DRAFT SVKM's NMIMS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING POLICY GUIDELINES

Universities are not only centres of knowledge creation and learning, but also play a vital role in fostering individual capability, personal growth, and holistic development. With the growing complexities of modern education and the increasing diversity on campuses, the mental health and overall well-being of students, faculty, and staff must be a central focus of institutional policies and programmes.

This policy is applicable to all students, faculty, and staff across the Schools, Departments, Institutions, and Campuses of SVKM's NMIMS. It shall also extend to any such entities that may be established in the future under the aegis of SVKM's NMIMS.

1. Aims and Objectives:

i. To create an awareness and cater to mental health needs of all NMIMS stake holders.
ii. To reduce stigma and discrimination emerging out of mental health issues through sensitization and education.
iii. Provide support services and access to resources to address mental health concerns on campus.
iv. Strengthen institutional capacity for prevention and early intervention in concerns relating to mental health.
v. Implement a risk-response mechanism for high-risk cases

2. Provisions:

The following provisions are set in place to meet the objectives of the policy.

i. *Awareness Program:*
   a) At the beginning of every academic session, new entrants will be addressed by the institution's counselling (psychologist) team which enables them to familiarise themselves with the psychologists and avail help when required.

This can help create a supportive and well-informed environment at the outset of their educational journey.

b) Parental Engagement: Institutions are to conduct regular mental health awareness sessions for parents.
c) Workshops: Every school will organize mental health related activities and workshops to support students and spread awareness throughout the academic year.
d) Students and staff members are responsible for contributing to creating a safe and non- threatening university environment in which mental health is promoted.

ii. *Peer Group support Training:*

Training students and faculty along with orientation in being first responders to mental health concerns of their peers/friends/students and guiding them to the institution's support team. All staff must receive mandatory training on identifying warning sign, providing psychological first aid, and referral mechanisms.

iii. *Liaison with external mental health services:*

In cases of severe distress, the student may be referred for psychometric assessment and psychiatric consultation to external qualified Mental Health Professionals.

iv. *Anti-Ragging Measures:*

Strict implementation and an active anti-ragging cell, helpline numbers and other support systems to be in place.

v. *Academic Accommodations:*

Provisions for academic accommodation will be made as per the Student Rule Book (SRB) guidelines on case-to-case basis to extend support to student's undergoing mental health issues. An Academic Break is provisioned to students for this purpose. The SRB maybe referred to in order to understand eligibility criteria and rules regarding the same.

3. Confidentiality

3.1. The Institution is committed to protecting student privacy and creating a supportive environment devoid of fear. For this purpose, a clear confidentiality clause exists to secure privacy of students availing counselling. Case Review Protocols will be considered which aims at sharing only necessary case details and discussing case anonymously to provide support to student.

3.1.1. In accordance with mental Health care Act 2017, confidentiality may be breached in exceptional circumstances, such as cases where there is risk of self-harm, suicidality or harm to others. In such cases, the counsellor may contact the student's emergency contact person, family members or someone in a position to prevent the potential harm, revealing only necessary information. Students will be informed about the breach of the confidentiality.

Confidential Reporting: A secure, stigma-free system is required for reporting issues like bullying and harassment.

4. Protocol for Management and Intervention of High-Risk cases:

If a student is assessed to be at high risk of self-harm/ has expressed suicidal intent, the University Counsellors (Psychologists) are authorised to overstep confidentiality and inform the parents/ guardian about the mental health status of their ward. The same will be communicated to the Dean/Director of the respective School/ Campus and the University Registrar. It will be the parent's/guardian's responsibility to ensure that medical intervention is done and the student is not left unsupervised to ensure safety. The University will, within its scope, guide parents, provide medical references and extend utmost cooperation to ensure the student's wellbeing. In such matters, complete caution must be taken to share information regarding the student's mental health concerns strictly on a need-to-know basis within the University.

The student will be required to submit a certification from the treating registered psychiatrist stating her/his fitness to continue with the program.

5. Anti-discrimination

5.1. SVKM is committed towards ensuring that its institutions ensure a climate of inclusion and equity. All educational goals and practices are aimed at upholding these values and fostering a spirit of cooperation and support towards mental health and well-being.

5.2. No person should be excluded from access to any mental health or service provided at the campus.

5.3. Mental health support provided by the University is available to all the students, regardless of gender (including LGBTQ+), disability, caste, ethnicity, religion, and any other marginalised socio-economic backgrounds.

6. Policy Distribution and Dissemination

6.1. NMIMS University is committed to ensuring that this Mental Health Policy is accessible to all members of the university. In order to promote accessibility, the following measures will be implemented:

a. Online Availability and promotion

This policy will be published on the NMIMS website. This section will be easy to navigate and regularly updated to reflect any changes.

b. Orientation and Onboarding:

This policy will be distributed to staff and faculty during orientation and onboarding to ensure their awareness and understanding of their roles and responsibilities in promoting Student Mental Health.

Foot note:

This policy is to be treated as a dynamic and forward moving document that will have provision of amendment and modification to accommodate feedback, changing nature of mental health issues, professional recommendations, government policy and directives.

External Resources:

Annexure I

Annexure II