

STUDENTS AND MENTAL HEALTH

70%

of mental illnesses start in adolescence and young adulthood, making youth vulnerable to mental health problems and addiction. This may be due to the changing brain as well as to new social experiences. Youth is a time of self-discovery and critical transitions – from primary to secondary school through to post-secondary education. It is also a time of new peer groups, greater responsibility and living more independently.

46%

of post-secondary students in a 2016 Canadian survey reported feeling “so depressed it was difficult to function” in the last 12 months.

13%

of these students reported that they had seriously considered suicide.



Teachers feel unequipped to deal with child and youth mental illness.

87% of Canadian elementary and secondary teachers report that a lack of staff training is a barrier to mental health services for students.^{xviii} Psychotherapy for students is limited. Health insurance plans, which are already scarce, only cover from \$300 to \$500 a year. That’s as little as two visits to a psychologist. As it is, only 69% of Canadian universities and 28% of colleges offer this coverage.^{xix}

The transition to post-secondary often means that students who had mental health supports at home, in their community or in high school, “age out” or otherwise lose these supports when they leave high school and/or start post-secondary school.



More Feet on the Ground,

a website created by Ontario’s Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, provides information on how to:

- ✓ Recognize signs of mental health problems and distress.
- ✓ Respond in a way that is appropriate.
- ✓ Refer students to the appropriate resources.

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SUPPORTING STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

Here's what schools and campuses can do to support student mental health:

- Enhance mental health services on campus where capacity exists. Provide on-campus services for students with mental health problems, including addictions.
- Create (or enhance) student wellness programs like peer support, Elder counselling and sharing circles, stress, time and financial management workshops, study tips workshops, Mood Walks, yoga, meditation.
- Make sure students know about these supports – promote them to the student population.
- Train professors, teaching assistants (TAs) and student residence assistants (RAs/Dons) to see the signs of mental health problems and encourage them to provide support.
- Post and share the Carry It Toolkit.
- Use the social media shareables and social media bank, with links to the Toolkit, to spread the word.



At the front line of mental health: what teachers, faculty, and teaching assistants can do

▪ **Recommend that students in need visit mental health services on campus.**

Teachers, faculty, and TAs are often at the front lines of student mental health. They may notice behaviour changes in their students. Are they absent more often? Are they in-class but just not “present”? Students may confide in you about their struggles with mental health and/or substances. You may not be a mental health professional, but you can recognize when students are in distress and support them. Know where they can go for mental health support and help them access those services.

▪ **Coordinate with off-campus services.**

Services can sometimes be difficult to access because services in the mental health sector are not well coordinated, and that includes coordination between community mental health organizations and schools. Campus health-care providers, in their role as facilitators, have a responsibility to facilitate service access and to follow-up.

▪ **Connect to safe and appropriate services**

Services need to be appropriate for the groups they are intended to serve. For Indigenous communities in Canada, this means connecting students with culturally appropriate and safe mental health promotion and treatment services. There are also mental health services that are specialized for 2SLGBTQ+ youth, women who are survivors of violence, newcomers (including international students), and ethno-cultural communities, among many others.