

"Empowering Rural Communities: The Saksham Program Journey"



Embarking on the JSW Foundation Fellowship program was a transformative experience, leading me to immerse myself in the realm of intellectual and developmental disabilities in rural Raigad, Maharashtra. Recognizing the distinct challenges faced in rural areas, I quickly realized that community-based rehabilitation was the most effective approach.

My efforts centered on community outreach, prioritizing early identification and intervention for those lacking access to rehabilitation services. Understanding the pivotal role of caregivers/parents, I focused on empowering them to nurture their children's development. Initiatives like community counseling, tele-counseling, and a WhatsApp group facilitated a sense of community and support among caregivers.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this journey was the success of our four-day intensive training program, Saksham. Conducted in collaboration with Nayi Disha Hyderabad and including parents from Aai Day Care Centre, Saksham aimed to equip caregivers with the knowledge and skills essential for supporting their children's development.

Comprising five modules conducted in Marathi and Hindi, Saksham addressed crucial topics such as acceptance, combating stigma, managing challenging behaviors, enhancing communication skills, and addressing parental concerns. Each module focused on empowering parents to understand and plan for their child's unique needs.

Module 1, the "empower module," emphasized the importance of fostering strong emotional connections with children and nurturing positive relationships. It highlighted the essential

foundational skills crucial for both parents and children in the context of home-based intervention.

Module 2 delved into strategies for expanding a child's communication skills, while Module 3 underscored the significance of establishing consistent daily routines to foster independence in completing daily tasks.

Module 4 equipped parents with strategies for promoting positive behavior and understanding sensory processing, laying the groundwork for effective intervention.

Lastly, Module 5 emphasized child safety and protection, providing resources and guidance to create a safe home environment and access support when needed.

By equipping parents with comprehensive knowledge and skills, the Saksham program empowers them to advocate for their children's well-being and actively participate in their development. It's a testament to the transformative power of community-driven initiatives in rural areas, fostering inclusivity and empowerment.