

SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY

Understanding Reason for Mental Distress

- Students go through many transitions during their school life which can cause extreme stress, for example, transition from home to school, from one school to another, school to college, losing a parent/sibling/friend/near and dear one, etc.
- Also experience changes as they progress through the developmental stages, leading to concerns such as those related to physical changes and appearance, peer pressure, career decisions, academic pressure, and pressuring students into preparing for competitive examinations.
- Negative school environment like negative relationships with peers/teachers, discrimination, bullying, harassment, humiliation, isolation, etc.
- Absence of school-family connects, parental neglect/ abuse, lack of acceptance/recognition by family members, family history of suicide, Criticism/ bullying by family members.

Warning Signs of Students at Risk

- **Feelings:** Hopelessness, guilt, shame, self-hatred, exhaustion persistent sadness among students.
- **Behaviours:** Withdrawal from Social Interactions, friends, classmates, and family, lack of concentration such as being absent-minded, forgetful, and/or restlessness in class, sudden, mood changes, change in appetite/sleeping patterns. Also, students with reckless behaviour, talking about self-harm or ending life
- **Actions:** Lack of Participation, losing interest in previously enjoyed school activities, being careless about safety, use of substances (smoking, alcohol, etc.), decline in overall quality of academic and other schoolwork and becoming detached.

Plan of action for promoting Mental Health

1. **Implementation of school activities** directed towards creating awareness about mental well-being,
2. **Promoting a positive school environment:**
 - **Supporting student well-being and reducing the risk of suicide.** Raising awareness about mental health.
 - To promote and strengthen the protective factors and reduce the risk factors.
 - Promote **open dialogue, which can reduce the stigma associated** with seeking help and encourage students to reach out for support without fear of judgment or isolation.

Actions for promoting a positive school environment:

- **Encouraging peer support:** Through group activities, clubs, events, etc.
- **Organising activities regularly for relaxing/reducing stress:** Like yoga, meditation, art, music, etc.
- **Providing channels for expression:** Such as access to a trained counsellor, help boxes, or suggestions boxes to express concerns and seek help.
- **Compiling resources to seek support:** Helpline numbers (**Tele-MANAS** Helpline – 14416/ 18008914416, **YUVA** Helpline No. 10580/ 1800116888), phone numbers and email IDs of Counsellors and SWT members, brochures and pamphlets on causes, risk factors, protective factors, warning signs, etc.
- **Integrating Mental Well-being in School Functioning:** Including aspects of mental well-being in daily interactions, open discussions, assembly time, different programmes, subject-teaching, etc.)
- **Creating a Safe Environment in School:** Locking empty classrooms, lighting up dark corridors, cleaning gardens and areas with excess growth of grass and

- **Encouraging School-Community Partnerships:** Among all stakeholders: school administrators, teachers, counsellors, students, medical staff, supporting staff, parents, and community.
 - **Building Awareness about Mental Well-being among all Stakeholders:** Through Role plays, Storytelling, Nukkad natak, Rallies, Posters, Exhibitions, Annual Day themes, etc.)
3. **Building capacity for different stakeholders** to prevent suicides and respond to crises, the school will empower all stakeholders, including teachers, staff, students, and families. **(Mandatory two session in a year on psychological first-aid, identification of warning signs, response to self-harm, and referral mechanism).**
 4. **Responding immediately and supporting students at risk:**
 - Maintaining records of at-risk behaviours of a student and follow-up on the student and SWT members to connect with parents after the incident to follow up on the student.
 - Dividing warning signs into three categories– **feelings, behaviour and actions.**
 - **Having a protocol for stakeholders to refer cases timely to SWT** – Referral form, email address, contact number of Mental Health teachers, Drop Box etc.
 5. **Appraisal of actions taken by the school:** Regular assessments to reflect on the suicide prevention efforts. SWT and other stakeholders to meet periodically to discuss their experiences in implementing guidelines and analyze feedback for areas needing improvement.
It is important for the **school to review the effectiveness of SWT** and its functioning on an annual basis.

Note: Record of all Counselling and mental health activities conducted during the session to be maintained.