



POLICY TITLE:	STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH POLICY : AY 2024/2025
SCHOOL:	Al Ain Juniors School

Policy Contact: Counsellor	Issue Date: June 2024
School: Al Ain Juniors School	Next Revision Date: June 2025
Reference No: AJ-GCD-21	Version No: 1

Objectives of the Policy

- Ensure that mental health is prioritized and integrated in all aspects of the school environment.
- Encourage schools to adopt a community-wide approach to promote mental health through awareness campaigns and initiatives aimed at all stakeholders.
- Support early identification and intervention by establishing systems and protocols for identifying and addressing mental health concerns early

In line with the ADEK wellbeing policies. The policy includes the following elements:

1. **Student Awareness and Education:** A clear approach and plan ensuring that students learn and understand how to live balanced and healthy lives, including activities to promote and maintain mental health.
2. **Student Counseling:** The provision of in-school or outsourced qualified specialist services to students who may require additional support or counseling.
3. **Referral Pathways:** The procedures through which individuals can refer themselves or others for the mental health support services offered by the school.
4. **Support During Vulnerable Phases:** Step-by-step approach to support students in managing and alleviating stress during vulnerable phases of the academic year.
5. **Wellness Resources:** The provision of appropriate resources, such as a wellness space, that provide opportunities for students to focus on their wellbeing (e.g., reduce stress and anxiety).
6. **Inclusion:** Tailored, needs-led services for students with additional learning needs, in line with the *ADEK School Inclusion Policy* and the Federal Decree Law No. (29) of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its amendments, and planned programs and initiatives to promote inclusion.

Mental Health Awareness and Education



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Educating Students About Mental Health: School teaches students about mental health and living healthy, balanced lives, with a focus on increasing protective factors and developing coping mechanisms. This shall include mindfulness, social

and emotional learning (including emotional regulation and resilience), stress management, time management and organization, and the importance of creating a receptive environment for those seeking mental health support and avoiding actions that can lead to stigmatization.

School ensures coverage of health education requirements as per the *National School Health Screening Guideline* (MoHAP, 2003) and the *School Screening Standard* (DoH, 2023).

In addition, for students in Cycles 2 and 3, topics should also include other types of mental health difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety) and related coping mechanisms (e.g., surrounding parents' separation/divorce), substance use (misuse, abuse, and addiction) and its prevention and treatment, eating disorders (including causes, indicators, and treatment), digital gaming addiction, suicide and suicidal ideation, any maltreatment concerns, and ways to access help.

Parental Awareness: Schools informs parents of their students' mental health policy, and initiatives, and offer engagement opportunities, including facilitating and disseminating awareness materials/resources, holding workshops, and encouraging parent participation in surveys on mental health issued by other stakeholders.

Counseling and Support Services

Mandatory Provision of Counseling: School provide all students with access to counseling as required and ensure each step of the counseling process is documented as per requirements in line with the *ADEK School Reporting Policy*.

School has authorized school counselors internally as staff members in order to provide students with access to counseling to address their mental health.

Confidentiality: Schools and counselors adhere to confidentiality requirements as per Federal Decree Law No. (45) of 2021 Concerning the Protection of Personal Data, the DCD Social Care Professionals Code of Conduct & Ethics in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (DCD, 2020), and other relevant government authorities.



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School authorize school counselors to share information with relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents, principal, and vice principal) if the school counselor deems this is required to protect the best interests of the student or where this is required legally.

- a. In case of suspected maltreatment or potential significant self-harm, the school counselor shall share information with the Child Protection Coordinator or any member of the Child Protection Team, in line with the *ADEK School Student Protection Policy*.
- b. In cases such as suicidal ideation or severe substance abuse, the school counselor shall immediately inform school leadership to take further action.

The school counselor shall explain to the student the limitations of confidentiality in age-appropriate terms.

Parental Consent: School seeks consent from parents if regular or structured counseling is provided to a student. Where the need for counseling is identified but parents refuse to give consent, schools shall require them to indicate their decision in writing, with an acknowledgment that they will take responsibility for the wellbeing of the student.

Parental consent shall not be required when a student interacts with the school counselor(s) in an unstructured or irregular manner (e.g., a spontaneous conversation regarding daily life, or unplanned drop-ins).

Parental consent shall not be required if the counselor deems it to be in the best interest of the student, i.e., in situations where informing parents may adversely affect the wellbeing of the child.

Where a parent refuses to give consent and the counselor and school determine that access to a counselor is a necessary measure to prevent potential significant harm to the student, schools shall report this as neglect to the Child Protection Specialist and/or Child Protection Unit, in line with the *ADEK School Student Protection Policy*.

Referral Pathways

External Referral: Where it is determined that a student requires specialized support beyond the professional qualifications of the school counselor, school requires students to seek help from external professionals.



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Communication: School communicates their referral pathways to all stakeholders (e.g., parents, staff). Schools shall publish the referral pathways in the Parent Handbook.

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Confidentiality: Schools shall ensure that all information reported through the referral pathway is treated confidentially.

Support During Vulnerable Phases

Support During Vulnerable Phases: School identifies specific periods during the academic year when students are prone to increased stress and emotional vulnerability such as the time of examinations, university applications, transition between grade cycles, etc. Schools shall take structured measures to reduce the chances of, and where applicable, alleviate students' stress and enhance their mental health. Such measures shall include:

Study Leaves: A period of absence that is authorized by the school for students to study for board/pre-collegiate examinations for a maximum of 4 weeks annually, in line with the *ADEK School Assessment Policy*.

End-of-Semester Office Hours: Brief one-on-one online or offline sessions between teachers and students for sharing feedback, both positive and constructive at the end of each semester/term.

Workshops: Individual or group workshop sessions with students to equip them to cope with stress and emotional vulnerability during vulnerable phases.

Support for Students with Additional Learning Needs

School ensures that the Head of Inclusion works alongside all relevant stakeholders such as teachers, specialists, parents, and school counselors to safeguard the mental health of students with additional learning needs. Schools shall ensure that all Documented Learning Plans (DLP) are holistic and take the level of functioning of the students with additional learning needs into account, in line with the *ADEK School Inclusion Policy*.

School offers reasonable accommodations to support the mental health needs of

students with additional learning needs. For instance, schools can consider adopting the following measures to accommodate the specific needs of students with additional learning needs:

Adjusting the school timetable to shorten it and accommodate breakout timings for students experiencing high levels of anxiety.

Making the uniform norms flexible for students identified to have sensory needs.

Close monitoring of students who are identified as being at risk of teasing or bullying.

Related policies

- Child protection policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Attendance policy
- Uniform, dress code and proper grooming policy
- Motivation and appreciation policy
- Rewards policy
- Baseline assessment policy
- Examination rules and academic honest policy
- Disciplinary policy
- Anti-vandalism policy
- Electronic gadgets and other prohibited items policy
- Bus regulation policy
- Play-ground policy
- Camping and trips policy
- Other campus behavior policy
- Student teacher relationship policy
- Employee code of conduct policy
- Complaint management policy
- Student well-being policy
- Arrival, break and dispersal policy
- Student offsite conduct policy



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Authorized Signatories:		
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