

Published: March 26, 2013 00:00 IST | Updated: March 26, 2013 06:07 IST

## **New mental health policy in May**

Special Correspondent

The new mental health policy of the State will come into force in May, Health Minister V.S. Sivakumar has said.

Replying to a submission by Leader of the Opposition V.S. Achuthanandan in the Assembly on Monday, he said a committee which had been entrusted the task of modifying the mental health policy of 2000, to suit the current requirements of the State, had already submitted a draft document to the government.

The new State mental health policy envisaged convergence of various departments for the care and rehabilitation of the mentally ill. Mr. Sivakumar said the district mental health programme (DMHP) would be implemented in all 14 districts.

### **Community model**

The programme which implemented a community-model of care for mental health patients, with free clinics and medicines at the primary health centre-level, was being successfully carried out in Thiruvananthapuram district for the past few years. Mr. Sivakumar said Kerala would be the first State to implement the DMHP in all districts.

He said the government had created several new posts to ensure that the shortage of staff did not affect the smooth functioning of mental health centres.

Already, six assistant surgeons, 60 staff nurses and one RMO had been appointed at the mental health centres in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur, and Kozhikode.

These apart, the government would soon be creating 99 new posts of employees and doctors for the mental health centres, he added.

Printable version | Mar 28, 2015 10:58:08 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/new-mental-health-policy-in-may/article4549603.ece>

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