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# Mental healthcare to reach every nook and corner of Tamil Nadu

*Mental healthcare is getting increasingly accessible in urban spaces. But people in rural areas, especially the poor and homeless, continue to live with little or no support.*



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For representational purposes

**By Omjasvin MD**

**Express News Service**

CHENNAI: Mental healthcare is getting increasingly accessible in urban spaces. But people in rural areas, especially the poor and homeless, continue to live with little or no support. To change this, Banyan, an NGO for mental health, has joined hands with the Tamil Nadu government to help the homeless in 10 rural districts of the State. The move is set to benefit thousands of people who live on the streets.

Adequate district-based acute care services aren't available, and the pandemic has caused more people to be in need of therapy, says Mrinalini Ravi, co-lead, Sundram Fasteners Centre for Social Action and Research at the Banyan Academy. "The project includes outreach to homeless people, civic society, and provision of food and clothing. We will identify and link the homeless to a support system," she adds.

Patients who need support would be referred to the government's Emergency Care and Recovery Centre. "They would be offered psychiatric, psychological and social care treatment, besides counselling for vocational training and job opportunities. After three or four months, we will identify their families," she explains.

Thanjavur, Madurai, Tenkasi, The Nilgris, Thirunelveli, Kanniyakumari, Sivagangai, Erode, Cuddalore and Krishnagiri are set to benefit from this initiative. This project is already being implemented in five districts - Theni, Villupuram, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, and Tiruppur. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) will provide technical expertise for the project, put together the workforce, and train people.

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