

Draft

Best Practice Counseling Services for Migrant Labour

Counseling Services for Migrant Labour

Introduction

India was put under a nationwide lockdown by the Honorable Prime Minister of India, a period in which the spread of the Covid-19 has substantially slowed down. But since it was a sudden announcement, people who were stuck away from their homes started asking for the movement-passes to travel during the lockdown.

People, mostly migrant labourers, lost their jobs and wanted to go back to their respective states. They were denied any mode of transportation by the District Administration, keeping in view the severity of the Covid-19 and the lockdown measures. At the same time, the authorities had assured them that they will be getting ration, food, water and other basic amenities. Despite this, many of the migrant laborers started their journey on foot.

They were then stopped midway by setting up Nakas on all the border areas and shelter-homes were set up in the premises of schools or Dharamshalas to keep them till the lockdown was in force. The migrant labourers including men, women and children, are kept with following management:

- I. Social distancing is being maintained;
- II. Food is served;
- III. Shelter homes get sanitized and cleaned regularly;
- IV. Health Teams visit regularly in these homes and monitor people with symptoms. Along with that, their body temperatures are being monitored daily;
- V. There is a TV in each shelter home with cable connection for entertainment of the people
- VI. Yoga and Physical Training sessions are conducted every morning;
- VII. Counseling sessions are also conducted for the migrant labourers;

Here in this document, we will discuss about the best practices adopted by all 22 districts in the state of Haryana for the counseling of Migrant Labourers. But before that, we need to understand why the need for counseling arose in these shelter homes.

Need of Counseling in Shelter Homes

Psychological distress was observed in migrant labourers due to chaos and uncertainty of crisis. They were feeling irritated due to impact of sudden lockdown which had potential to convert into a law and order problem. Broad expectation from the counseling was to give mental peace to migrants and make them feel at home in shelter-homes till the period of lockdown.

Activities Carried- out

- I. Yoga and Physical Training Sessions are being carried out every morning in the premises of Shelter homes.

- II. Sessions by Counselors and Psychologists are being carried out inside these homes.
- III. There is a Television in every shelter-home with the Dish Connection for entertaining and relaxing the migrant labourers.
- IV. In some homes, the inmates clean and maintain the premises of the school and the garden voluntarily. This helps them stay busy and use their time productively forgetting about the negative thoughts.

Key Implementers and Collaborators

The Psychologists from Civil Hospitals of the respective districts were deployed in the shelter homes for conducting the counseling sessions with the inmates by the District Administration.

District Level Sports Officers and Coaches helped in conducting the Yoga and Physical Training Sessions.

Incident Commanders of the respective areas of shelter homes review and work to fulfill the needs and demands of the Homes regularly.

Resource Implications

Shelter-homes for labourers have been mostly setup in the government schools. This way, the resources were saved by the government.

The manpower used by the District Administration are the state officials like District Sports Officer, Coaches and Psychologists. No new person was recruited to work and monitor these shelter-homes.

Home mates are cleaning and maintaining the premises of the shelter-homes voluntarily to keep themselves engaged. This help decreases the burden on the cleaning staff and the treasury of the government.

Outputs and Outcomes

- I. Migrant Laborers felt at home in shelter camps. They were given a normal routine. This also reduced mass migration incidents.
- II. Cooperation by the homemates helped the District Administration maintain law and order situation in the drab times of COVID-19.
- III. The migrants helped the authorities by staying in these homes in the times of crisis and did not become a hurdle for them.

Assessment of the Practice Carried Out

Higher Officials of each district themselves paid visits to shelter-homes to check upon the well-being of the workers. Control Rooms of the districts gathered report of all the shelter-homes from their Incident Commanders regularly. The authorities constantly updated themselves about the status of the environment in the homes so that any problem could be worked upon readily. It was

found that the counseling had given the inmates a certainty and peace of mind and made the environment of the shelter- homes stable.

Lesson Learnt

Positive attitude of the state officials who did psychological counseling and involved migrants into daily routine worked really well. A trust was built between District Administration and the Migrant Labourers. The labourers had started believing that they were in the safe hands of the Government and the Administration in these times of Crisis.

Conclusion

Counseling benefited migrants and indirectly made job of District Administration comfortable. It is a 'best practice' because generally it is the lack of trust and faith between migrants and local administration that results into chaos and creates problem of public disorder. Also incorporation of behavioral concepts is very well needed in managing crisis situations.

Migration has always been a sensitive issue. As the Constitution of India gives a fundamental right to free movement throughout the country via Article 19(1)(d), we should respect and help the persons in the territorial jurisdiction of our state. Anybody who is a citizen of India is free to move and work countrywide.

If in such times of crisis, the state and the District Administration do not care for their migrants, it creates a trust deficit between the migrants and the Government. It would have also created a trust deficit between the respective states of the migrant labourers and the state of Haryana without this practice.

So in these times of crisis, we need to trust these migrants and that is what they need the most. Listen to them carefully and try to solve the issues they are facing. Develop faith between the migrants and the Administration and show them that Haryana cares for them.