

Mahatma Gandhi College, Thiruvananthapuram

Institutional Policy on Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention

Preamble

Mahatma Gandhi College is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all students. Recognising the increasing challenges related to mental health, stress, and emotional well-being among young adults, the College has formulated this policy to ensure preventive, supportive, and responsive measures for mental health promotion and suicide prevention. This policy is framed in alignment with the UGC Anti-Ragging Regulations (2009), National Education Policy (2020) guidelines, and global best practices in student welfare.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

1. Provide an enabling environment that prioritises student mental health and well-being.
2. Establish preventive systems to reduce the risk of suicide and self-harm.
3. Ensure access to professional counselling and peer support for all students.
4. Train faculty, staff, and student leaders to identify early warning signs of distress.
5. Integrate anti-ragging measures with broader mental health initiatives.
6. Promote resilience, stress management, and healthy coping mechanisms.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students of Mahatma Gandhi College (undergraduate, postgraduate, research scholars).
- Faculty members, non-teaching staff, and other stakeholders involved in student welfare.
- Campus-wide activities, including academic, co-curricular, and residential life.

Preventive Measures for Suicide

The College shall implement the following measures:

- **Zero-Tolerance Policy towards Ragging:** Strict adherence to UGC Anti-Ragging Regulations with active Anti-Ragging Committees and Squads.
- **Helplines & Peer Support:** Establishment of 24/7 helpline access, peer mentoring systems, and designated student buddies for fresher support.

Awareness on Helpline Numbers

The College disseminates this information through multiple platforms and programmes, such as:

- Orientation sessions for freshers and senior students, where details of helplines related to mental health, suicide prevention, women's safety, anti-ragging, are clearly explained.
- Awareness campaigns conducted in connection with World Suicide Prevention Day, National Anti-Ragging Week, and World Mental Health Day, during which students are reminded of the helpline facilities available in Kerala, including Disha (1056), Tele-MANAS (14416), Women Helpline (1091/181), and the UGC Anti-Ragging Helpline (1800-180-5522).
- Posters and digital displays placed at prominent locations on campus, including the notice boards, library, and counselling centre, highlighting key helpline numbers for quick student reference.

- Workshops and interactive sessions conducted by the Counselling Cell and Department of Psychology in collaboration with NGOs such as Sanjeevani Befrienders, where students are guided on how and when to use these helplines.

Early Warning Systems

Mahatma Gandhi College has established structured **early warning systems** to identify students who may be at risk of emotional distress, self-harm, or suicidal tendencies. These mechanisms are designed to ensure timely intervention and support before a situation escalates.

Key features include:

- **Tutorial System:** Every student is assigned to a faculty mentor/class tutor who maintains regular interaction with them. This enables close monitoring of attendance, academic performance, and behavioural changes, which may serve as early indicators of distress.
- **Counselling Referrals:** Faculty members are trained to identify red flags such as withdrawal from peers, declining academic engagement, or sudden mood changes. Such cases are immediately referred to the **Counselling Cell** for professional assistance.
- **Peer Support Network:** Senior students and members of the **Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience Club** act as peer mentors, offering first-level support. They are sensitised to notice signs of loneliness, bullying, or stress among their peers and to channel such concerns to counsellors or faculty.
- **Collaboration with Parents/Guardians:** When necessary, the College maintains communication with parents/guardians to provide a supportive environment at home alongside institutional care.
- **Regular Workshops and Awareness Campaigns:** Training sessions for faculty, staff, and students focus on identifying psychological distress signals, promoting empathy, and equipping the campus community with practical intervention skills.
- **Student-led Initiatives:** Encouragement of student projects such as YouTube campaigns and peer-to-peer workshops on suicide prevention and care.

Mental Health Systems

To strengthen student well-being, the College shall ensure:

- **Counselling Services:** Availability of in-house professional counsellors and referral mechanisms to external experts and organisations.
- **Collaborations:** Formal partnerships with recognised mental health NGOs (e.g., *Sanjeevani Befrienders*) for training, workshops, and crisis response.
- **Training & Sensitisation:** Regular capacity-building programmes for faculty, staff, and students to identify warning signs, manage stress, and respond empathetically.
- **Well-Being Initiatives:** Yoga, meditation, art therapy, and stress management sessions integrated into the academic calendar.
- **Seminar Series:** A structured *Mental Health Awareness Seminar Series (2025–26)* for students and staff.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Principal:** Overall supervision and policy implementation.
- **Counselling Cell:** Provide confidential one-on-one counselling, maintain records, and conduct awareness classes.
- **Department of Psychology:** Lead mental health initiatives, internships, and research collaborations.
- **Anti-Ragging Committee:** Integrate anti-ragging awareness with mental health sensitisation.

- **Faculty Mentors/Class Tutors:** Act as first-level identifiers of distress and refer cases to the Counselling Cell.
- **Student Peer Leaders:** Support fellow students, encourage positive interactions, and reduce stigma.

Monitoring and Reporting

- The College shall submit **quarterly compliance reports** on mental health and suicide prevention measures to regulatory bodies, in line with UGC directives.
- Suicide cases reported through credible media shall be acknowledged for compliance monitoring, without assuming direct links to ragging unless established.
- Feedback mechanisms (surveys, focus groups) shall be used to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives.

Confidentiality and Sensitivity

All counselling interactions, reports, and related records shall be maintained with the utmost confidentiality, respecting the dignity and privacy of students. Faculty, staff, and peers shall be sensitised to handle such issues with empathy and discretion.

Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the College Mental Health and Well-Being Committee in consultation with students, faculty, and external experts. Recommendations for improvement will be integrated into future revisions.

Through this policy, Mahatma Gandhi College reaffirms its dedication to student well-being, resilience, and safety. By combining preventive, supportive, and responsive measures, the College seeks to create a compassionate academic environment where every student can thrive.




PRINCIPAL
Mahatma Gandhi College
Thiruvananthapuram