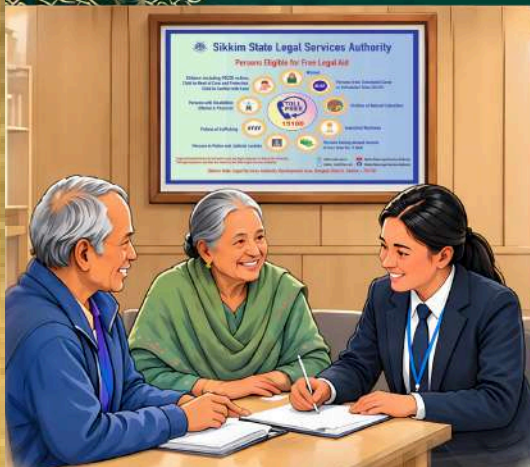
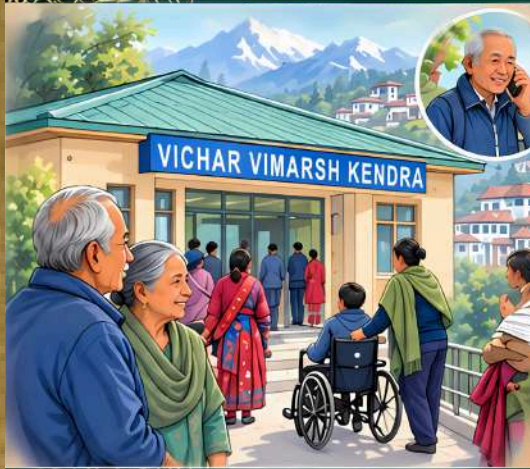




SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY



VICHAR VIMARSH KENDRA विचार-विमर्श केन्द्र (VVK)



Extended by Sikkim SLSA under
NALSA (JAGRITI -Justice Awareness for Grassroots Information and
Transparency Initiative) Scheme, 2025

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“VICHAR VIMARSH KENDRA (विचार-विमर्श केन्द्र)” (VVK)

Extended by the Sikkim SLISA under

**NALSA (JAGRITI -Justice Awareness for Grassroots Information and
Transparency Initiative) Scheme, 2025.**

1. INTRODUCTION:

- (a) Mental health and suicides concerns constitute a serious public health issue in the State of Sikkim.
- (b) Despite its relatively small population, Sikkim reported a high incidence of suicide compared to other States, over the years.
- (c) The causes are multifaceted and includes unemployment, socio-economic challenges, climate related vulnerabilities, limited access to quality healthcare, mental illness, family-related issues, substance abuse and alcoholism. These factors significantly contribute to anxiety and depression among children, youth and adults.
- (d) Additionally, there has been rise in issues relating to women and children, including offences under POCSO Act, trafficking, domestic violence, Children in conflict with law (CICL), Children in need of care and protection (CNCP), children with special needs and school dropouts.
- (e) Under various NALSA schemes, including:
 - (i) **NALSA (Legal Services to the Mentally Ill and Mentally Disabled Persons) Scheme, 2015.**
 - (ii) **NALSA (Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation) Scheme, 2015 and;**
 - (iii) Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, the Sikkim SLISA has undertaken awareness and intervention programmes. Psychological counseling is being conducted in schools, colleges, universities, correctional institutions and also for the employees of the government departments.

- (f) However, there remains a significant gap in accessibility to integrated support services for the vulnerable individuals due to poverty, discrimination, stigma and limited professional support. Therefore, establishment of a “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra” (*Counseling and Support Centre*) is proposed to provide coordinated access to legal, psychological and social support services through professionals.
- (g) The Centre shall extend services to senior citizens, differently abled persons and litigants (civil/criminal) whose cases are pending before the Hon'ble High Court and the District Courts of Sikkim.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME:

- (a) To provide accessible and professional counseling services.
- (b) To reduce mental health stigma and prevent suicides.
- (c) To facilitate legal awareness and access to justice.
- (d) To support victims of violence, abuse and vulnerable groups.
- (e) To provide referral services for medical, legal and rehabilitation support.
- (f) To ensure early intervention and crisis management.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE:

- (a) Since the “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra” under the Schemes above is at a nascent stage and the venue for the centre has not yet been finalised, it is proposed that a neutral and appropriate space be identified where counseling may be conducted in a confidential and anonymous manner. Accordingly, the Sikkim SLSA proposes to write to and consult with the State Government for identification of a suitable venue for the aforesaid Centre.
- (b) Essential infrastructure shall include:
- Computer system with internet (BSNL/FTTH).
 - Webcam, Audio system for virtual counseling.
 - Dedicated helpline number.
 - Office furniture and storage.
 - Confidential record keeping system.
 - Dedicated helpline Number.
- (c) Further, a mobile handset along with a dedicated number shall be provided for the official use of the Coordinator to ensure accessibility and timely response.

4. HUMAN RESOURCE:

(a) As per *sub-regulation (2)* of Regulation 9 of the NALSA (Free and Competent Legal Services) Regulations, 2010, the Executive Chairman, Sikkim SLISA is empowered to maintain a separate panel of experts including:

- Advocates.
- Psychologists.
- Mediators.

(b) FULL-TIME COORDINATOR WITH OFFICE ATTENDANT:

(i) A Coordinator shall be appointed, on contractual basis, for day-to-day functioning of the Centre by the Hon'ble Executive Chairperson, Sikkim SLISA.

(ii) Qualifications:

- The candidate must be a Graduate and should hold a Certificate/Diploma in Computer Science or Information Technology (IT).
- The candidate must have minimum 2 years' experience in application maintenance and support.
- The candidate must have good oral and written communication skills in English and in local language.
- The candidate must mandatorily be a local resident of Sikkim.

(iii) Remuneration: 35,000/- per month.

(iv) An Office Attendant shall be appointed to assist the Coordinator in his/her day to day administrative and logistical functions of the Centre.

(v) Qualifications:

- The candidate must have passed Class XII from a recognized Board.
- The candidate must mandatorily be a local resident of Sikkim.

(vi) Remuneration: ₹15,000/- per month.

(c) **MODALITIES FOR FUNCTIONING OF VICHAR VIMARSH KENDRA:**

(a) Application may be received through:

- Email.
- Walk-in.
- Helpline.

(b) The Coordinator shall:

- Register cases.
- Coordinate with the Member Secretary, Sikkim SLA.
- Assign Counselors.

(c) The Coordinator shall receive applications (*if any*) through email or through visits to the Centre by the beneficiaries and shall in turn directly liaise with the Member Secretary, Sikkim SLA for the appointment of an appropriate Counselor, as per the requirements.

(d) For counseling, in the matters pending before the Ld Courts in Sikkim or in pre-litigative matters, Advocates practicing before the Hon'ble High Court of Sikkim and the various district courts in the state of Sikkim, or the parties who desire to utilize the counseling facility available under the “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra” shall book an appointment online and inform the Coordinator, either through online or physical mode, who shall coordinate with the Member Secretary of this Authority, for allotment of a counselor for the purpose above.

(d) **TYPES OF COUNSELING:**

- Individual counseling.
- Family counseling.
- Legal counseling.
- Crisis intervention.
- Online/Video counseling.

(e) **MODES OF SEEKING COUNSELING:**

(a) **Through helpline:** Counseling services may be accessed through a dedicated helpline, which shall serve as an immediate and accessible point of contact for individuals in need of assistance.

(b) **Through walk-in:** Individuals may access counseling by visiting the Centre, where appropriate assessment and expert assistance shall be provided.

(c) **Referral:** Through courts, police, NGOs, institutions.

(f) CASE PRIORITIZATION AND SCHEDULING:

- (a) Priority shall be given to:
- POCSO Cases.
 - Victims of sexual offences/acid attacks.
 - Children and Senior citizens.
 - Persons with disabilities.
 - Substance abuse cases.
- (b) The Counsellors (*Senior Panel Advocates, Trained Mediators, Psychiatrists, Marriage Counsellors, Psychologists*) shall prioritize the cases coming before them in such a manner as to give sufficient consideration to the necessities of urgent intervention. As far as practicable and subject to individual needs in specific cases, first priority shall be given to cases registered under the POCSO Act, cases of rape victims and acid attack survivors, Senior Citizens, as well as mentally/physically challenged persons/children and thereafter, to persons habitual of substance abuse and those having matrimonial and family disputes.
- (c) The aforementioned Counsellors shall maintain their schedule in such a manner as to ensure that the beneficiaries do not have to wait for long periods of time, without any justifiable reasons.

(g) PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

- (i) Strict confidentiality of record.
- (ii) Secure data management.
- (iii) Limited access to sensitive information and ethical counseling practices.
- a) A register shall be maintained at the “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra” by the Coordinator, indicating the names of the beneficiaries to whom counseling has been extended, which shall be monitored by the Member Secretary, Sikkim SLA.
- b) The interaction with beneficiaries and record keeping, thereof, shall be conducted with utmost regard to the privacy and confidentiality of the beneficiaries and their issues in the “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra”.

(h) RECORDING AND MONITORING:

- (I) Maintain case registers and digital records.
- (ii) Track outcomes and follow ups.
- (iii) Monthly reporting to SLA.

- (a) The Coordinator would maintain record of all the sessions including final outcome to evaluate the effectiveness, of the interventions and follow up actions in a register provided at the “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra”. The same shall be maintained confidentially.

(i) **REFERRAL MECHANISM:**

- (a) If the counselor is of the view that the beneficiary requires any other services like legal aid, medical, mental health care intervention or of any other agency, then he/she shall refer the matter to Member Secretary, Sikkim SLA, through the Coordinator for necessary action.

- (b) Cases requiring additional support shall be referred to:

- (i) Hospitals (Mental health/medical case)
- (ii) Legal Aid Services.
- (iii) Police/Protection Officers.
- (iv) NGOs/Rehabilitation Centres.

(j) **AWARENESS AND OUTREACH:**

- (i) Awareness programmes in schools, colleges, communities.
- (ii) Collaboration with DLSAs.
- (iii) Media and publicity campaigns.
- (iv) Legal Literacy Camps.

- (a) SLA/DLSAs shall endeavor to give wide publicity to the availability of counseling services, ensuring mass outreach through awareness programmes of the “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra” established under the NALSA (JAGRITI -Justice Awareness for Grassroots Information and Transparency Initiative) Scheme, 2025.

(k) **FINANCIAL OUTLAY:**

- (a) Expenses for infrastructure setup shall be met up from the State Fund.
- (b) Expense for awareness and honorarium to the counselors shall be met from the NALSA fund.
- (c) Honorarium of Counselors: ₹2,000/- per sitting, per day for counselors (*including virtual sessions*).

(d) Remuneration of Coordinator: ₹35,000/- per month.

(e) Remuneration of Office Attendant: ₹15,000/- per month.

(l) **MONITORING AND EVALUATION:**

- (i) Periodic review by Member Secretary, Sikkim SLISA.
- (ii) Quarterly performance reports.
- (iii) Feedback from beneficiaries.

The Establishment of “Vichar Vimarsh Kendra” will provide an integrated accessible and structured support system addressing mental health, legal awareness and social challenges in Sikkim. The Centre will act as a vital bridge between vulnerable individuals and institutional support systems.
