

MEDIA STATEMENT

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TO: All Media

ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reporters

For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE STATEMENT ON PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN THE POST SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, said although the South African Medical Research Council report revealed that 10% of rape cases reported in South Africa are from institutions of higher learning, the Department of Higher Education and Training created an enabling environment for the PSET institutions to ensure the effective implementation of the Framework to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the PSET.

The Department published the Policy Framework to address GBV in the PSET System on 17 July 2020 that aims to, amongst others, promote the safety of all students and staff by putting in place comprehensive prevention and awareness programmes intended to raise the importance of policies and services addressing GBV, as well as other measures to prevent incidents of GBV.

“The Policy also provide comprehensive support, assistance to victims and refer them appropriately to specialised support and assistance in line with the National Instructions, National Directives, List of Designated Health Establishments and Additional Services directives under the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act,” Minister Nzimande said.

The Department of Higher Education and Training created an enabling policy environment including sector policies, guidelines, standards, protocols and tools, to support institutions in the implementation of social inclusion. This includes managing the institutional policy environment; manage and support implementation programmes within institutions and monitor the implementation of Social Inclusion.

Furthermore, the Department has finalised the Social inclusion Review and Implementation Model (SI-RIM) - a mechanism to provide information for reporting purposes.

Minister Nzimande said all these interventions are implemented through HIGHER HEALTH which is the implementation arm of the Department to implement a comprehensive and integrated programme promoting health and wellbeing of students in universities and TVET colleges and provide on-campus support to PSET institutions in 7 priority areas, including: HIV/TB/STI, Sexual Reproductive Health, Maternal Health and Contraception, GBV, Mental health, LGBTQI+, Alcohol and Drug Abuse prevention and Disability.

HIGHER HEALTH provides psycho-social support services through two main modalities: (1) through the HIGHER HEALTH toll-free helpline, and (2) through interventions provided by counselling and clinical psychologists. It is also running a comprehensive awareness programme through several focussed campus activities, campus radio programmes and peer support mechanisms.

“This year, over 14 000 students accessed the various HIGHER HEALTH models of psychosocial support. Academic stress and anxiety (30%), general stress and substance abuse (22%) depression and suicide (18%) and sexual, physical and emotional abuse (19%) present the main reasons for accessing support care,” said Minister Nzimande.

Following the release of the Policy Framework and as part of its work, a Ministerial Task Team on GBVF in universities established that not all universities have sufficient means to deal with GBV.

The Ministerial Task Team will soon release their report on areas requiring improvement in institutional responses to GBV and sexual harassment and appropriate levels of support needed for the implementation of the National Policy Framework to address gender-based violence by universities.

Issued by:
Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
Meiring Naude Road
Brummeria
Pretoria
Enquiries: Ishmael Mnisi 0660378859