



Saint Claret College, Ziro

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7.2.1 Institutional Best Practice

Best Practice-2

1. Title of the Practice

Counselling and Wellbeing Services

2. Objectives of the Practice (100 words)

- **To establish** a comprehensive structure of counselling to reach students, faculty and staff through various levels of services in order to address psychological needs and help towards holistic personal development and optimal academic performance.
- **To train** faculty and staff in well-being measures and equip them with basic counselling skills to identify, address or refer students with mental health concerns to higher levels of services.
- **To extend** counselling services to the community and other agencies through consultation, training workshops, and conferences.
- **To create awareness**, do advocacy, and assist with mental health concerns in the Institution and community.

3. The Context

The Institution's remote location and lack of mental health facilities in the milieu, and the recurrence of suicide and cases of depression in the surrounding communities, are the impetus to set up a counselling system to address well-being concerns and establish preventive measures for students.

Professional counselling services are needed to address the academic demands, and developmental adjustments which are extra stressors to college life, and which often lead students to digress from their goals in life.

Faculty and staff play a significant role in identifying and addressing students' mental health issues as they have direct contact with students. Training them with essential skills would help alleviate and serve as a catch basin to contain the problems.

Ziro has numerous private and government schools and agencies without mental health professionals; the SCCZ Counselling Cell extends its services to other organizations to create awareness, advocacy, consultation, and training.

4. The Practice

The structure of Counselling and wellbeing services at SCCZ

- i. **The College Counsellor**, an experienced professional, handles the Office-based counselling. Students walk into the comfort and confidentiality of the counselling room to express their concerns, apprehensions and worries or discern their careers. Students with clinical conditions are followed up with psychological support and therapy.
- ii. **Faculty and staff** trained and equipped with basic counselling skills by the college Counsellor form the next level. They respond to the immediate counselling needs of the students and refer those who need further assistance to the counsellor.
- iii. **Peer counsellors** are selected students who exhibit emotional maturity and have an aptitude for counselling. They are trained in basic tenets of counselling to accompany fellow students. They also identify and refer students to the counsellor for further assistance.

The office of the Counsellor oversees all counselling and well-being services which include:

- a. **Advisories**: Posters on mental health concerns, tips and suggestions for healthy college life, opinion polls, emotional health check, etc., are done through strategically positioned, attractive and eye-catching notices to create awareness and give information on common issues faced by college students.
- b. **Online advisory and Campaigns**: A dedicated page for the counselling cell is integrated into the college web site to serve as a mental health advisory page wherein related posters and videos are posted. World Suicide Prevention Day and World Mental Health Awareness Day are observed through week-long campaigns to create online and offline awareness and advocacy.
- c. **Research and Needs Assessment**: Regular student surveys and well-being assessments are conducted to determine faculty and students' mental health needs in order to design necessary interventions for an optimal academic environment.
- d. **Short Modules** are a means to augment the gap between office-based counselling and its stigma. Modules such as 'Stress to Success', 'Suicide Prevention and First Aid', 'Anger Management', etc., are available for students offline and online. Well-being courses containing carefully selected short video clips and posters on wellbeing are assigned to both Students (A Dose of Well-being) and faculty (Well-being @ Work) through the LMS.
- e. **Consultation and Extension**: Consultation services with specific concerns and training programs are designed for schools and organisations, according to their need, such as 'Introduction to Well-being for Police Personnel: Building Resilience through Well-being Toolkit', Teachers Toolkit for Classroom Counselling, etc.
- f. **A counselling hotline** was established during the pandemic to respond to the mental health needs of students and police personnel.

5. Evidence of Success

- There is an increased number of students availing counselling services. The issues ranged from academic, personal, family, relationship or adjustment problems, identity and gender confusion, etc.
- Students who were confused about their career choice were helped to walk through the process with research and interest inventory.
- Students with clinical conditions were able to continue their academic studies with supportive counselling and therapy.
- Students were responsive and expressed their opinions and state of mind by answering the interactive questionnaires and checklists displayed on the notice board.
- Students were able to practice exercises posted in 'A Dose of Well-being' on the LMS; the student testimonies exemplify and testify to their efforts and the usefulness of the assigned materials. It suggests their commitment and effort toward their well-being.
- The appreciation received from the Superintendent of Police of Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh attests to the contribution made by the Counselling Cell of SCCZ to the Police Personnel of the district.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Despite efforts to cater to the psychological needs of students with multi-level counselling services, the stigma towards accessing mental health services is still prevalent. Various non-traditional means such as advisory notice boards, opinion polls and emotional health checks were employed to create awareness and understanding and encourage students to avail of counselling services.

Although efforts were made to present well-being measures through online platforms such as LMS and the college website, the number of students who accessed the materials was minimal.

Counselling service is a new idea and novelty, and many students are unaware of its benefits, limiting student participation in programs and activities designed for them.

7. Notes

Students are increasingly under pressure to meet academic requirements and stressed by the competitive environments, which need to be eased with supportive counselling and guidance services. To provide soulful education, the counselling services play a significant role. Some of the efforts to empower society were made through the following training workshops:

- Introduction to Well-being for Police Personnel: Building Resilience through Well-being Toolkit
- Soft-skills Training for Tourism Policing – Phase I
- Teachers' Toolkit for Classroom Counselling for teachers of Government and Private Schools in Ziro Valley.