

Best Practice 2023-24

Best Practice: Counseling Scouts – The Psychological First Aiders

Objectives of the Practice

- To help students understand the importance of counseling for mental well-being and academic success.
- To create a network of trained student representatives called Counseling Scouts in every department.
- To make psychological first aid accessible to students.
- To build a supportive environment encouraging students to seek help.

The Context

Students face personal, academic, and social challenges impacting their mental health. Many are unaware of how counseling can help or hesitate to approach professional counselors. The Students' Counseling Cell (SCC) at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit launched the Counseling Scouts program. Selected students from each department act as a bridge between their peers and SCC to connect students to professional support.

The Practice

Selection of Counseling Scouts:

- Selected based on approachability, empathy, and responsibility, including regional campus students.

Training of Counseling Scouts:

A one-day session trains Scouts in acceptance, communication, empathy, confidentiality, non-judgment, professionalism, and managing emotions. Scouts are facilitators, not counselors.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Represent students' concerns to SCC.
- Guide students to professional counseling.
- Promote SCC services and offer peer support.

Functioning and Monitoring:

- Supervised by the University Counselor with monthly reviews.

- Regional campus representatives participate remotely.

Evidence of Success

- Increased counseling awareness and accessibility.
- More students seek SCC support.
- Positive feedback from students.

Problems Encountered

- Mental health stigma, limited awareness, and geographical challenges.

Resources Required

- Training, budget, professional counselors, awareness campaigns, and support systems.

By addressing challenges, the program fosters a more inclusive, supportive environment for students.