



higher education  
& training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**HIGHER HEALTH**

Higher Education & Training: Health, Wellness and Development Centre

## COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

As we embark upon this academic year, it is our firm belief that success in our educational institutions is closely tied to the health and wellbeing of our student population.. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is often a challenging journey, especially for those entering tertiary education for the first time.

This journey is filled with possibility and potential, but also obstacles and challenges.

So, on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of tertiary students who benefitted from the services facilitated by Higher Health with support from all our institutions in 2023, I would like to thank you for your support and collaboration over a hugely successful year.

This cooperation and partnership has allowed us to significantly extend the positive impact we made on students in 2023. We recently enrolled 5000 students in a pilot programme and currently enrolling more in our Higher Health Civic Education Soft Skills programme at NQF Level5 with support from QCTO and HWSETA. The co-curriculum runs alongside the academic curriculum across all our campuses countrywide.

The accredited programme offers the Top 10 soft skills of the work space (conflict management, leadership, teambuilding etc.) while building resilience amongst our young people at early stages of their development.

As a bridging or exit course across our sector, it aims to build Soft skills needed for better employability, and that complement the hard skills offered by Universities and Colleges, that will improve economic productivity. This unique first of its kind in Africa – NQF Level 5 programme is offered in all twelve official South African languages, including Sign language.

This interactive programme with participatory pedagogy of 'each one teach ten' covers 6 credit bearing modules, namely civic education, , mental health, Gender studies, comprehensive sexuality education, Substance abuse and disability. Higher Health is also developing modules on climate change and financial literacy as important components of the Higher Health Civic education and soft skills offering.

Soft skills are needed in bridging our skills gap - an attempt to build a nation that has gone through a lot!

Higher Health is grateful to 10 000 institutional peer educators across all campuses countrywide who volunteer their time and energy to be trained to support fellow students on all Higher Health programmes. These are the unsung heroes of South Africa helping Higher Health reach millions of young people across our rural, peri-urban, informal and urban campuses across the country. Equally we appreciate the over 50 000 frontline workers (campus security, residence wardens and house mothers, student support services, SRCs, health and social workers, among others) who work in various institutions with Higher Health to implement protocols, procedures and guidelines and address challenges that face our sector.

We are proud that last year, some 753 000 young students across our sector were linked to various youth-friendly health, social and mental health services, including through our mobile clinic fleet, campus clinics, psycho-social and mental health units and other support services across all campuses in South Africa.

The Higher Health programmes, which revolves around education as empowerment, early risk detection among young people and providing a spectrum of services of health, wellbeing and psycho-social at their doorstep, shows a huge impact. The challenge of stigma and non-reporting among people living with gender-based violence and mental health issues is extremely high.

In the last two (2) years Higher Health enrolled over 350 000 students across our Universities, TVET Colleges and CET Colleges in the Higher Health civic and health skills Programme, GBV module.

These continuous efforts to address GBV are evident in the number of students engaging GBV dialogues: 316 048 participated in the Co-Curriculum on GBV, where 190 316 went through GBV risk assessments, 18 994 have been considered as high risk for GBV; and 12 682 have been sent for GBV counselling.

They received counselling and other assistance, mainly through the **HIGHER HEALTH TOLL-FREE 24-HOUR CRISIS HELPLINE - 0800 36 36 36** - which is a real, tangible resource to any student in need. We thank institutional psychologists and other teams who offer these valuable services.

30 299 students reached out to the HIGHER HEALTH 24-hour TOLL FREE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS HELPLINE from January 2021 to June 2023.

HIGHER HEALTH MENTAL HEALTH prevention interventions were provided to 321 004 students from January 2021 to June 2023.

HIGHER HEALTH Psychosocial Support Counselling Unit provided support to 23 450 students from January 2021 to June 2023.

Crises was Managed with 53 619 students from January 2021 to June 2023.

The Transforming MENTalities summit hosted by Higher Health during Women's month last year, asked for Higher Health to develop more peer educators and champions across all our campuses, to work as change agents in transforming MENTalities, more men dialogues across all institutions, incorporating gender studies including GBV, gender equality, gender diversity and transforming MENTalities as co-curriculum alongside the main curriculum in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector.

Support services for GBV victims are instrumental in providing necessary assistance and creating a safer and supportive environment on campuses.

Despite these interventions, the youth of South Africa continue to face many risks and challenges. After the Covid-19 pandemic, health, social and economic conditions continue to pose a risk to students' sense of security, mental condition and social integration. Ensuring that students complete their studies successfully, coupled with civic education and the adoption of civic values, along with addressing issues of health, wellness and psycho-social development for a holistic graduate remain a top priority to safeguard the future of our youth, and the future of South Africa.

We will continue to address Covid-19, other established youth epidemics and challenges, and will be devoting attention to nurturing civic values and gender equality and all the while striving to transform mentalities of young men that drive South Africa's high rate of GBV.

In the year ahead we will be redoubling our efforts to enrol students into our co-curriculum HIGHER HEALTH I Civic Education and Health Skills Programme; assess and screen individual students through our confidential platforms; and work with vulnerable youth to provide health support and services that address their specific needs and risks.