

Launch of Rashtriya Kishor (i) Swasthya Karyakram and National Adolescent Health Consultation

Translating Strategy into Programme:

Counselling

Shubhada Maitra, Ph.D

Professor, Centre for Health and Mental
Health, School of Social Work, TISS

Overview

- Conceptual framework
- Evidence from the field
- Operationalising strategy into programme
- Conclusion

Conceptual Framework

```
graph TD; A[Disclosure/ Help-Seeking] --- B[Mental health issues confronting adolescents]; B --- C[Discovery]; A --- C; A --- D[Supervision/ mentoring]; B --- D; C --- D;
```

Disclosure/ Help-Seeking

- Enhance access
- Build confidence
- Ensure confidentiality
- Reduce stigma

Mental health issues confronting adolescents

- Scholastic performance
- Bullying, lying, stealing
- Sexual abuse, violence
- Sex, sexuality, sexual orientation related concerns
- Substance use
- Suicidal thoughts
- Self-harm
- Anxiety, depression, phobias

Discovery

- Early identification
- Screening
- Capacity building

Supervision/ mentoring

Evidence from the field: Case illustrations

- H, a 12 year old Muslim boy, belonging to a middle income family. Studying in 7th std in an English medium school in Mumbai. Referred for failure in 4 core subjects
- A, a 10 year old Hindu boy, living in a single parent family, with his mother and maternal grandmother. Was in a hostel school studying in 5th std. Mother was asked to withdraw the boy from the school for 'bizzare' behaviour. Mother suspected sexual abuse by peers

Intervention (role of the counsellor)

- In the first case, counselling the child, his parents and elder sister
- In the second case, intensive play sessions with the boy and counselling with mother

Evidence from the field: *Muskaan* experience

- Work in municipal schools focused on promotion of mental health and well-being and prevention of problems (group interventions with children, teachers and parents)
- Work with individual children, groups and their parents

Evidence from the field: Flying High (*Oonchi Udaan*)



Referral

to specialised
counselling

School-based
individual
counselling

Group sessions with 5th, 6th, 7th
std. children, teachers and
parents

Counselling for change?

- Not an apolitical process
- While individual and the group is a focus, social change is a goal

Operationalising strategy into programme

- **Where?**

Education and training institutes

In and out of schools, communities

Ashram shaalas in tribal areas

Adolescent friendly spaces

Juvenile institutions/ correctional settings

Health facilities

Operationalising strategy into programme contd...

- **Who?**

Teachers, parents, peers, community youth volunteers, community workers, juvenile justice workers, police personnel

- **Characteristics**

Adolescent-centered, interested in going beyond their 'traditional' roles, open to ongoing learning, empathetic with good communication skills (listening, observation...)

Operationalising strategy into programme contd...

- **What?**

Training on adolescent developmental and mental health issues

Basics of communication

Screening for mental health 'distress'

Rudimentary counselling skills including providing emotional support and referrals

Operationalising strategy into programme contd...

- **When?**

Duration and severity of the issue

The problem does not seem to be of a transient nature

Affects other areas of life such as academics, relationships, selfhood, sexuality

Operationalising strategy into programme contd...

- **When does one refer to a mental health professional?**

When the 'identified problem' is not resolved through initial interventions by 'barefoot' counsellors

When the 'identified problem' is resolved but another one crops up in its place

When the problem requires a thorough assessment and intervention by mental health professionals

Conclusion

- Counselling is a professional activity requiring skilled personnel
- Counsellors need to develop the ability to address issues along a continuum
- Need for multi-sectoral linkages (education, juvenile justice, community)
- Monitoring and evaluation