



Higher Education & Training: Health, Wellness and Development Centre

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HIGHER HEALTH Media Release

Higher Health calls for united action to support youth development and wellness

Wednesday, June 15, 2022: As we celebrate Youth Month this June, we must recommit ourselves to tackling poverty, unemployment, unequal educational opportunities and psychosocial development other factors that undermine the health and wellbeing of our young people.

“Our unified action between government, civil society organisations and private sector can contribute to addressing youth vulnerability by virtue of their positioning at the interface between policy and practice,” says Prof Ramneek Ahluwalia, CEO of Higher Health, a non-profit organisation devoted to the health, wellness and psychosocial wellbeing of students in the post-school education and training (PSET) sector.

“I call on stakeholders both in the public and private sector to support the initiatives of HH towards building civic education, early adulthood health, wellbeing and psychosocial development as well as creating good citizenship among our youth which will contribute towards gaining meaningful employment, entrepreneurship and to an economically prosperous South Africa.”

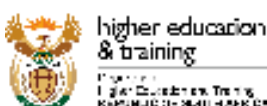
In nearly two decades of work in the area of youth health, Higher Health has come to understand the extent to which poverty, inequality and various forms of disadvantage affect the mental wellbeing and physical health of many young south Africans. “If this is the situation on university and college campuses – where young people have the hope that their studies will lead to a better life – imagine how much more serious the affect is on youth who are not studying, not undergoing training and not employed, where Professor Ahluwalia urges for more parents, guardians and young people to find ways of getting educated and skilled qualified as educations is prevention” Prof Ahluwalia says.

Statistics SA’s employment figures for quarter one of 2022 indicated that 37% of youth aged 15-24 years were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and that the figure had risen in the past year.

Many social problems manifest among young people. The HH studies have shown that 60% of our youth in colleges and institutions of higher learning admitted to binge drinking once a month, 65% of GBV is preceded by drugs and alcohol abuse as indicated by the WHO 2018 studies in South Africa.

Improving wellbeing. Inspiring success.

Directors: W de Villiers (Chairperson), A Bawa, M Mabizela, T Mayekiso, SJ Mlotshwa, N Phaswana-Mafuya, A Singh, D Tromp, B Madalane, R Ahluwalia (CEO)



Other challenges included mistimed pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse, physical abuse and the absence of fathers/father figures, human rights violations, mental health challenges, HIV that surround our youth and inhibit our youth progression and assimilation into society post schooling.

The Optimus Study on sexual abuse showed the extent to which youth carry with them a history of abuse: about one in three suffer sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18 years.

One of the most telling statistics on youth mental health is the suicide rate among teenagers: nearly one in 10 teen deaths is due to suicide – and the figure for attempted suicides is probably twice as high. Both speak to the much wider problem of depression.

“The figures show why we all must play our part in developing and implementing youth empowerment initiatives to increase opportunities for young people. Without adequate and appropriate forms of financial assistance, improved quality of schooling and strengthened post-school education and training provision, young people living in poverty will continue to lack access to the opportunities needed for them to break out of chronic unemployment and poverty,” argues Prof Ahluwalia.

Higher Health assists universities and colleges to look after over 2,5 million young South Africans in the post school education system to develop programmes that attend to the mental, psychosocial wellbeing and physical health needs of students. These include mental health services, sexual and reproductive healthcare, and initiatives to reduce gender-based violence and harmful alcohol and drug use.

It has supplemented on-site campus clinics by deploying a fleet of 10 purpose-built mobile clinics and by partnering with the SA Depression and Anxiety Group to offer a 24-hour student helpline.

How to access the HIGHER HEALTH 24-hour student helpline:

- Toll-free call 0800 36 36 36
- SMS 43-33-6

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About HIGHER HEALTH

HIGHER HEALTH is a national agency that seeks to inspire success of two million students that attend 26 universities and 50 TVET colleges by improving their health and wellbeing. We seek to reduce the effect of health-related conditions that often challenge students in tertiary studies and which, if left unaddressed, can lead to students delaying the completion and even abandoning their studies.

<https://higherhealth.ac.za/>

For more information and interview requests please contact:

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