

Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)

Roles and Responsibilities - Exam Notes

QUESTION

Describe the roles and responsibilities of Accredited Social Health Activist - ASHA.

a. Selection and position of ASHA - 1 mark

b. Main roles of ASHA - 4 marks

c. Importance in national health programmes - 1 mark

a. Selection and Position of ASHA

- **Selection Criteria:** An ASHA must be a resident of the village and a woman (preferably married, widow, or divorced) in the age group of 25 to 45 years with formal education up to the eighth class. She should possess good communication skills and leadership qualities.
- **Population Norm:** The general norm of selection is one ASHA for 1000 population. In tribal, hilly, and desert areas, the norm can be relaxed to one ASHA per habitation.
- **Position:** She acts as an interface or bridge between the community and the health care system (including the ANM and Anganwadi worker). She is accountable to the Panchayat.

b. Main Roles of ASHA

The responsibilities of an ASHA worker are community-centric and encompass preventive, promotive, and basic curative care:

Health Education and Awareness

She creates awareness and provides information to the community on determinants of health, such as nutrition, basic sanitation, hygienic practices, healthy living, and the need for timely utilization of health services.

Counselling on MCH

She counsels women on birth preparedness, the importance of institutional/safe delivery, exclusive breast-feeding, complementary feeding, immunization, contraception, and prevention of common infections including reproductive tract infections/sexually transmitted infections (RTI/STI).

Community Mobilization and Facilitation

She mobilizes the community and facilitates them in accessing health services at Anganwadi/Sub-centres/PHCs, such as Antenatal Care (ANC), postnatal check-ups, immunization, and supplementary nutrition.

Escort Services

She arranges escort services and accompanies pregnant women and children requiring treatment or admission to the nearest pre-identified health facility (PHC/CHC/First Referral Unit).

Primary Medical Care and Depot Holder

She provides primary medical care for minor ailments like diarrhoea, fevers, and first-aid for minor injuries. She acts as a depot holder for essential provisions like Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), Iron Folic Acid (IFA) tablets, chloroquine, disposable delivery kits, oral contraceptive pills, and condoms.

Village Health Planning

She works with the Village Health and Sanitation Committee of the Gram Panchayat to develop a comprehensive village health plan.

Vital Events and Surveillance

She informs the Sub-centre/PHC about the births and deaths in her village and reports any unusual health problems or disease outbreaks in the community.

Sanitation Promotion

She promotes the construction of household toilets under the total sanitation campaign.

c. Importance in National Health Programmes

ASHA workers are the backbone of grass-root implementation for various National Health Programmes:

Programme	Importance / Role of ASHA
National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)	She acts as a Directly Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS) provider to ensure treatment compliance.
Maternal and Child Health (NRHM/RCH)	She is a critical component of the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), tracking pregnancies and motivating/escorting mothers for institutional deliveries to reduce the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR). She also conducts Home Based Newborn Care (HBNC) visits to decrease neonatal mortality.
Vector-Borne and Endemic Diseases	She plays a vital role in disease surveillance and management. For Malaria, she utilizes Rapid Diagnostic Kits (RDks) and administers radical treatment. For Leprosy and Kala-azar, she receives specific incentives for active case finding, referring suspected cases, and ensuring treatment completion.

Exam Focus: resident village woman - one ASHA per 1000 population - bridge between community and health care system - health education - MCH counselling - depot holder - DOTS provider - JSY/HBNC.