

NWU to launch project to promote mental health and prevent substance abuse

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The high prevalence of mental health problems and substance abuse among adults and young people within communities have been reported across the country, and the North West province is no exception.



To address this problem, the North-West University's (NWU's) faculties of Law, Health Sciences, and Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and the North-West Department of Health, will be launching a multi-sectoral collaborative care community intervention project at the Lokaleng village in Mahikeng on 15 October 2021.

The theme of this project resonates with the 2021 World Mental Health Day Theme - "Mental Health in an Unequal World".

According to Prof. Ushotanefe Useh, director of the NWU's Lifestyle Diseases research niche unit, this collaborative approach aims to promote mental health and well-being and to prevent substance abuse among young people, which might lead to mental illness.

"We will also provide health screening services which will aid us in developing appropriate intervention strategies," he adds.

"The multi-sectoral collaborative care model proposes a combination of health system reforms and community-based resources, as well as a comprehensive and coordinated response with regard to mental health services," says Prof. Miriam Moagi from the School of Nursing.

The NWU's Faculty of Law will address the role of the law and the implications of wrongdoing associated with substance abuse, with Advocate Getsia Zazo and Friedel Steenekamp taking the lead.

In turn, Prof. Kwena Mokoboki and her team from the School of Agricultural Sciences will introduce empowerment and job creation projects to assist young people in the community to improve their mental health and well-being by training them to farm with indigenous chickens and produce vegetables. This training might also assist with the rehabilitation of young people in the area.

Prof. Choja Oduaran from the subject group Psychology will lead the psychology team, while social work services will be offered by the team led by Dr Elizabeth Smit.

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