Khalifa University Employee Mental Health Support Framework

HUMAN
RESOURCES

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1. Foreword

At Khalifa University, we recognize the vital importance of mental well-being as an integral component of both personal and professional success. In a fast-paced academic environment, where demands on faculty and staff are high, it is crucial to provide an environment that fosters psychological resilience, promotes mental wellness, and supports individuals during times of need.

This framework is designed to guide our approach to mental health support for all employees, ensuring that they have access to comprehensive and efficient resources that prioritize their well-being. By drawing on existing functions and collaborating with specialized health providers, we aim to create a supportive, inclusive, and stigma-free environment where mental health is valued and openly discussed.

In addition to providing access to counseling and support services, we are committed to proactively addressing mental health through regular mental health screening and an early warning system to identify potential concerns before they escalate. Furthermore, we recognize the importance of work-life balance initiatives in maintaining mental wellness and will continue to promote policies and practices that help employees manage their personal and professional lives effectively.

Through this structured approach, we aspire to build a culture that not only offers accessible mental health support but also ensures that our employees feel empowered to seek help when needed, confident in the confidentiality and efficacy of the services available to them. We are committed to continuously refining this framework to align with best practices, ensuring that our employees are supported in a manner that respects their dignity and encourages their professional and personal flourishing.

This document outlines the framework through which mental health support will be delivered, ensuring that the well-being of our employees remains a shared priority and a cornerstone of our institutional values.

2. What is Mental Health

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as "a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community."

Mental health refers to an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It influences how we think, feel, and act, and it plays a vital role in how we handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions. Just like physical health, mental health is essential at every stage of life and can fluctuate based on life experiences, environment, and access to support. Promoting mental health involves fostering resilience, well-being, and a work environment that allows individuals to thrive both personally and professionally.

3. Why Do We Need a Mental Health Framework

Improving outcomes for employees requires a university-wide approach that emphasizes prevention, early intervention, and open discussions about mental health. It also necessitates timely access to support services. This framework aligns with Khalifa University's commitment to mental health and well-being and sets out the following SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives:

The Mental Health and Well-being Framework seeks to:

- Promote Mental Well-being:
  - Foster a culture that prioritizes mental health and encourages open discussions on psychological well-being.
  - Target: Achieve 80% participation in mental health awareness programs by year-end.
- Provide Accessible Support:
  - Ensure straightforward access to mental health support for employees, minimizing barriers to services.
  - Target: Facilitate seamless access to counseling services and external mental health resources.
- Improve Mental Health Literacy:
  - Enhance awareness and understanding of available mental health resources and support systems.
  - Target: Conduct mental health pop-up sessions on regular basis.

Figure 1: Core Elements: KU Employee Mental Health Support Framework

4. Mental Health Support Structure

4.1. Internal Support Mechanisms:

- Confidential Counseling Services:
  - Existing counseling services, staffed with qualified mental health professionals, will continue to provide initial support and guidance to employees.
  - Employees can schedule an appointment through the HR Division or a dedicated online scheduling tool.
  - All sessions will be conducted with confidentiality, in line with Khalifa University policies and local laws.
- Mental Health Awareness Programs:
  - Regular pop-up sessions/workshops will be conducted to educate employees on mental health topics, stress management, and resilience building.
  - The HR Division will coordinate the scheduling and promotion of these sessions to ensure broad participation.
- Wellness and Employee Engagement Activities:
  - HR and KU Divisions organize exciting events, including workshops, social gatherings, and celebrations, to foster engagement, learning, and networking within the community.
- Work-Life Balance:
  - Khalifa University of Science and Technology (KU) creates an environment that promotes achievement and enjoyment in both an employee's professional and personal life.
  - KU supports employees through clearly defined leave policies that encourage them to balance work and family.
- Flexible Working Hours:
  - Khalifa University (KU) is dedicated to supporting employee engagement and work-life harmony, by championing flexible work options to our employees.
- Dedicated Support Hotline:
  - KU provides dedicated support email for its employees to provide the needed support at any time counselling.support@ku.ac.ae

4.2. Referral Process to External Specialized Services:

In cases where specialized or extended mental health support is required, the following referral process will be implemented:

- Initial Assessment: The internal counseling unit will conduct a preliminary assessment to determine the need for external intervention.

- Referral to Specialized Services: Employees will be referred to appropriate specialized mental health services in the UAE covered under KU medical insurance scope, such as:
  - **SAKINA Program through SEHA:**
    A confidential service providing free psychological support. Employees can access licensed specialists by calling SEHA on 80050 and selecting "SAKINA" from the options provided.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Khalifa University's Counseling Services:

- Provide initial counseling and support to employees seeking assistance.
- Conduct assessments and facilitate referrals to external specialized services when necessary.
- Maintain confidentiality and compliance with relevant privacy regulations.

5.2 Human Resources Division:

- Provide all needed support and coordination to the counselling services unit to address and support our employees whenever needed.
- Ensure confidentiality and ethical handling of all employee mental health matters.

5.3 Line Managers:

- Ensure full cooperation and understanding to cater for our employees required support and recommended arrangements as advised by HR and counseling unit.

6. Updates and Future Enhancements

This framework will evaluated on annual basis or when needed to ensure the responsiveness and effectiveness of the mental health support to our employees.

7. Confidentiality

All interactions, assessments, and records related to employee mental health will be handled with the utmost confidentiality, adhering to applicable laws and university policies. This includes strict confidentiality agreements between the internal counseling unit and employees, as well as the secure handling of any related documentation.

8. Conclusion

Khalifa University is dedicated to the mental well-being of its employees. By implementing this framework, the university aims to provide effective, accessible, and compassionate mental health support, reinforcing its commitment to a healthy and productive work environment.