



CHILDLINE 1098 IS NOT LOCKED DOWN

15th April 2020, Mumbai: CHILDLINE 1098 the national emergency helpline for children in distress is not locked down. The service continues to receive calls, provide information, emotional support to children, take up interventions on the ground to prevent abuse and assist children in distress. During the COVID- 19 Pandemic, apart from the regular case reporting, the helpline has become an important source for linking people to food, other amenities, facilitate health related interventions like vaccinations, transport, restoration of children with parents and the like.

Unlike other tele-helpline numbers, CHILDLINE 1098 supports not only through tele-service but has an active outreach in the districts. The designated teams take up interventions on the ground while working closely with the related Government Departments and active support from the local district administration. Out of the 4.6 Lakh calls responded by the helpline during the last 21 days from March 20th to April 10th 2020, of which majority of the time was under the lock down period. 30% of the calls were from the northern region, followed by 29% from the Western region, and 21% and 20% from Southern and eastern regions respectively. These calls include calls for information, active intervention, prank/crank calls, or even silent calls even where the confidence building of the caller is undertaken. The helpline is providing information about COVID-19 prevention as well as referring to the relief services through district level linkages.

A total of 9385 interventions were taken up on the ground by the frontline unsung heroes during this period. Of these, 30% of the cases were related to Corona pandemic situation. Within the corona related interventions, 91% of them requested for food while 6% were for medical assistance and the remaining were help on transportation.

As the helpline for children in distress, CHILDLINE continues to prevent abuse of children as well as rescue them from abusive situations. Of these 9385 interventions, to name a major few categories; CHILDLINE emergency interventions for child protection aspects (protection from abuse) accounted for 20% which includes preventing child marriage, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, trafficking, abandonment, neglect, child labour etc. About 9% of the calls were related to health aspects, support for other resources 7%, missing children and Education Related accounted for 5% each. Emotional support and guidance was provided to a large number of children to alleviate their fears and anxieties. However, it is felt that a large number of children may not have had opportunities to report their distress as they may not have access to mobile phones, their friends, teachers or other concerned adults. In this regard the helpline is planning to actively follow up on the cases of abuse reported to ensure that they are safe. CHILDLINE provides emergency immediate assistance and connects with relevant authorities like police, child welfare committee, and district administration for long term rehabilitation.

CHILDLINE service has been identifying vulnerable children and adults like migrants, nomadic population, tribal, pavement dwellers and street children on the ground in the districts and linking them to other donors and District Administration for continuation of relief services. Apart from working with the District Administration, teams have been supporting the Health Department in providing awareness on COVID 19, distributing the safety masks and sanitizer to '*break the chain*', working with the labour department and down to the Panchayat level. Some of the district CHILDLINES has been actively engaging children in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) and through online activities to provide them with recreation.

As a response to the Pandemic situation, Childline India Foundation had to ensure the safety of the teams through advisories, and direction to ensure the timely presence of the teams, at the same time motivate them to overcome their fear through safety measures. In spite of their presence on the ground they often meet with challenges related to their commuting from place to place while on rescue. The line departments often come to their rescue to support them with transport. However, communities are fast quarantining themselves, and are not allowing any outsider to enter their villages; therefore they find it difficult to rescue a child from such communities. Shelter for the child rescued is also an issue in some districts as the child care institutions are hesitant to receive new children. The rehabilitation aspects are getting delayed due to lack of railways and other transport.

CHILDLINE is present in 571+ districts and 128 railway stations, covering over 77% of the country. The long-term goal is for CHILDLINE to be present in every district and provide pan-India access and protection for children. CHILDLINE India Foundation is the nodal agency appointed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India to initiate, implement and monitor CHILDLINE 1098 services across the country.

About Us

CHILDLINE 1098 is India's first and only 24-hour, toll-free, emergency phone outreach service for children in need of care and protection, linking them to long-term services for rehabilitation. Any child or concerned adult who calls the 1098 helpline number is provided with emergency assistance. Based on the child's need, he/she is referred to a relevant organization for crisis intervention and long-term rehabilitation and follow-up. CHILDLINE works in tandem with Child Protection Structures at the district and state level, multiple stakeholders, including the Government, civil society organizations, corporates and community, to ensure that child's protection becomes everyone's mandate.

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