

After Mumbai, Pune gets 24X7 mental health helpline

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THE Vandrevala Foundation on Tuesday launched its Mental Health Helpline, similar to the one operational in Mumbai.

According to a press release, this is part of the next stage in the foundation's 'Mental Health Initiative-India'.

The foundation's work in the area of mental health started with a 24x7 Mental Health helpline at Mumbai.

The helpline (9522-25706000) which became operational in August 2009, offers telephonic counselling to people on a range of mental health issues. In recognition of its contribution to mental health issues the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has given the Foundation's helpline the status of an 'official' BMC helpline.

After Mumbai, Pune is the first city to be added on to the helpline grid, which ultimately aims at having a pan-India presence. Dr Arun John, executive vice president, said, "The helpline is manned by certified clinical psychologists who have been trained to counsel people over the phone. The counsellors speak Marathi, Hindi and English. The helpline also has tie-ups with other support services to deal with psychiatric emergencies as well as assist people in various areas of mental healthcare." In addition to patients the Helpline will be of great benefit to families as well as the general community.

The helpline follows a three-tier system wherein the call is received by a trained clinical psychologist and then depending upon the severity and complexity of the call, it is escalated to tier II level which is manned by trained psychiatrists. In life threatening cases, wherein the caller may exhibit violent or suicidal tendencies or in acute psychiatric emergencies, the call is escalated further and senior psychiatrists also get involved.