VINAYAKA MISSION'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION

(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

POLICY ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE FOR STUDENTS

1. Preamble:

Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation (Deemed to be University) (VMRF(DU)) sexual and reproductive health as an essential component of students' physical, psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Access to accurate health information, preventive care, appropriate clinical services, professional counseling, and health education enables students to make informed decisions concerning their health, personal safety, relationships, and reproductive well-being.

Students pursuing higher education may have questions or concerns relating to puberty, menstrual health, reproductive physiology, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, consent, healthy relationships, pregnancy-related care, fertility, and sexual health. Inadequate information, stigma, misinformation, and difficulties in accessing appropriate health services may adversely affect students' health, safety, dignity, and academic participation.

In recognition of these concerns, the University is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, respectful, and supportive campus environment in which students can access reliable sexual and reproductive health information, appropriate health-care services, counseling, and referral facilities without stigma or unlawful discrimination.

This policy establishes an institutional framework for promoting sexual and reproductive health awareness, facilitating access to appropriate health-care services, encouraging preventive practices, protecting students' privacy, and ensuring compliance with applicable Indian laws and professional standards.

2. Short Title and Commencement:

1. This policy shall be called **"Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare for Students".**
2. This policy shall come into force from the date of approval of the Executive Council of the University.

3. Purpose:

- Promote awareness and understanding of sexual and reproductive health among students.

- Provide accurate, evidence-informed, age-appropriate, and scientifically sound health information.
- Facilitate access to appropriate preventive, diagnostic, counseling, and treatment services through the University Health Centre or authorized external healthcare providers.
- Promote menstrual health, reproductive hygiene, contraception awareness, and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.
- Educate students about consent, personal boundaries, healthy relationships, gender sensitivity, and responsible decision-making.
- Facilitate access to appropriate information and professional guidance concerning fertility, pregnancy-related care, and legally available reproductive health services.
- Encourage early consultation and timely referral for sexual and reproductive health concerns.
- Establish appropriate mechanisms for confidential counseling and professional referral, subject to applicable legal requirements.
- Prevent stigma, misinformation, harassment, exploitation, and discrimination relating to sexual and reproductive health.
- Promote awareness of sexual violence, coercion, and the support and reporting mechanisms available to students.
- Ensure that services are accessible to students with disabilities and students requiring additional support.
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and continuously improving the quality and accessibility of student sexual and reproductive health services.

4. Scope and Applicability:

- This policy shall apply to all students enrolled in the University's undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, diploma, certificate, and other recognized academic programs.
- It shall cover students residing in University hostels, participating in clinical postings, internships, fieldwork, institutional activities, and other University-related educational engagements, as relevant.
- The policy shall also apply to University personnel and authorized service providers to the extent that they are involved in delivering, coordinating, or facilitating student sexual and reproductive health services.

5. Institutional Governance:

5.1 Student Sexual and Reproductive Health Committee

The University shall constitute a Student Sexual and Reproductive Health Committee or assign these responsibilities to an appropriate existing student health and wellness committee.

The Committee may comprise:

- A senior University administrator as Chairperson.
- The Dean or Director responsible for student welfare.
- The University medical officer or a qualified healthcare professional.
- A qualified professional with experience in reproductive or sexual health.
- A representative of the counseling or psychological support services.
- A representative of the Women's Cell or Gender Sensitization Committee.
- A representative of the disability support unit.
- A faculty representative.
- A student representative, where appropriate and subject to suitable safeguards.
- Any other member nominated by the competent authority.

The Committee shall:

1. Prepare and review the annual student sexual and reproductive health action plan.
2. Coordinate health education and awareness programs.
3. Facilitate access to qualified healthcare professionals and referral services.
4. Review the accessibility and availability of student health services.
5. Ensure that educational materials are accurate and appropriate.
6. Recommend training for faculty mentors, wardens, student welfare personnel, and other designated staff.
7. Review anonymized service utilization data and student feedback.
8. Recommend corrective measures and improvements.
9. Submit an annual implementation report to the competent University authority.

5.2 Designated Nodal Officer

The University shall designate a nodal officer or office to coordinate student sexual and reproductive health services, maintain referral information, communicate service availability, and monitor implementation.

5.3 University Health Centre

Where available, the University Health Centre shall facilitate appropriate consultations, preventive services, health education, counseling referrals, and follow-up within its approved clinical capacity.

Where services are not available within the University, arrangements shall be made, wherever feasible, with appropriate government hospitals, medical college hospitals, and authorized healthcare providers.

6. Sexual and Reproductive Health-Care Services for Students:

6.1 General Sexual and Reproductive Health Consultation

The University shall facilitate access to professional consultation for students who require information or assistance relating to sexual and reproductive health.

Depending on available facilities, services may include:

- General reproductive health consultations.
- Guidance regarding common reproductive health concerns.
- Referral for specialist assessment and treatment.
- Information on preventive health practices.
- Professional guidance concerning when medical evaluation is advisable.
- Follow-up referral where clinically indicated.

All clinical services shall be provided by appropriately qualified professionals.

6.2 Menstrual Health and Hygiene

The University shall promote menstrual health awareness and facilitate access to appropriate menstrual health support.

Initiatives may include:

- Education on menstruation, menstrual hygiene, and common menstrual concerns.
- Guidance concerning painful, irregular, heavy, or otherwise concerning menstruation.
- Referral for medical assessment when required.
- Availability of menstrual hygiene products through appropriate campus arrangements.
- Clean, safe, and accessible toilet facilities with suitable disposal arrangements.
- Awareness of conditions that require timely medical attention.

6.3 Contraception Awareness and Referral

The University shall facilitate access to accurate information and professional guidance concerning contraception and family planning.

Educational and referral services may cover:

- Available contraceptive methods and their general characteristics.
- Correct use, effectiveness, limitations, and potential adverse effects.
- Condoms and their role in reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections.
- Referral to qualified professionals for individual contraceptive advice.
- Information on emergency contraception and timely access through authorized providers, where appropriate.

The University shall not compel students to use any particular contraceptive method or disclose their contraceptive choices to academic or administrative authorities.

6.4 Prevention, Testing and Treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections

The University shall promote awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and facilitate access to appropriate preventive and clinical services.

Support may include:

- Information about transmission, prevention, symptoms, and treatment.
- Education on safer sexual practices.
- Information on appropriate condom use.
- Referral for STI testing and clinical assessment.
- Access to authorized HIV testing services, subject to applicable consent and confidentiality requirements.
- Referral for treatment and follow-up care.
- Information about preventive interventions, including pre-exposure or post-exposure prophylaxis where clinically appropriate and available through authorised providers.

The University shall not conduct compulsory HIV or STI testing as a condition of admission, attendance, examination, hostel accommodation, or participation in academic activities, except where a specific legal requirement applies.

6.5 Fertility and Reproductive Health Awareness

The University shall facilitate access to accurate information concerning reproductive physiology, fertility, and reproductive health.

Educational initiatives may address:

- Basic reproductive physiology.
- Factors that may affect fertility.
- Common reproductive health conditions.
- Preconception health and healthy lifestyle practices.
- The importance of timely professional consultation for fertility-related concerns.
- Referral to qualified specialists where indicated.

Information shall be provided without imposing expectations concerning marriage, parenthood, or reproductive choices.

6.6 Pregnancy-Related Health Care and Support

The University shall facilitate access to professional guidance and appropriate referrals for students seeking assistance relating to pregnancy.

Support may include:

- Referral for pregnancy testing and clinical confirmation.
- Information concerning antenatal care and maternal health.
- Guidance on nutrition, medication safety, and professional medical supervision.
- Information about legally available pregnancy-related care and services.
- Referral for pregnancy complications and urgent medical concerns.
- Guidance concerning applicable academic, attendance, leave, and other student support provisions.

Pregnancy-related information shall be handled confidentially, subject to applicable legal requirements. Students shall not be subjected to humiliation, coercion, or unlawful discrimination because they seek pregnancy-related health care.

6.7 Information and Referral Concerning Lawful Abortion-Related Care

The University shall facilitate access to accurate information and appropriate referrals concerning abortion-related health care permitted under Indian law.

Students seeking such services shall be guided towards appropriately qualified healthcare professionals and authorized facilities. Services shall be governed by the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, as amended, and applicable rules and regulations.

The University shall ensure that information is communicated sensitively and without coercion or stigma. Clinical decisions and procedures shall remain within the applicable legal framework and the responsibility of qualified healthcare professionals.

6.8 Sexual Health Counseling

The University shall facilitate access to appropriate counseling for students who require guidance concerning sexual health, body image, personal boundaries, healthy relationships, reproductive concerns, or other related issues.

Counseling shall be non-judgmental and confidential within applicable legal limits. Clinical assessment and specialized interventions shall be provided only by appropriately qualified professionals.

6.9 Specialist Referral Services

Where the required service is beyond the University's clinical capacity, the student shall be guided towards an appropriate healthcare facility.

Referral pathways may include government hospitals, medical college hospitals, gynecology services, urology services, dermatology services, authorized HIV testing and treatment facilities, mental health professionals, and other relevant specialists.

Referral information shall be reviewed periodically to ensure accuracy and availability.

7. Sexual and Reproductive Health Information and Education:

7.1 Structured Health Education

The University shall organize structured sexual and reproductive health education programs for students. Such programs shall be age-appropriate, scientifically accurate, culturally sensitive, respectful of diversity, and consistent with applicable laws and educational requirements.

7.2 Core Educational Topics

The program may cover:

1. Human anatomy and reproductive physiology.
2. Puberty and bodily changes.
3. Menstrual health and hygiene.
4. Reproductive health and fertility awareness.
5. Contraception and family planning.
6. Prevention, identification, and treatment of STIs.
7. HIV prevention, testing, treatment awareness, and stigma reduction.

8. Consent, personal boundaries, and healthy relationships.
9. Prevention of sexual coercion, exploitation, and violence.
10. Pregnancy-related health information and access to lawful care.
11. Healthy lifestyle practices and reproductive well-being.
12. Access to professional health services and reliable information sources.
13. Digital safety, online exploitation, and responsible handling of intimate personal information.
14. Relevant legal rights, protections, and reporting mechanisms.

7.3 Modes of Delivery

Health education may be delivered through:

- Student orientation programs.
- Expert lectures and seminars.
- Interactive workshops and awareness sessions.
- Health awareness campaigns and health camps.
- Digital learning modules and approved online resources.
- Posters, brochures, leaflets, and campus information displays.
- Peer education programs supervised by qualified professionals.
- Departmental and interdisciplinary health promotion activities.

7.4 Educational Resources

The University shall encourage the preparation and dissemination of reliable educational materials in English and other appropriate languages.

Materials shall be reviewed periodically by qualified professionals for accuracy, clarity, accessibility, and relevance.

7.5 Peer Education and Student Participation

The University may establish student health ambassadors or peer education groups to promote awareness, reduce stigma, and guide students towards appropriate services.

Peer educators shall receive suitable training and supervision. They shall not diagnose health conditions, conduct clinical procedures, or provide specialized counseling beyond their competence.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 University Administration

The competent authority shall approve the policy, provide appropriate resources, designate responsible personnel, and review implementation.

8.2 Student Welfare Division

The Student Welfare Division shall coordinate student awareness programs, communicate service availability, facilitate referrals, and monitor implementation.

8.3 University Health Centre

The University Health Centre, where available, shall facilitate appropriate consultations, preventive services, health education, and referrals within its approved clinical capacity.

8.4 Constituent Institutions and Academic Departments

Deans, Heads of Departments, and institutional leaders shall communicate the availability of services, encourage participation in approved awareness programs, and facilitate appropriate referrals while protecting student privacy.

8.5 Qualified Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals shall provide services within their competence and in accordance with applicable clinical, ethical, legal, and confidentiality requirements.

8.6 Counselors

Counselors shall provide appropriate psychosocial support, facilitate referrals where required, and maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality.

8.7 Faculty Mentors and Wardens

Faculty mentors, wardens, and designated student support personnel shall guide students towards appropriate services, support approved awareness initiatives, and escalate urgent safety concerns through established procedures. They shall not undertake clinical assessment or treatment beyond their competence.

8.8 Students and Student Organizations

Students may participate in approved health promotion and peer education activities, subject to appropriate training, supervision, and professional guidance.

9. Resources And Implementation

The University shall endeavor to provide appropriate administrative, financial, human, and infrastructural resources for implementing this policy.

Resources may include:

- Qualified medical officers and healthcare professionals.
- Access to reproductive health specialists and counselors.
- Referral arrangements with recognized healthcare facilities.
- Health education materials and digital resources.
- Menstrual hygiene facilities and supplies.
- Appropriate consultation spaces that protect privacy.
- Secure record-management systems.
- Awareness program budgets.
- Verified healthcare and emergency contact directories.

Where in-house services are unavailable, the University may establish referral arrangements with appropriate public health institutions and qualified healthcare providers.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The designated Committee shall periodically evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

Monitoring may include:

1. Number and frequency of student sexual and reproductive health education programs.
2. Participation in awareness and sensitization activities.
3. Availability and accessibility of counseling and clinical referral services.
4. Student awareness of available sexual and reproductive health services.
5. Availability of menstrual hygiene facilities and appropriate supplies.
6. Training coverage among designated personnel.
7. Availability of documented consent, confidentiality, and referral procedures.
8. Implementation of corrective actions identified during reviews.
9. Compliance with applicable legal and professional requirements.
10. Completion of annual implementation reports and action-taken reports.

The University may obtain feedback through appropriate surveys and consultations. Sensitive health information shall not be collected unnecessarily, and individual clinical details shall not be used for routine institutional performance assessment.

11. Grievance Redressal

Any concern relating to denial of access to services, inappropriate conduct, breach of confidentiality, discrimination, or non-compliance with this policy may be submitted through the appropriate University grievance redressal mechanism.

Complaints shall be handled fairly and confidentially, subject to applicable legal requirements and due process.

Matters falling within the jurisdiction of statutory committees or other designated authorities shall be referred to the appropriate mechanism.

No student shall be subjected to retaliation for raising a concern in good faith.

12. Legal and Regulatory alignment

This policy shall be implemented in accordance with applicable Indian laws, rules, regulations, professional standards, and University statutes and ordinances.

Relevant legal frameworks may include, as applicable:

1. **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, as amended**, and applicable rules concerning legally permitted abortion-related care.
2. **HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017**, including relevant protections against discrimination and provisions concerning confidentiality.
3. **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012**, where matters involving students below 18 years and applicable reporting obligations arise.
4. **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**, and applicable rules.
5. **Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994**, as amended, where relevant.
6. **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**, and applicable accessibility and non-discrimination requirements.
7. **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, and applicable rules and commencement provisions, to the extent in force and applicable.
8. Applicable UGC regulations, other relevant higher education requirements, and University statutes, ordinances, and institutional policies.

The policy shall not replace statutory procedures, clinical judgement, emergency medical care, or the rights and remedies available under applicable law.

13. Review and Amendment

This policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years or earlier if required by changes in applicable legislation, regulatory requirements, public health guidance, institutional needs, or service delivery arrangements.

Amendments shall be recommended by the designated Committee and submitted to the competent authority for approval.

14. Approval and Effective Date

This policy shall take effect from the date of approval by the competent authority of the University.

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