

MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Policy Statement

The United World College movement is not exempt from the global reality of increasing mental health concerns among students. This policy, which outlines procedures, guidelines and best practises, is designed to ensure a safe and healthy 'home' environment for all members of the community, safeguarding the interests of individuals and the community.

The policy is shared with students, parents and members of the community who are encouraged to become familiar with the content.

The Head of Student Life along with the College Mindfulness and Wellbeing Counsellor, the College Doctor, Advisors and Wada Parents, will work towards ensuring the mental wellbeing of the students, keeping in mind the guidelines of this document.

As far as feasible, UWC Mahindra College will do its best to support any student with a mental health concern. Since there could be different manifestations of mental health concerns, a range of guidelines for ways in which students would be assisted have been provided.

1. Pre-Existing Concerns:

As mentioned earlier, the numbers of adolescents with a diagnosis has increased over the years and some students may be coming into UWC Mahindra College with a pre-existing diagnosis. UWC Mahindra college has systems in place to ensure incoming students are provided with adequate support right from the start as a precaution or maintenance.

Mention in the Health and Well-being Form:

It is essential that parents and students mention any pre-existing physical and/or psychological issue the student has experienced when they complete the required Health and Wellbeing Form at the time of Admission. The sooner the College Wellbeing Team knows about a pre-existing diagnosis or episodes, the better support plans can be put in place. A pre-existing diagnosis will not be held against a student who has been admitted to the College.

On Arrival:

During orientation week, each student meets with the Medical Doctor and the Mindfulness and Wellbeing Counselor. The student is expected to inform the wellbeing team if there have been any changes in their health/mental health situation; such as a new diagnosis, prescription or medication, change in medication etc. since the Health and Wellbeing Form was submitted during admission.

In order to ensure that the College is able to provide adequate care and support to students, it is important that this information is received well in advance. Given the College's remote location and limited resources, support systems need to be well planned.

Response to Pre-Existing Concerns:

Medication:

All psychotropic medication must be immediately deposited at the Medical Center upon arrival. Students must submit a copy of the prescription and a detailed report from the treating psychologist/psychiatrist to the Medical center.

If the student is carrying any medication as a precautionary measure, they are still required to bring a prescription from the treating doctor. Medication will not be replenished, without a prescription from the treating doctor.

Support on Campus:

If a student has any history with mental health concerns, an effort would be made through conversation with the Doctor and Mindfulness and Wellbeing Counsellor, to understand how the disorder manifests itself in the personal context of the student. Possible triggers and possible solutions would be discussed right at the outset. Support systems on campus would be clarified to the student. The Students Advisor will be notified. If needed, other support procedures would be set up for the student. For example: fixed appointments with the Doctor/Counsellor, providing safe/quiet spaces to recover, informing other responsible adults, etc.

Meeting a Local Psychiatrist:

If a student needs to meet a psychiatrist, this service would be provided off campus, at the expense of the parents.

2. Developing Concerns:

Adolescence is a stage where symptoms of mental health concerns can begin to show signs. The residential Mindfulness and Wellbeing Counsellor is there to assist students through a range of concerns.

The Counsellor will also work with other members of the community- Subject teachers, Advisors, Wada Parents, Learning Support Coordinator and Peer Support Group members to assess possible concerns that might arise while a student's stay at UWC Mahindra College and ensure that the student is provided with the wide range of support that is available on campus.

Initial Assessment:

The Counsellor may identify mental health risks during an individual session with a student who has asked for a meeting. The Counsellor might also be alerted about possible concerns by faculty and students on campus. There would be a conversation with the Counsellor, where the student's current experiences and past history would be explored. Based on the Counselor's recommendation, further steps would be taken and support systems on campus would be set up.

Outside Assistance:

If after an initial assessment by the Counsellor, there seems to be a possibility of a mental health risk like mood disorders, eating disorders, anxiety disorders, etc. which might need medication, the Counsellor would recommend that the student go for a psychological assessment and subsequently meet a psychiatrist.

Students over 18 years old will be highly encouraged to contact their parents before a psychological assessment. In the case of the student being under 18, the parents will be informed, and consent sought, before the assessment. Students will be involved in the conversation between the parents and the Counselor. If a student, whether over or under 18, is prescribed psychiatric medication, parents will be informed. If required, the Counselor or a Peer Support Group member would accompany the student to the college recommended psychologist/psychiatrist.

If a parent/guardian disapproves of the Counselor's recommendation for further assessment, the College will have to determine if it is possible to continue to support the student on campus.

If there is a diagnosis for which medication is prescribed, this is monitored by the Medical center. If the student and parents decide against this recommendation, they will have to give this in writing, and the College will have to determine if it is possible to continue to support the student on campus.

If the Counselor recommends a psychological assessment, transport and consultation fees will be borne by the college. However, the expenses for every consecutive visit will be the responsibility of the parents/students. Likewise, if medication is prescribed, the cost of the medication must be covered by the parents. If a student or parent requests for further psychological assessment, the cost of the assessment will be borne by the parent.

The Leadership team will decide whether the student can be supported from the Student Support Fund on a case to case basis.

If the student receives a diagnosis and symptoms/behaviour persist, impacting the wellbeing of the student or others in the community, the student may be asked to go home till adequate recovery has been achieved, and the College receives a report from the treating Psychiatrist/Psychologist stating that the student is fit to resume College.

Extended Leave for Mental Health Purpose:

In some cases, when students are diagnosed with a psychological disorder, the adjustment phase may require family support. In such cases, the school may recommend that the student go home on medical leave until they are stable and able to resume their college life. Alternatively, parents or family members may be advised to come to campus to support the student during the adjustment period. In such instances the Wellbeing team, the Head of Academics and Advisor will work with the student and the family to ensure the student's academic standing is minimally impacted by working on alternative plans and deadlines. Each case will be reviewed individually taking into consideration the needs of the student.

The national committee will also be informed so that they may also provide any additional support that might be required. If the student is better suited to go home, the cost of the flights will be borne by the parents. In case of financial constraints, the College will discuss possible solutions on a case to case basis.

Living In The Community:

UWC Mahindra College tries its best to support every student on campus. However, since it is a close knit community, everyone's lives are interwoven and when someone is dealing with a concern, there is usually a ripple effect on many others. If it is found by the Head of College, Deputy Head of College, Head of Student Life, the Counsellor, the Doctor and the Advisor that a student's mental health concerns are negatively impacting other student/s, a discussion around the impacts and the possible solutions would be held with all the stakeholders, and all efforts would be made to support students who are being impacted by this situation.

If the impact on the larger community is frequent, intense or has been occurring over a long period, a student may be asked to take a medical leave of absence to be under the care of their family. The duration of the stay would be assessed on a case by case scenario.

Confidentiality:

The Counselor, College Doctor and other faculty members adopt a holistic approach to mental health support and work hard to ensure that confidentiality is upheld in all matters relating to the mental health of students. However, it is important to acknowledge the limits to these efforts. In our attempt to provide the best care, the wellbeing team meets regularly to assess student cases. During these meetings the Wellness Counselor and the Doctor, or any other party involved, have the right to share with the team any concerns observed during care. Additionally, Student-Doctor/Counsellor confidentiality can be breached if the student is suspected of harming themselves or others, or if any other concerns are present that may jeopardize a student's wellbeing and that of any other members of the community.

APPENDIX A:

Specific Developing Concerns:

Through experience, there are a few concerns that are more frequently observed, and this section deals with the guidelines for these concerns.

The Counsellor, the Doctor, the advisor of the student and the Wada Parents (when needed) will be responsible for ensuring support systems are in place for the student needing help. Support systems, which could include regular check-ins, counselling sessions, accessing need for off campus support, etc. would be put into place depending on the severity of the concern and each student's individual needs.

The list is not assumed to be a comprehensive one, and situations outside the following, would be discussed on a case to case basis, keeping in mind the wellbeing of the student and the community.

Eating Disorders:

If a student is suspected to have an eating disorder, which includes the anorexic and bulimic spectrum, the following actions will be taken:

- The student will be sent for a psychological/psychiatric evaluation.
- The student will have to have a supervised weigh-in in College Medical Center every week.
- The student will have to meet the Counsellor every week for an update.
- The student is recommended to meet with a dietician and a psychiatrist, and the parents will be informed of the same.
- The recommendations of the doctors, like the diet plan and the possible need for medication, will be conveyed to the parents and the student will be encouraged to follow them.
- The expenses for the first visits to the doctors will be covered by the college, the consecutive ones by the parent/student.
- The student may be accompanied by the Counsellor for the visit to the dietician and the psychiatrist for the first visit.

A student will be asked to return home for an eating disorder if any one of the following were to exist:

- There is a severe loss of weight and the body weight reduces by 15% or more, after the first weight in.
- There is refusal to gain weight and distorted body image (patients view themselves as fat, even though they may be dangerously underweight)

Self Harm:

- Any form of self harm including cutting, banging head on the wall, slapping oneself, refusing food, substance use/abuse etc. would be a cause of concern.

- If a student is known to be self harming, the parents and National Committee of the student will be informed immediately.
- The student would need to meet a psychiatrist and the parents would be informed of the recommended course of action.

Depression:

- The symptoms of depression need to exist for a minimum of 2 weeks for a possible diagnosis.
- If the symptoms persist, the student will be asked to see a psychiatrist, on informing the parent/guardian.
- The recommendations of the psychiatrist will be conveyed to the parents and a support plan will be made accordingly.

Anxiety & Panic Attacks:

- If a student experiences excessive anxiety and/or two panic attacks within two weeks, without any known trigger, then a student would be asked to meet a psychiatrist, after informing the parent/guardian.
- The recommendations of the psychiatrist will be conveyed to the parents/guardians and a support plan will be made accordingly.

Psychosis:

- If a student experiences psychotic symptoms, based on an assessment by the counselor, the family will be contacted immediately and the student will be referred to a psychiatrist.
- The student will be kept in the medical center under adult supervision if no violent behaviors are observed.
- In cases where the student with psychosis is exhibiting violent or aggressive behaviors the student may be referred for in-patient care in Pune until the symptoms are under control. The student will be accompanied by a responsible adult.
- The college doctor will supervise and administer the medication prescribed by the psychiatrist to treat/manage the psychosis.
- The parents/guardians will be asked to arrive on campus within 24-48 hours so the student can be under the care of their family.
- The well-being team, in consultation with the students family, will devise a support plan based on the recommendations of the psychiatrist.