

## **Mental Health Policy**

Higher education is a key pathway for social transformation and social mobility along with the upliftment of individuals, households, and in turn communities. Mental health and well-being of students is an integral part of holistic development. Considering its importance, NEP-2020 addresses this issue and provides that to ensure the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of the students, support centres and career counsellors are to be made available for all students in the higher education institutions (HEIs) The policy has emphasised not only on learning based on developing cognitive competencies, but also skills, attitudes, and behaviours which will enable building character and creating holistic and skilled individuals, equipped with key 21st-century skills.

World Health Organization (WHO, 1948) clearly states that "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." WHO further states that mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. Skills like understanding, expressing, and regulating emotions, as well as the ability to adapt and cope with challenging situations, are essential for good mental health and well being. Taking steps to protect and enhance an individual's mental health and well-being is crucial for a fulfilling and happy life. When students are not able to manage their personal social issues and concerns effectively, it can have severe consequences, like constant feeling of sadness, dissatisfaction and frustration, mood swings, feeling of hopelessness, etc. and in extreme cases may also lead to self-harm, including suicide. 'Every Child Matters' is the underlying belief in developing the Guidelines for prevention of suicide. The reasons for suicide are complex and differ from individual to individual. It is also important to know that at times, suicide can be an impulsive act that can take place due to immediate stress-causing events. Every suicide is a clear reminder of compromised mental

well-being at the individual's level and ineffectiveness of the preventive and well-being promoting mechanisms around the individual.

### **Action Taken**

- A mental health committee has been formed under the leadership of the College Principal, where each member is oriented in handling crisis situations. When a student displaying warning signs has been identified by any stakeholder, they need to be reported to the committee, which takes immediate action. The committee will play an important role in implementation of college activities directed towards creating awareness about mental well-being, leading towards suicide prevention.
- A qualified counsellor, psychologist and social worker have been appointed / engaged for creating awareness about the mental health.
- Mentor-Mentee Committee has been formulated. One mentor is appointed for handling a group of 20-25 students.
- Helpline numbers including Tele-Manas is provided to the students to address their mental health and psychosocial issues. This unique helpline is manned by a pool of experienced counsellors/ Psychologists and other mental health professionals
- Creates environment that respects and protects the basic rights of everyone, including people with mental health problems.
- Strengthen community networks and encourage collective responsibility for preventing alcohol/drug abuse, gender discrimination and community and family violence
- Encourage stakeholders that are involved in promoting mental health and well-being, e.g. working with women's clubs on gender issues or with a local non-governmental organization focusing on early interventions with children.
- Facilitate Inclusion in Community-Based Programmes.

- Overcome Stigma and Discrimination in the Community.
- Yoga and Physical Education Being physically active is very crucial for overall well-being of the mind and the body. Any form of exercise, must form a part of every one's routine to stay healthy. Modern research has shown that one of the most effective ways for reducing cortisol production and related stress response in body is yoga and Physical Education

With the emerging needs and concerns of students coming from diverse backgrounds and aspirations, a holistic and comprehensive guidance system in the form of counselling and wellbeing services for mental health and emotional wellbeing of students has become essential.

## **HELPLINE NUMBERS**

**Tele-MANAS** (Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States) is India's 24/7 national tele-mental health program. It provides free, confidential, and professional psychological support to individuals across all states and union territories.

**Toll-Free Numbers:** Dial **14416** (short code) or **1-800-891-4416**.