

A psychosocial response to COVID-19

iCALL



mariwala
health
initiative

introduction

iCALL is a Field Action Project of the School of Human Ecology, Tata Institute of Social sciences. iCALL was established in September, 2012 with an objective of providing accessible, affordable and quality counseling services to individuals in distress; particularly those who belong to the marginalised communities. **Since its inception iCALL's counsellors have answered over 1.25 lakh calls, emails and chats collectively from 26 states and 5 Union territories across India and also from 20 different countries.**

iCALL is a national level telephonic, email and

chat-based facility which offers free counselling services to individuals in distress. The service is **run by trained professionals who provide information, emotional support, therapeutic services and referral linkages in 10 different regional languages** for individuals, in distress. When required, iCALL provides callers with referrals to other related services such as domestic violence shelters, legal aid etc.

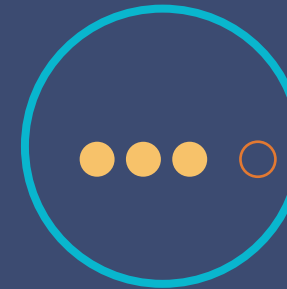
iCALL believes that distress is psychosocial in nature and needs to be contextualised in people's lives. iCALL adopts a strengths-based approach to its work and provides psychosocial counseling for over 20+ themes.

These themes include concerns such as emotional distress, relationship conflicts, academic concerns, mental health diagnosis, domestic violence, sexuality, suicide, self-harm.

Apart from providing psychosocial counseling services, **iCALL also engages in other activities such as research, curriculum development for and capacity enhancement of mental health and helping professionals, providing consultancy** to state governments, NGOs and International organisations (UNFPA, UNICEF and Facebook), and outreach & awareness creation on mental health and allied issues.



**experienced
in providing
psychosocial
services**



**trained in
working with
marginalized
groups**



**provided
training to diverse
stakeholders**



**services provided
in 10 different
regional languages**



**collaborated with
Government,
Non Governmental &
International organisations**



**research-based
insights**



**rooted within
an academic
institution**



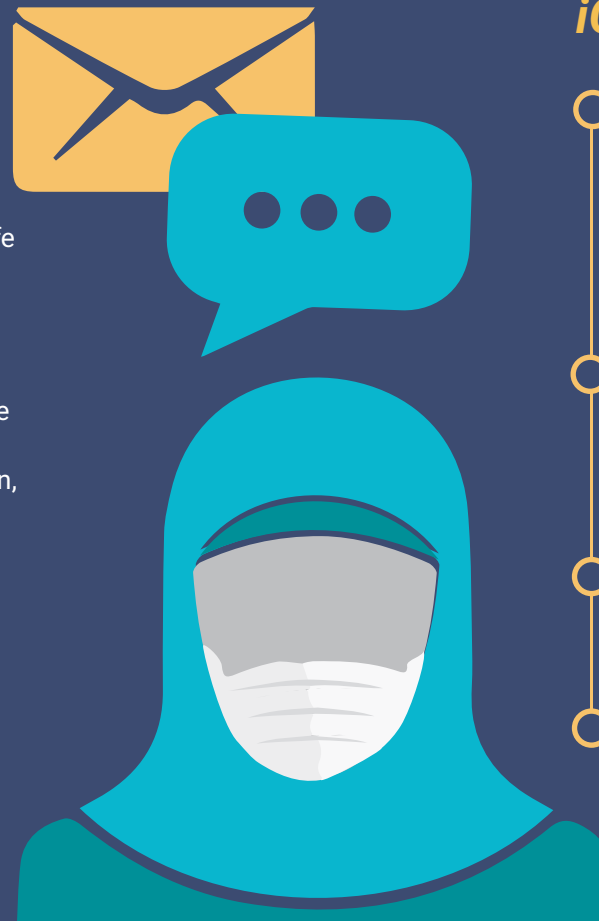
**developed mental health
content for users
& helping professionals**

iCALL's response to the COVID-19 crisis:

The COVID-19 pandemic presents not only a threat to physical health/life, but also to the psychosocial lives of individuals. Public health emergencies such as this, are known to have an impact on the psychosocial well-being of individuals, the effects of which can also be seen a long time after the outbreak has ended.

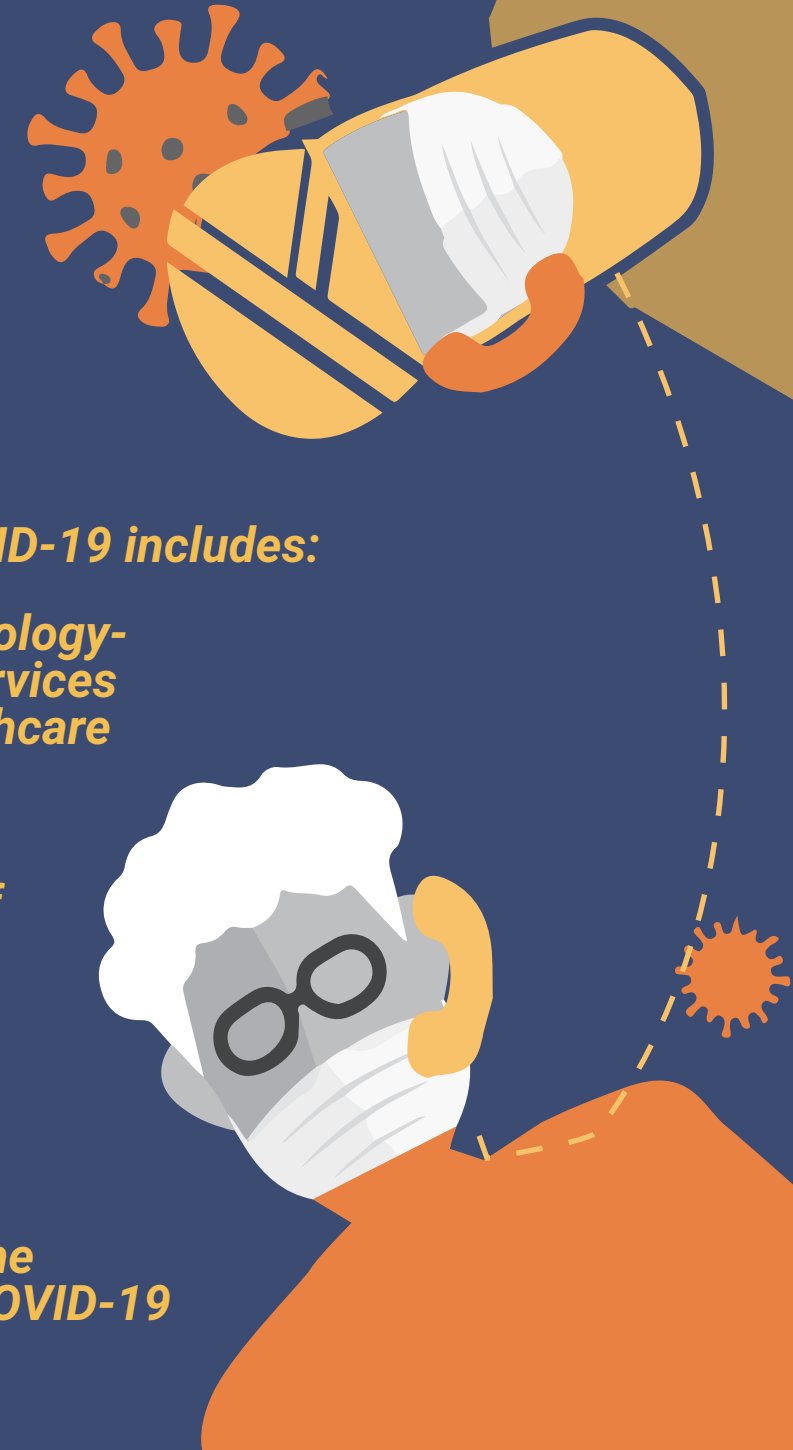
The necessary course of action pertaining to containment strategies, also has psychosocial consequences such as increase in anxiety and uncertainty about

future, loneliness, disruption of life plans, estrangement from family/loved ones, restrictions in movement and freedom, loss of livelihoods of people. The psychosocial impact is even more severe for marginalised and vulnerable groups such as women, survivors of abuse and violence, elderly, migrants, persons living with disabilities and also individuals with diverse gender and sexual expressions.



iCALL's response to the COVID-19 includes:

- ***enabling dedicated technology-assisted psychosocial services for general public & healthcare providers and counselors***
- ***enhancing the capacity of mental health & helping professionals***
- ***developing guidelines for psychosocial care***
- ***conducting research on the psychosocial impact of COVID-19***



435

*calls received
on the COVID-19 line
from different parts
of India*



enabling technology-assisted psychosocial services

In the light of the COVID-19 iCALL remotely offered its regular psychosocial counselling services from three new numbers. Clients are also able to access iCALL's services over telephone email or chat.

Additionally, iCALL launched another phone line dedicated to addressing the psychosocial impact of COVID-19. This service aims to assist individuals and communities with emotional and practical support by providing a safe space to address emotional distress, information related to COVID-19 & resultant consequences to health, livelihood, food, transportation and other areas of life — by linking individuals to appropriate

referrals, resources and services. The service will consciously attempt to reach out to marginalised groups to address the unique challenges faced by them in these difficult times.

Apart from initiating a dedicated helpline for general public, iCALL has also initiated a dedicated helpline for healthcare providers and counselors. Health care providers, who are at the forefront of the response to the pandemic, are especially vulnerable during this pandemic since they are more susceptible not only to infection from the virus but also to experiencing increased psychological distress owing to their professional roles.

It is against this background, that iCALL, TISS with the support of United Nations Population Fund, has launched a dedicated national-level counselling helpline 'SWAASTHI'. This service aspires to offer emotional support and referral linkages to aid the psychosocial wellbeing of healthcare providers and counselors so as to enhance their resilience.



enhancing the capacity of mental health & helping professionals

iCALL has participated in and hosted several webinars and workshops for mental health and helping professionals from across the country, who are involved in providing ground-level services to individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These webinars also address specific issues related to the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 such as skills in technology assisted counseling, ethics in technology assisted counseling, violence against women, self care of the counselors and mental health professionals, setting up technology assisted services

and ensuring well-being during COVID times. Furthermore, webinars cover issues regarding the ethics of psychosocial care, working with adolescents and working with clients with diverse gender and sexuality expressions.

Given the transition of mental health and helping services from face-to-face to technology-assisted modalities, due to the lockdown situation, iCALL has also launched a series of webinars to train mental health professionals (& organisations) on technology-assisted counseling.

iCALL, in partnership with UNFPA, UN Women & WHO started a capacity enhancement course on strengthening response to violence against women and girls. This initiative is implemented in partnership with Ministry of Women and Child Development in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha. The series covers approximately 750 counsellors across these states

iCALL is working with several developmental organisations and networks to advocate for integrating models of psychosocial care within their practice.

developing guidelines for psychosocial care

In the light of COVID-19, iCALL is involved in developing generic guidelines and protocols for providing psychosocial care pertinent to vulnerable and marginalised communities — addressing relevant issues such as violence, suicide and self-harm — for all age groups especially women and elderly persons.

iCALL also played an important role in guiding many government and non-government organisations in developing mental health protocols, interventions, strategies & products.

- *Assisting UNFPA Madhya Pradesh in developing guidelines for State counsellors offering counselling on issues related to COVID-19 and providing policies & practices pertaining to delivering counselling services on issues related to COVID-19.*
- *Creating a guideline on self-care for frontline healthcare workers in Madhya Pradesh.*
- *Assisting UNFPA Rajasthan to redesign roles of RKSK counsellors, enabling phone-based service delivery for adolescents.*
- *Providing UNFPA Madhya Pradesh*
- *Enabling Facebook (global) to address mental health concerns in times of COVID-19.*
- *Strengthening the response to violence against women and girls with support from UNFPA, UN Women & WHO*



creating content on psychosocial issues related to COVID-19

iCALL is actively engaged in creating IEC material on various psychosocial issues related to COVID-19 such as: anxiety, loneliness, uncertainty, working from home & the mental health of frontline workers. iCALL has also helped many of its partner organisations to develop multilingual mental health content relevant to their contexts. This content has also been made available in vernacular languages. iCALL created a separate section on its website for COVID-19 resources, enabling better access to such material.

- *Looking after your wellbeing amidst the lockdown*
- *Creating personal space at home during lockdown*
- *Working with overwhelming thoughts around COVID-19*
- *Dealing with loneliness during the COVID-19 lockdown*
- *Helping your child make sense of COVID-19*
- *Managing panic & anxiety around COVID-19*
- *Mental health tips for frontline health workers*
- *Managing your anxiety during COVID-19*
- *Becoming efficient at work from home*



outreach highlights

Since the lockdown, iCALL has offered services to **2500+ clients** via telephone, email and chat.

iCALL has **received 500 calls** from different parts of the country, accessing support for various psychosocial concerns.

14 psychologists joined iCALL as volunteers to offer psycho-social counseling services through the dedicated COVID line.

400 mental health professionals were trained through these two webinars.

Over **100 counsellors involved in the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram** from the state of Rajasthan attended an

iCALL webinar focused on offering counselling to adolescents and youth, on varied psychosocial issues.

3500 employees from an Engineering MNC attended an iCALL webinar on managing distress in times of COVID-19.

650 staff members of an MNC attended a workshop was conducted with a corporate organisation on resuming work & balancing mental health after the lockdown.

750 people attended an iCALL Instagram chat on managing mental wellbeing and dealing with loneliness during the lockdown.

16 doctors, psychiatrists and

psychologists associated with the Indian Medical Association attended iCALL's training on offering psychological support over telephone.

Several **members of the CurioCity Collective and Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad and Centre for Management of Health Services** attended iCALL's session on mental health and COVID-19.



what can iCALL do for you?



tailor-made webinars for multiple stakeholders



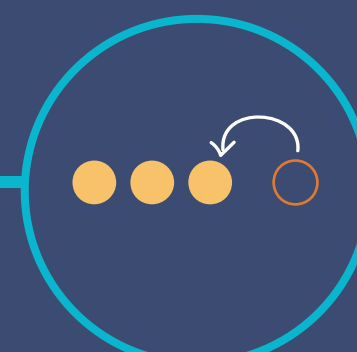
research to map the mental health impact of COVID-19



guidelines, protocols & content related to COVID-19 & mental health



training in tech-based psychosocial services



guidance on reaching marginalized groups

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