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Office of the Chief Public Relations Officer
Jamia Millia Islamia

Press Release

JMI and SPYM launch landmark Peer Support Volunteer Programme and Wellness Connect Helpline App in alignment with the directions of the Hon'ble SC, Ministries of Education and Social Justice and Empowerment and the UGC

New Delhi, November 18, 2026

In a significant and pioneering initiative to strengthen mental health and emotional well-being among university students, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), through its Mental Health and Wellness Cell, in collaboration with the Society for the Promotion of Youth & Masses (SPYM), yesterday launched an innovative Peer Support Volunteer Programme and the Jamia Wellness Connect Helpline App. Conceived as a comprehensive, student-centric support mechanism, the initiative aims to make timely, accessible, confidential, and meaningful mental health assistance available to students across the university. ***This makes JMI among the first universities in the country to have a comprehensive health policy in place closely aligned to the directives of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, various ministries of the Government of India, and the University Grants Commission (UGC).***

The programme and the helpline app were formally inaugurated and unveiled by the Vice-Chancellor, JMI, Prof. Mazhar Asif, and the Registrar, JMI, Prof. Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, in the presence of Shri K. Narayan, SPYM; Mr. Gary Ried, SPYM; Prof. Zubair Meenai, Chairman, Mental Health and Wellness Cell; and Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, JMI, who conceptualized and spearheaded the initiative.

At the heart of this ambitious and carefully designed initiative, which will place JMI at the forefront of student mental health and wellness support, is **a dedicated cohort of 40 Peer Support Volunteers drawn from different departments and centres of JMI.** They will work under the guidance of faculty mentors with whom they have been attached, in addition to the intensive training that they have already received from trained counsellors of SPYM as well as from the university's Department of Psychology, to enable them to combine peer engagement with professional psychological guidance and supervision.

The selection of the volunteers followed a rigorous and competitive process. As many as 140 students responded to a widely publicized Expression of Interest issued in August

2026. Following a stringent selection process and final interviews, only 40 candidates were selected. The selected volunteers subsequently underwent intensive training to equip them with the necessary skills, know-how, empathy, and sensitivity to support fellow students. The programme, one of a kind in the country, represents a carefully structured and integrated model of peer-led support, backed by professional expertise, under the overall supervision of JMI, characterized by a strong commitment to confidentiality and student welfare.

A major highlight of the initiative is the Jamia Wellness Connect digital helpline, accessible through WhatsApp at **9911266684**. Designed to ensure simple, prudent, and also discreet and convenient access to support, the technology-enabled helpline available in three languages, English, Hindi, and Urdu, provides students with an easy three-step process to seek counselling and help. The platform places particular emphasis on accessibility, privacy, choice, and the dignity of students. Students can seek assistance using a nickname of their choice and choose whether they wish to speak with a male or female counsellor, depending on their comfort and preference. They can also access support at a time convenient to them. Through the helpline, students can communicate their concerns to trained peer support volunteers, who will provide appropriate counselling and, wherever necessary, seek further assistance from the attached faculty members, who in turn serve as mentors to the student volunteers. Cases requiring intervention beyond counselling and faculty mentor support will be referred to a hospital or appropriate medical facility.

The helpline also incorporates access to the Police Emergency Response Number **112**, enabling students to seek emergency assistance when required. The initiative seeks to create a reliable and highly efficient, as well as dependable, support ecosystem in which students can seek help without hesitation, stigma, or fear of compromising their privacy.

Congratulating the student volunteers and the university's Mental Health and Wellness Cell, SPYM, and the concerned departments on the successful launch of the programme, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Mazhar Asif said, "Our youth are increasingly confronted with unprecedented financial, psychological, and emotional stresses. Providing meaningful support, promoting mental wellness and safeguarding their overall well-being is one of our most important responsibilities." Prof. Asif added, "JMI has developed this initiative to ensure that students have access to quality mental health support throughout the year, with round-the-clock assistance in the comfort of their university environment. I believe this programme will be a lasting contribution of JMI not only to its students but also to the youth and the nation. We hope to expand this initiative further to demonstrate that institutional willingness and commitment, professional anchorage, and dedicated student participation can achieve powerfully positive outcomes."

Registrar, JMI, Prof. Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, too, congratulated the Mental Health and Wellness Cell, SPYM, and student volunteers for their sustained efforts in transposing the abstract concept into a functional and real digital support system in record time. He said, “This initiative reflects JMI's vision and longstanding mission of providing psychological and emotional support to its students. It is inspiring as well as humbling that nearly 140 students came forward for this honorable and selfless responsibility. We salute their spirit of service." Prof. Rizvi observed, “Today’s launch demonstrates JMI’s commitment to the mental well-being of its over 22,000-strong student community. It also resonates and aligns with the broader emphasis placed on mental health in keeping with the directives issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, as well as the UGC.

Shri K. Narayan, National Mentor, SPYM, said that his organization had placed its firm faith in JMI as the most suited and well-equipped university to implement and run such an initiative. He observed, "JMI’s academic strength, intellectual depth, philosophical legacy, and student-centric ethos made it an ideal institution to set a national benchmark." He added that the programme could serve as a valuable model for other universities to emulate and learn from.

Mr. Gary Ried, National Technical Advisor, SPYM, known worldwide for his innovative approaches in the domain of mental health, who played a key role in the development and successful launch of the programme by bringing the expertise and learnings from beyond the India example, said, "What JMI has achieved through this initiative is remarkable. The rare combination of passion to serve society and a sense of purpose and resolve to transform the lives of young people has the potential to make the programme an exemplary one, which in turn will go a long way in establishing JMI as a gold standard in student mental health and wellness support, not only in India and South Asia but globally." “What makes this programme particularly special is the commitment of student volunteers who are dedicating their time to support fellow students in distress, offering understanding, companionship, and support. The university, while taking ownership of this extraordinary initiative, must nurture its potential with patience and conviction," he added.

Prof. Zubair Meenai, Chairman, Mental Health and Wellness Cell and Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, JMI, expressed satisfaction at the rigorous training imparted to the selected volunteers and congratulated the 40 students entrusted with supporting their peers across the university. He expressed confidence that the programme would be progressively expanded into an exemplary model of student mental health support. He thanked Prof. Asif and Prof. Rizvi for their personal involvement and unwavering support throughout the process and lauded SPYM's invaluable technical, logistical, material, and intellectual contributions to the ideation and implementation of the programme and the app. “By bringing together trained student volunteers, professional counsellors, faculty

mentorship, digital accessibility, and institutional support, JMI has created an integrated and responsive mechanism for addressing the mental health needs of its students. To that extent, the initiative remains unprecedented in its potentiality and scalability," Prof. Meenai added.

The launch of the Peer Support Volunteer Programme and Jamia Wellness Connect Helpline App marks a watershed moment in JMI's continuing efforts to place student welfare, health, and well-being at the center of university life.

Prof. Saima Saeed
Chief Public Relations Officer


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