FUTURE LEADERS
International Private School
Madinat Zayed, Muroor Road - Branch 2

Student Mental Health Policy

Approved By	Board of Trustees
Review Date	August 2026
Next review Date	June 2027

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AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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As set out in the ADEK Wellbeing Policy, wellbeing is fundamental to student progression and success. FLIS BR2 has a responsibility to nurture and sustain the mental wellbeing of their student community, and to identify and support students at risk of poor mental health.
This policy sets out the basic requirements in relation to the education of students about mental wellbeing, and the provision of mental health support services. It should be read in conjunction with the ADEK wellbeing policies.

Purpose

- Ensure that mental health is prioritized and integrated in all aspects of the school environment.
- Adopt a community-wide approach to promote mental health through awareness campaigns and initiatives aimed at all stakeholders.
- Support early identification and intervention by establishing systems and protocols for identifying and addressing mental health concerns early.

School Policy on Student Mental Health

FLIS BR2 shall develop and implement a Student Mental Health Policy, with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention, in line with the ADEK wellbeing policies. The policy shall include, at minimum, the following elements:

1. Student Awareness and Education: A clear approach and plan ensuring that students learn and understand how to live balanced and healthy lives, including activities to promote and maintain mental health.
2. Student Counseling: The provision of in-school or outsourced qualified specialist services to students who may require additional support or counseling.
3. Referral Pathways: The procedures through which individuals can refer themselves or others for the mental health support services offered by the school.
4. Support During Vulnerable Phases: Step-by-step approach to support students in managing and alleviating stress during vulnerable phases of the academic year.
5. Wellness Resources: The provision of appropriate resources, such as a wellness space, that provide opportunities for students to focus on their wellbeing (e.g., reduce stress and anxiety).
6. Inclusion: Tailored, needs-led services for students with additional learning needs, in line with the ADEK Inclusion Policy and the Federal Decree-Law No. (29) of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Special Needs, and planned
programs and initiatives to promote inclusion in schools.

Mental Health Awareness and Education
FLIS BR2 shall teach students about mental health and living healthy, balanced lives, with a focus on increasing protective factors and developing coping mechanisms. This shall include mindfulness, social and emotional learning (including emotional regulation and resilience), stress management, time management and organization, and the importance of creating a receptive environment for those seeking mental health support and avoiding actions that can lead to stigmatization.
For students: In Cycles 2 and 3, topics should also include mental health difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety) and related coping mechanisms (e.g., surrounding parents' separation/divorce), substance use (misuse, abuse, and addiction) and its prevention and treatment, eating disorders (including causes, indicators, and treatment), digital gaming addiction, suicide and suicidal ideation, any maltreatment concerns, and ways to access help.
Parental Awareness: Schools shall inform parents of their students' mental health policy, and initiatives, and offer engagement opportunities.

Counseling and Support Services
Mandatory Provision of Counseling: Provide all students with access to counseling as required and ensure each step of the counseling process is documented as per requirements in line with the ADEK Reporting Policy.
Appointment of School Counselors: Employ school counselor(s) internally as a staff member or through Department of Health (DOH)-licensed centers via the in-school specialist system, in line with the ADEK In-School Specialist Service Policy, in order to provide students with access to counseling to address their mental health.
1. Qualifications: FLIS BR2 shall ensure that:
a. Counselors hired internally by the school as staff members meet the requirements specified in the ADEK Staff EligibilityPolicy.
b. Counselors employed through DOH-licensed centers as in-school specialists meet the requirements specified in the ADEK In-School Specialist Services Policy.
2. Counselor Responsibilities:
a. Schools shall require the counselor to conduct the following duties in addition to providing counseling services and in line with their professional qualifications:
• Work with relevant stakeholders, such as teachers and parents, to cater to students' counseling needs, as appropriate and in line with confidentiality requirements.
• Liaise with external bodies (e.g., psychiatric centers, child protection specialists, Family Care Authority, etc.) to ensure the provision of necessary support to student(s), as appropriate and in line with confidentiality requirements.

Appointment of Social Worker: Schools shall appoint a social worker as a member of staff to support students (and their families) as an integral link

between the school, home, and the community in helping students succeed.

1. Qualifications: Ensure that:

a. Social workers hired by the school as staff members meet the requirements specified in the ADEK Staff Eligibility Policy.

2. Social Workers' Responsibilities:

a. Schools shall require the social worker to conduct the following duties in line with their professional qualifications:

- As part of an interdisciplinary team to help students succeed, play a crucial role in evaluating needs, causes, and impact and providing assistance through support services to students inside a school setting.
- Work with students, parents, teachers, school staff, and the wider community to support the personal, social, mental, and emotional health needs of students with the goal of providing emotional and
- behavioral support to enhance competencies and enable them to be successful in the classroom.
- Social workers are not authorized to provide therapy/counseling.

Mental Health Committee or Lead:

FLIS BR2 shall appoint a committee or lead to promote awareness of mental health and social and emotional learning. In cases where counselor(s) are appointed internally as a staff member, it is recommended that the counselor take on this role.

Confidentiality:

FLIS BR2 and counselors shall adhere to confidentiality requirements as per Federal Decree Law No. (45) of 2021 on the Protection of Personal Data, the DCD Social Care Professionals Code of Conduct & Ethics in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (DCD, 2020), and other relevant government authorities.

1. Authorize school counselors to share information with relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents, principal, and vice principal) where the school counselor deems this is required to protect the best interests of the student or where this is required legally.

a. In case of suspected maltreatment or potential significant self-harm, the school counselor shall share information with the Child Protection Coordinator or any member of the Child Protection Team, in line with the ADEK Student Protection Policy.

b. In cases such as suicidal ideation or severe substance abuse, the school counselor shall immediately inform school leadership to take further action.

2. The school counselor shall explain to the student the limitations of confidentiality in age-appropriate terms.

Parental Consent:
FLIS BR2 shall seek consent from parents if regular or structured counseling is provided to a student. Where the needfor counseling is identified but parents refuse to give consent, schools shall require them to indicate their decision in writing, with an acknowledgment that they will take responsibility for the wellbeing of the student.

1. Parental consent shall not be required when a student interacts with the school counselor(s) in an unstructured or irregular manner (e.g., a spontaneous conversation regarding daily life, or unplanned drop-ins).
2. Parental consent shall not be required if the counselor deems it to be in the best interest of the student, i.e., in situations where informing parents may adversely affect the wellbeing of the child.
3. Where a parent refuses to give consent and the counselor and school determine that access to a counselor is a necessary measure to prevent potential significant harm to the student, schools shall report this as neglect to the Child Protection Specialist and/or Child Protection Unit, in line with the ADEK Student Protection Policy.

Referral Pathways
External Referral: Where it is determined that a student requires specialized support beyond the professional qualifications of the school counselor, the school shall require students to seek help from external professionals.
Development of Referral Pathways: The school shall design and develop referral pathways that outline the following, in line with the ADEK In-School Specialist Services Policy and the ADEK Inclusion Policy:

1. Procedure for referral by self and others to school counselors, social workers, and external professionals. This includes the procedure through which students and teachers can report signs of concerning behavior in students to the school administration. Schools shall identify and report students who are young caregivers to the Family Care Authority (FCA) and refer them for counseling.
2. Procedure for informing and engaging with parents, including the procedure through which the school administration needs to inform parents when signs of concerning behavior are identified and reported. The decision to inform parents and the choice of the means to inform them shall be made taking into consideration the best interests of the student.
3. Procedure for collecting information from students to monitor their mental health.

Communication:
FLIS BR2 shall communicate their referral pathways to all relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents, staff). Schools shall publish the referral pathways in the Parent Handbook.

Confidentiality: FLIS BR2 shall ensure that all information reported through the referral pathway is treated confidentially.

Support During Vulnerable Phases

Support During Vulnerable Phases: Identify specific periods during the academic year when students are prone to increased stress and emotional vulnerability such as the time of examinations, university applications, transition between grade cycles, etc. Schools shall take structured measures to reduce the chances of, and where applicable, alleviate students' stress and enhance their mental health. Such measures shall include:

1. Study Leaves: A period of absence that is authorized by the school for students to study for board/pre-collegiate examinations for a maximum of 4 weeks annually, in line with the ADEK Assessment Policy.
2. End-of-Semester Office Hours: Brief one-on-one online or offline sessions between teachers and students for sharing feedback, both positive and constructive at the end of each semester/term.
3. Workshops: Individual or group workshop sessions with students to equip them to cope with stress and emotional vulnerability during vulnerable phases.

Support for Students with Additional Learning Needs

The school shall ensure that the Head of Inclusion works alongside all relevant stakeholders such as teachers, specialists, parents, and school counselors to safeguard the mental health of students with additional learning needs. The school shall ensure that all Documented Learning Plans (DLP) are holistic and take the level of functioning of the students with additional learning needs into account, in line with the ADEK Inclusion Policy.

The school shall offer reasonable accommodations to support the mental health needs of students with additional learning needs. For instance, schools can consider adopting the following measures to accommodate the specific needs of students with additional learning needs:

1. Adjusting the school timetable to shorten it and accommodate breakout timings for students experiencing high levels of anxiety.
2. Making the uniform norms flexible for students identified to have sensory needs.
3. Close monitoring of students who are identified as being at risk of teasing or bullying.