

In October 2022, the Indian government launched the National Tele Mental Health Programme, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at providing free tele-mental health services across the country, with a special focus on remote and underserved areas. The program, known as Tele-Manas (Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking across States), has garnered immense success in a short span of time, receiving over 200,000 calls from individuals seeking mental health support.

### **Addressing the Need for Mental Health Services**

Mental health has been an increasingly concerning issue in India, with a significant portion of the population facing various mental health challenges. However, access to mental healthcare remains limited, especially in rural and remote regions. Recognizing this critical gap, the government introduced the National Tele Mental Health Programme to bridge the divide and offer much-needed support to those who might otherwise have difficulty accessing mental health services.

### **The Launch of Tele-Manas**

Tele-Manas was officially launched in October 2022, ushering in a new era of mental healthcare delivery in India. The program operates through a network of 42 active Tele-Manas cells spread across 31 states and Union Territories. These cells act as the first tier of assistance, staffed with trained counselors and mental health specialists.

### **Round-the-Clock Service Availability**

One of the most significant advantages of Tele-Manas is its 24/7 availability, providing individuals with access to mental health support at any time of the day. This feature is particularly crucial in crisis situations when immediate assistance is needed.

### **Multilingual Support**

India is a diverse nation with a multitude of languages spoken across its regions. To ensure that language is not a barrier to seeking help, the National Tele Mental Health Programme offers services in 20 different languages. This multilingual approach enables individuals to communicate comfortably and effectively with mental health professionals.

### **The Two-Tier System**

Tele-Manas is structured as a two-tier system to cater to the varying needs of individuals seeking mental health support:

- Tier 1: State Tele-Manas cells staffed with trained counselors and mental health specialists who provide tele-counseling to callers. These professionals offer empathetic listening, emotional support, and guidance to help individuals cope with their challenges.
- Tier 2: This tier involves specialists from the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) and medical colleges who provide physical consultations

and audio-visual consultations via e-Sanjeevani. If the situation requires more intensive support, individuals are referred to these specialists for further assessment and treatment.

### **Services Offered by Tele-Manas**

The National Tele Mental Health Programme offers an array of services to address diverse mental health needs:

- **Tele-counseling:** Trained counselors provide a safe and confidential space for individuals to express their thoughts and feelings. They offer emotional support, coping strategies, and assistance in managing mental health concerns.
- **Tele-Consultation:** When necessary, mental health professionals conduct tele-consultations with callers to provide expert guidance and recommendations for further management or treatment.
- **Referral Services:** Tele-Manas facilitate referrals to other mental health establishments such as medical colleges, District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) services, and specialty institutes, ensuring individuals receive comprehensive care when needed.