accommodative and gave us the classes whenever it was available. They were very cooperative...”

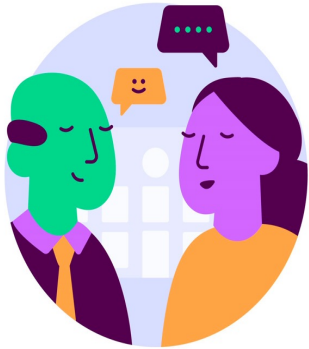
“As we were regularly in touch with students for 5 months, the relation improved. They {students} treated us like friends. Tell us anything that they want to share. They are close with us...”

WHAT DOES NEP SAY ABOUT THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN?



Counsellors or well-trained social workers connected to schools/school complexes and teachers will continuously work with students and their parents and will travel through and engage with communities to ensure that all school-age children are attending and learning in school

WHAT DO TEACHERS SAY ABOUT THE SAMA SNEHITHARU?



"SAMA like programs are very much necessary particularly for the adolescents. Earlier I was facing a lot of difficulties with the 9th std children. After SAMA's initiative children have been able to manage their anger, face bullying etc..."

WHAT DO TEACHERS SAY ABOUT NEP?



"NEP provides child centric learning foundation however, at present the schools are not equipped with specialized professionals for that..."

Key Learning 1

Adequate training and support is critical to the success of social workers.

Key Learning 2

Schools need time and support to prepare for the arrival of a social worker. A 'soft landing' will optimise their effectiveness.

Key Learning 3

Social workers need their own community for support and learning.

Key Learning 4

It is crucial to foster suitable values in social workers to ensure inclusive and ethical practice.

Key Learning 5

Social workers can be trained and supported to play a key role in safeguarding in schools.

Important takeaways

- Whole School mental health interventions are an urgent need in India that require specialized trained professionals
- Social workers can play a key role in implementing whole school mental programs
- SAMA has evidence of manualized programs that could be further adopted and personalized as required by the schools

