



A PREMIER INSTITUTE IN COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGY
Affiliated to Bengaluru North University

BEST PRACTICE 2

Title	Promoting Community Mental Health
Objectives of the practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. to increase awareness of mental health issues in the community2. to enhance student involvement in the community3. to meet the mission of Montfort College – to promote mental health and wellbeing in society by providing free counselling to the general public4. to promote the core values of empathy, cultural sensitivity, commitment and service
The Context	<p>Primarily, mental health awareness is low amongst the general public. Discussing mental health issues or seeking help for them is taboo for most people. As a result, depression, anxiety, stress-related problems, and even suicides are on the rise. These issues are extremely detrimental to mental health of the person in particular and of the nation at large.</p> <p>Secondly, due to urbanization the youth of today seems to be more isolated and may not often reach out to the community. Inculcating a sense of belonging with the community and developing a sense of service for the community is a dire need for the development of the nation.</p> <p>Finally, even for those seeking mental health help, the services are not easily accessible and people are not aware. Increasing access is extremely important to improve the mental health of the community.</p>

The Practice	<p>The vision and mission of Montfort College have been to promote mental health and wellbeing in society. In order to achieve the same, it is necessary to go beyond the classroom and reach out to the public. The practice has been two-fold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Instituting mandatory field practicum for Counselling Psychology, part of which involves providing free-of-cost counselling sessions to the general public directly, and at schools, colleges, NGOs, and also involves spreading mental health awareness through workshops and seminars b) Carrying out regular programmes to create mental health awareness in the public every year. <p>Firstly, each student of counselling psychology is required to complete 120-150 direct counselling hours under the supervision of a trained supervisor during the third and fourth semesters. The practicum also involves design and delivery of mental health awareness and sensitization workshops at schools, colleges, NGOs, and other institutions. The practice benefits the students by preparing them for professional practice and hones their case-history taking, exploration, case-conceptualization, treatment planning, and intervention skills. Thus, the students are adept at all aspects of one-on-one counselling by the time they graduate from the programme. In turn, the public is benefited by the availability of 50-60 trainee mental health professionals providing free-of-cost counselling services which are supervised by trained professionals, year-on-year. The second part of the practice is by carrying out regular awareness programs each year. These programs are included in the academic calendar each year. In addition to these three programs are conducted every year: World Suicide Prevention Day, World Mental Health Day, <i>and</i> Women's Day.</p> <p>The World Suicide Prevention Day and World Mental Health Day are for creating awareness in the general public regarding suicide prevention and mental health promotion. The programmes are organized by the college involving as many students as possible between World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10th of every year) and World Mental Health Day (October 10th of every year). Thus, various programs are carried out by the students and teachers during a one-month duration each year. The college worked through the student union to get students to plan various activities to increase awareness on specific mental health topics. Groups of students plan for activities such as street plays, rallies, and interviews, they distribute pamphlets with information about issues like depression, suicide prevention, exam anxiety, etc., to different parts of the city. They bring back their success stories to share with the entire college.</p>
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Evidence of Success	<p>Evidence for success is available in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Students are able to meet and exceed the number of required practicum hours showing that the uptake for these services is high 2) There has been an increase in student involvement as more and more students are volunteering their time and services at various centers such as NGOs, special schools, and half-way homes. 3) The evidence for mental health awareness is also in the reports that the students carry back about the reaction of the public.
Problems encountered and Resource required	<p>Providing counselling for real-life cases comes with a great amount of responsibility to ensure that the students' work is credible, and the services provided are of good quality.</p> <p>The entire administrative responsibility of the services provided by the students are also handled by the Institute which is an additional task.</p> <p>When it comes to seeking permissions for placement of students at various organizations, making the required connections is a big task for the institute. Similarly seeking permissions for street plays and rallies from the officials such as police department is a cumbersome job.</p> <p>The following are the resources required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Dedicated personnel to coordinate with various agencies to facilitate practicum 2) Trained and qualified supervisors to oversee student work 3) Support from the media to promote awareness 4) Funds for creating flyers, pamphlets, etc., and for transport