



Women's Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Dr. Saumya Goyal
President, National Mental Health Council

Date: 11th January 2022

Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman
Honourable Finance Minister
Ministry of Finance
Government of India

Subject: Seeking Mental Health sector-specific financial concessions, incentives and policies

Respected Madam,

We appreciate your solicitation of inputs from the industry towards creating a well-rounded budget for the financial year 2022-23.

We are honoured to introduce ourselves as the **National President** and **Vice President** of the **Mental Health Council** at the **Women's Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WICCI)**.

At the WICCI National Mental Health Council, we work with the underlying guiding principle of **'Mental Health Matters for All'** and are driven by council's **'Vision 2030 – Building Hope & Changing Mindsets'**. The council's work is built upon the pillars **'Advocacy Prevention Education Intervention Outreach'** (A.P.E.I.O) of mental health – that aim to ensure awareness, availability and accessibility of mental health information and intervention for all demographics in the nation.

We look forward to collaborating with the government for better coordination of the sector's, our people's and government's needs, and facilitating mental health systems and policies to be more accessible and inclusive in India.

We are also dedicated to building a more inclusive and sustainable future for Indian mental health women professionals, by influencing more women to drive economic growth, increase employment opportunities and generate impact. We are uniquely positioned to gather insights from experienced Mental Health Professionals and organizations from all over India and make recommendations that enable various stakeholders to work in the common interest of the mental health of our population thereby building a resilient nation.

We have a robust National Council that is well represented by women of substance and experience across professional practice, academy, and government sectors from across the nation. We are privileged to introduce the council members:



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- 1) **Ms. Charvi Jain** – Council Member; Counselling Psychologist & Psychotherapist; Founder of 'Over A Cup of Tea'
- 2) **Ms. Chetna Singhania** – Council Member; Psychologist & Social Entrepreneur; Founder of 'Vartamaan Care Network Foundation'
- 3) **Ms. Chhavi Pant Pande** – Council Member; Counsellor; Founder of 'The Counselling Cove'
- 4) **Dr. Ketoki Mazumdar** – Council Member; Consultant Psychotherapist; Assistant Professor at Tata Institute of Social Sciences
- 5) **Ms. Navroop Sood** – Council Member; Psychotherapist; Founder of 'Heal With Nav'
- 6) **Ms. Prerna Saxena** – Council Member; Psychotherapist, Mental Health Advocate & Social Worker
- 7) **Ms. Priya Bhargava** – Council Member; Motivational Speaker, Psychologist, Model & Disability Rights Activist
- 8) **Ms. Sheeba Vinay** – Council Member; Writer; Founder of 'WeTalk Mental Health' & 'WeTalk Writers & Publisher'
- 9) **Ms. Sheryll Rayan** – Council Member; Counsellor, NLP Practitioner & Master Hypnotist; Co-founder of 'Safe Realm'
- 10) **Ms. Shriya Shrivastava** – Council Member; Mental Health Therapist, Spiritual Healer & Dancer; Founder of 'Roohi – A Mental Health Platform'
- 11) **Ms. Shubhangi More** – Council Member; Counselling Psychologist, Couples & Family Therapist; Founder of 'Unbottled Emotions – A Mental Health Platform'
- 12) **Ms. Smriti Joshi** – Council Member; Clinical Psychologist & Digital Mental Health Expert; Lead Psychologist & Member of Board of Directors - Wysa
- 13) **Ms. Sonia David** – Council Member; Psychological Counsellor, Film Therapist, PhD Scholar & Educator; Founder of 'Mindful Mesmerisms'
- 14) **Ms. Sweetie Jain Birla** – Council Member; Psychologist & Counsellor; Founder of 'Mind Mirror Paradigm'
- 15) **Ms. Tanvi Mallya** – Council Member; Neuropsychologist, Geriatric & Dementia Specialist; Founder of 'Tanvi Mallya's ElderCare Services'
- 16) **Ms. Tanya Sachdev** – Council Member; Mindset Coach & Fashion Blogger
- 17) **Dr. Trinjhna Khattar** – Council Member; Proficiency Head, Psychotherapist & ABT Practitioner at Institute for Exceptional Children
- 18) **Dr. Vandana Yadav** – Council Member; Homeopathic Physician, Certified & Licensed Emotional Intelligence Coach (ICF approved), Psychological Counsellor; Co-founder of '5 Elements Wellness Clinic'



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The National Mental Health Council would like to propose the recommendations / policy interventions in the area of Mental Health, with respect to the upcoming budget:

Recommendations on Financial Grants and Concessions

- 1) Providing grants, scholarships, and awards to women (any who identify as women, including trans and cis women) who major in psychology from Government as well as private educational institutions in India.
- 2) Offering loans at lower rate of interest for women mental health professionals/ psychologists / psychotherapists / psychiatrists / behavioral health professionals etc. who are setting up their own practice; especially in Tier-2, Tier-3 and Tier-4 cities.
- 3) Complete tax exemption for these professionals if they are setting up their practice in rural areas.

Recommendations Regarding Insurance Policies

- 4) Including mental health treatment at private hospitals (both hospitalization as well as outpatient consultations) under the health insurance policies. Insurance for mental health concerns covering geriatric neuro-psychological health concerns to be included in these policies as well.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- 5) Integrating mental health awareness in the school curriculum across all boards and grades.
- 6) Regular holistic wellbeing interventions becoming an integral part of school and college education.
- 7) Including suicide prevention and reducing self-harm as necessary part of teacher training for high school. Teaching specific tips to teachers on how they can create safer classrooms, enable holistic development of the child, stand up against bullying and promote safe school climate.
- 8) Schools must be mandated to hire adequately qualified special educator and counselor separately as both have different roles and duties.
- 9) Video-based learning and film therapy can be added to school curriculums to help students learn not just life skills but also core subjects such as math and science. Education boards can also ensure tools and adequate training to educators in administering videos and film-based learning in schools.
- 10) Making understanding of human mind and behaviour a compulsory subject for all branches in college education just like the mandatory foundation course. Colleges should also be instructed to offer mandatory life skills sessions as there are many

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who face problems when they enter college from school as they come out of their comfort zone.

- 11) Workshops for parents made mandatory twice a year for all grades across all boards.
- 12) Certificate courses on film therapy, bibliotherapy, expressive therapies, creative movement therapies can be provided to mental health professionals for them to be equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge.
- 13) To strengthen innovation and quality research, overcoming the lack of participation and/or true response is essential. For this a reward system can be brought in for those participating. For example - getting points for each research one has participated in could help them in their higher education (similar to the concept of sports quota). This will bring a vast difference in the way psychology students and practitioners are conducting research and will help researchers draw a rich data.

Recommendations for the Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly Population

- 14) Every residential welfare association (RWA) should be mandated to conduct weekly / fortnightly assessment camps for people with disabilities including elderly. These assessments should assess not only mental health but physical health as well by visiting their homes and suggesting best remedies.
- 15) Government should have provisions for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities including elderly for free by the government agencies. Funds for the same can be included in the tax component for which tax benefit can be provided.
- 16) For sensitizing people about disability, old-age and mental health, it should be made mandatory for everyone to be trained in handling people with such issues and get a certification for the same in order to gain employment.
- 17) Retirement policies need to be strengthened and must be neuro-psycho-socio-informed.
- 18) More avenues need to open up that allow for a 'second career' for people with disabilities and the elderly; social clubs for these population groups that provide avenues for engagement and sense of purpose.

Recommendations for the Marginalized Communities

- 19) Mental health should be inclusive in terms of gender and sexuality. There is a major shortage of therapists who understand the issues of individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community. Government can run mental health institutes that will primarily cater to the needs of marginalized communities. Moreover, these institutes should include course work and research bodies that would focus and develop working models for mental wellness of these individuals. It is recommended to have reservations for those who belong to the LGBTQIA+ community within these institutes.



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Recommendations for Healthcare Facilities

- 20) Special wings in hospitals and clinics be dedicated to providing psychotherapy or mental support through relevant therapy / counselling to people / patients suffering from chronic illnesses / painful conditions / autoimmune diseases and lifelong illnesses.
- 21) The facilities should also educate the family members, caregivers on how to be supportive and empathetic with such individuals

Recommendations for Public and Private Sector Organizations

- 22) Draft policies to ensure strict implementation of prevention of discrimination against employees who are impacted by mental health issues.
- 23) Implementing policies that enable reintegrating employees with a mental health problem into the workplace.

We look forward to your kind attention and support on the requests that have been proposed.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Saumya Goyal

President

WICCI National Mental Health Council

Dr. Shambhavi Samir Alve

Vice President

WICCI National Mental Health Council