

Centre to identify two teachers in every govt school as 'health and wellness ambassadors'

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The Centre on Wednesday launched initiative under which two teachers in every government school will be identified as 'health and wellness ambassadors' to spread awareness about the preventive health aspects.

The School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat, which will be jointly run by the Union ministries of Health and Human Resources Development was launched by Union Health minister Harsh Vardhan, HRD minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey.

"The School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres shall foster the growth, development and educational achievement of school going children by promoting their health and well-being," Union Health minister Harsh Vardhan said as he rolled out of the joint initiative.

This initiative will further strengthen the concept of preventive, promotive and positive health, which forms the fundamental cornerstone of the health and wellness centres of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, he said.

This initiative will be effectively linked with other government initiatives such as Fit India movement, Eat Right campaign, Poshan Abhiyaan for an all-round and holistic development model of health for the school children, Vardhan said.

Vardhan stated the efforts put in by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for developing 24-hour curriculum, materials for training of nodal teachers and facilitators guide were developed in consultation with the Ministry of Health.

Emotional wellbeing and mental health, interpersonal relationships, gender equality, nutrition, health and sanitation, prevention and management of substance misuse, reproductive health and HIV prevention, safety and security against violence and injuries, and promotion of safe use of internet, media and social media are among the 11 identified themes.

"In this new initiative, health promotion and prevention activities program has been added in addition to ongoing health screening program through Rasthriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) teams and provision of services (IFA, Albendazole and sanitary napkins).

"While health screening and provision of services are ongoing activities, the newly added health promotion and prevention component will be implemented by two teachers identified in every school as 'Health and Wellness Ambassador'. These ambassadors will be supported by class monitors as 'Health and Wellness Messengers'," Vardhan said.

The minister said a National Resource Group (NRG) of 40 members has already been constituted by NCERT who have sound training skills and experience in adolescent health.

HRD minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said the teachers are the best mentors for the children and now they will also act as 'health and wellness ambassadors' and will disseminate various key information by organising

culturally sensitive activity based sessions for one hour per week for 24 weeks in a year to promote joyful learning.

The first phase of implementation will be in all the public upper primary, secondary and senior secondary schools of aspirational districts. Subsequently, remaining districts will be taken up in the second year, he said.