

Students encouraged to use Higher Health crisis helpline

Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, has encouraged South African students to use the Higher Health 24-hour crisis helpline, which addresses the mental health needs of students and staff in the higher education community.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

Nzimande made the call as the department joined the world in marking World Mental Health Day on Tuesday under the theme, 'Mental health is a universal human right'.

The Higher Health 24-hour crisis helpline can be accessed via a toll-free line on 0800 006 333.

In response to mental health within the Post School Education and Training (PSET) sector, Nzimande said in the past two years, Higher Health, the Higher Education and Training Department's health and wellness agency, managed 53,619 reported mental health cases by students.

Nzimande said through Higher Health Mental Health Prevention, the department provided mental health support to 321,004 students from January 2021 to June 2023, aimed towards fighting the stigma and taboos around mental health.

"Higher Health is also working with students from the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more) community, survivors of GBV [gender-based violence] and general student and staff, and supports them with their health and psycho-social needs.

“Higher Health is equipped with mobile clinics, nurses, community health and wellness practitioners, psychologists and peer educators, to provide support to students, and arm them with knowledge to build their resilience against the scourge of mental health,” Nzimande said.

The Higher Health Psychosocial Support Counselling Unit equipped with experienced psychologists and counsellors also supported 23 450 students through therapies and mental health treatment, from January 2021 to June 2023.

Through Higher Health, in July 2023, Nzimande launched the National Civic Education and Health Skills Programme’s co-curriculum designed to address a number of personal and social challenges facing youth within the PSET sector.

The online programme covers six modules, including one Mental Health module. The co-curriculum is offered in all 12 official languages which includes the sign language.

Raising awareness

Meanwhile, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) said it continues to work with all relevant stakeholders to maximise awareness on mental disorders as a disability.

This includes health promotion, disease prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in primary, secondary and tertiary care.

“The right to health must be informed by our human rights approach which calls for, among others, investment in community-based care, rehabilitation and prevention,” the department said.

As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, the department, together with SA Federation for Mental Health (SAFMH) and other government departments, will on 17 October 2023 co-host a webinar to discuss mental health issues.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>