



**Student
Mental Health
Framework**
2022-2026

Carleton
University



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Acknowledgements

The Student Mental Health Framework 2022-2026 emerged from the need to evolve our previous Framework, review our programs and services, consider new trends and best practices, and collaborate with the community to develop a more holistic approach to student mental health and wellness. We would like to acknowledge the work and support of the Student Mental Health Advisory Committee in the development and ongoing implementation of this Framework.

We would also like to acknowledge the members of the Carleton community and our external partners for engaging in the consultation process of this Framework, and for providing continuous feedback as we continue to strive for wellness on campus. During the consultation process, feedback was collected through closed meetings, guided group information and feedback sessions, online feedback forms, and email submissions. The input and feedback have provided us with critical perspectives and ideas for the development of this Framework. We wish to thank the Office of Quality Initiatives for facilitating the many feedback and information sessions throughout the consultation process. The development of this Framework has benefitted immensely from the input and shared knowledge of students, faculty, staff, and external community partners to create a guiding document that represents the voices of our diverse communities.



Algonquin Territory Acknowledgement

Carleton University acknowledges the location of its campus upon the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin Anishinabeg nation. We recognize that the Student Mental Health Framework 2022-2026 must reflect the values of the Algonquin people. Accordingly, we must strive to further strengthen relationships between Carleton and the Algonquin communities, and endeavour to accelerate the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, ways of teaching and healing, and knowledge in our campus practices.

Student Mental Health and Wellness: Starting from Strength

Carleton University is a dynamic, diverse, and innovative university with over 31,000 undergraduate and graduate students and approximately 5,300 faculty and staff. We remain committed to creating a culture where the mental health and wellness of our students is prioritized. Since the first Framework was launched in 2009, Carleton has been striving for continuous improvement, which led to the development and launch of the Student Mental Health Framework (SMHF) 2.0 in October 2016. The SMHF 2.0 had the goal of building a holistic, campus-wide approach to mental health and well-being. Since its launch, students, staff, and faculty have been working collaboratively to implement the 38 recommendations under six areas of focus, which were all addressed or implemented as of the fall 2021 term. This section provides a summary of the key accomplishments achieved under SMHF 2.0, which enables us to start the revised Framework from a place of strength.

Enhancing Mental Health Support

Diversifying and increasing access to mental health support was a key objective of the SMHF 2.0. Since fall 2018, Carleton University undergraduate students have been able to access Empower Me, a 24/7 off-campus professional mental health service that aims to contribute to a resilient student community. As part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we also partnered with International SOS' 24/7 Emotional Support service in 2020. This service allows students studying outside of Canada to connect with mental health professionals and counselling services in over 60 languages to support their mental, emotional, and physical wellness.

To help meet the mental health needs of our students, the Health and Counselling Services team grew from six counsellors to 12 full-time counsellors and two part-time counsellors. This 133% increase in counselling services includes the addition of a same-day intake triage counsellor in 2020 and a crisis counsellor for all clients reaching out to counselling services. These two new counsellors assist students in quickly connecting with the counselling services and resources that best fit their mental health needs and has enabled the university to provide same-day counselling services to students in crisis. We also have several specialized counsellors providing mental health services for our diverse student communities, including 2SLGBTQ+, trans and non-binary, racialized, Indigenous, graduate, international, and residence students. Health and Counselling Services has also partnered with The Royal to increase psychiatric assessments, reducing the wait times for students accessing psychiatric care.



In the spring of 2018, a second KORU Mindfulness teacher was trained to provide students with mindfulness and meditation sessions to decrease stress and support resiliency development and satisfaction in life. The Care and Support team in the Office of Student Affairs also grew by 200% — enabling staff to connect with more students for individualized support with resource navigation.

Increasing Awareness, Training, and Education

We have continued to produce and update various support documents and resources for members of our community, including *Supporting Students in Distress*, to assist faculty and staff in recognizing when a student is in distress and how to respond effectively; *Collaborative Resources for Mental Health and Well-being*, to assist in matching students to the appropriate level of support based on their specific needs; and *Supporting a Friend*, designed by students to help them support friends who may be in distress.

In addition, Supporting Students in Distress training sessions were offered regularly to staff, faculty, and student leaders. Supporting a Friend workshops were also offered, with the development and delivery of these sessions being overseen by students. We have continued to offer suicide prevention skills training through

safeTALK and LivingWorks Start as part of student leader and peer mentor training schedules, as well as to all faculty and staff.

The Umbrella Project, Carleton's Harm Reduction Strategy, was implemented to reduce stigma and promote safer substance use through education, outreach, and support. Since 2019, Carleton has distributed 300 Naloxone Training Kits and has offered more than 70 sessions of All People All Pathways to Carleton community members, a peer support group facilitated by individuals with lived or living experience with substance use and addiction.

Building Thriving Communities

The Student Mental Health Student Engagement Committee was formed in fall 2017 to create engagement opportunities and to foster conversations on mental health and wellness on campus for students and by students. This included continuous improvements to student wellness programming and experiential learning through promotional campaigns and events. In the fall 2018 term, we launched the Carleton Therapy Dog program, the first of its kind in Canada, where faculty and staff had their personal dogs trained to be Carleton Therapy Dogs, providing comfort and support to students and helping to build thriving communities.





Student Mental Health Framework 2022-2026

We are committed to further evolving our Student Mental Health Framework to highlight a more holistic approach to student mental health and wellness by further incorporating spirituality, substance use health, Indigenous ways of healing, cyberbullying prevention, and pedagogy in addition to our already extensive programming and expanded counselling support.

The development of this Framework was influenced by the complexity of global challenges that were present at the time of its creation. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the mental health and wellness of all members of our community. We know there will be many more challenges on the road ahead but are confident that this Framework will guide us in supporting our students as we transition back to in-person classes, support

services, and social engagements. Ensuring that equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and Indigenous perspectives are woven into the fabric of this document and any related work plans remains a priority. We know there is still much work to be done, and we are committed to ensuring that the implementation of the recommendations in this Framework aligns with these values and takes an intersectional approach to mental health and wellness for all members of our community.

Aspiration Statement

We will strive for wellness by proactively promoting a holistic and intersectional approach to student mental health and wellness, and by strategically coordinating our programs, services, and initiatives to build skills and strengthen resilience.

Guiding Values

Collaboration:

We engage students, staff, faculty, and external community partners to facilitate and support the sharing of knowledge, experience, and expertise to develop innovative and effective programs and practices.

Holistic Environment:

We recognize that mental health and wellness exist on a continuum and are influenced by many sociocultural factors present in the learning environment and community. We will support a variety of complementary strategies to enhance mental health and substance use health, wellness, coping skills, and resilience at all levels of the institution to create an environment where all students can thrive.

Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion:

We believe that in order to provide a healthy and supportive environment, we need to understand our students' unique needs and ensure our services are accessible, inclusive, and respectful of all cultures and identities.

Continuous Improvement:

We strive to create a culture of continuous improvement, recognizing the need for continued evaluation of programs, services, and initiatives, and for the implementation of emerging best practices as they become available.

Areas of Focus: Objectives and Recommendations

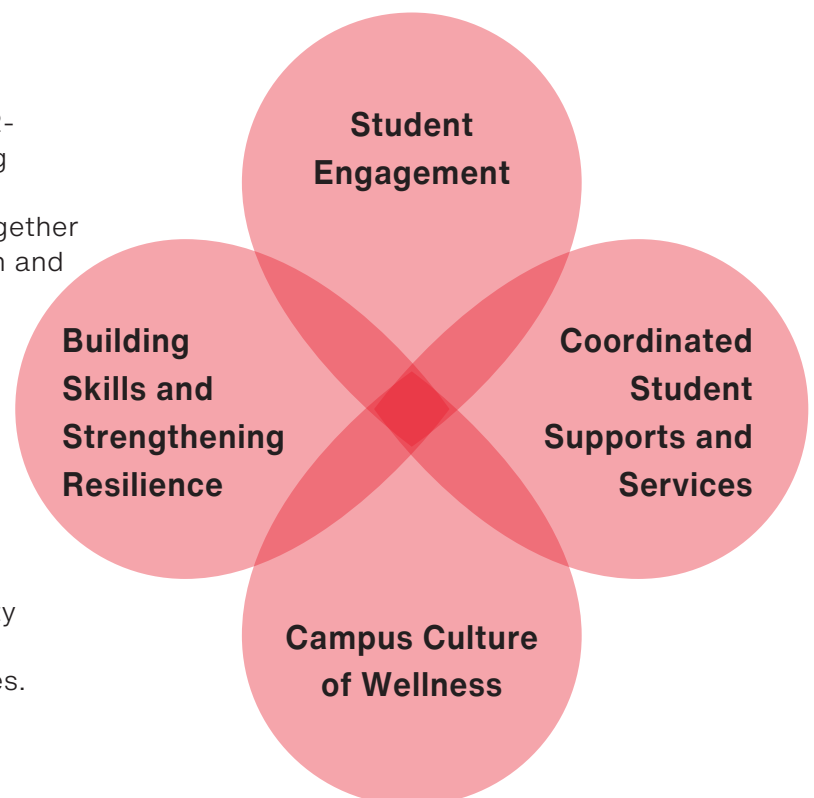


Four Areas of Focus

The Student Mental Health Framework 2022-2026 outlines four areas of focus comprising **12 objectives** and **30 recommendations**.

Each area of focus is interdependent and together help to support overall student mental health and wellness at Carleton.

These **four areas of focus** have evolved from the original six identified in the Student Mental Health Framework 2.0. This updated and streamlined approach reflects our ongoing focus and commitment to thrive in each of these overlapping areas over the next four years. We will continue to seek feedback from the university community and strive for equity, diversity, and inclusion in all of our services, programs, and initiatives.



Student Engagement

Objectives

- Recognize and support student engagement opportunities across our diverse university environment with a focus on student involvement, mental health and wellness, and inclusivity.
- Increase opportunities for student engagement and feedback in mental health and wellness initiatives, services, programs, and associated policies.

Recommendations

- Increase student involvement in the implementation of all areas of focus in this Framework through developing and strengthening partnerships with students, staff, and faculty.
- Further develop partnerships with student-led groups and support their innovative ideas and initiatives that promote a holistic approach to mental health and wellness.
- Continue to support and engage the Student Mental Health Student Engagement Committee in developing and implementing student-led initiatives.
- Leverage the results of existing student surveys and explore the implementation of additional surveys to better capture and improve the overall health and wellness of our students.
- Develop and implement assessment and evaluation tools for existing programs and services to ensure they are meeting students' needs.
- Assess opportunities to engage graduate-level student expertise in researching and evaluating mental health and wellness initiatives on campus.



Building Skills and Strengthening Resilience

Objectives

- Enhance collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to support anti-stigma programming and campaigns, and continue to work towards increasing all aspects of mental health and wellness awareness.
- Encourage personal growth through opportunities to develop self-awareness and the acquisition of effective coping skills to strengthen resiliency.
- Develop specific strategies and frameworks to support holistic and proactive approaches to mental health and wellness.



Recommendations

- Update the wellness website to provide access to comprehensive information on mental health and wellness to students, staff, faculty, and parents, including building resilience and coping skills, substance use health, and streamlining resource navigation.
- Provide regular training using an intersectional approach to enable students, staff, and faculty to assist students in a way that is respectful of culture and identities, and which reflects the diversity of Carleton community members.
- Enhance online modules, workshops, and programming using an intersectional approach that introduces students to the concepts of overall wellness and thriving within the university environment, with a particular focus on key areas like nutrition, physical health, finances, living on your own, loneliness, and isolation.
- Develop programming and initiatives to provide students with opportunities and resources that will help them to recognize personal strengths, develop coping skills, and build resilience.
- Enhance training, events, and knowledge sharing of mental health and wellness services to contribute to overall student wellness, with a particular focus on encouraging health-seeking behaviours.
- Develop and implement training, education, and resources to reduce harms in different online environments, such as social media.
- Support the development and implementation of a substance use health and harm reduction strategy that is focused on support, resources, education, and partnerships.

Coordinated Student Supports and Services

Objectives

- Increase knowledge and ease of navigation of existing campus resources, programs, and services for mental health and wellness that are available to students.
- Build capacity to ensure the provision of effective and interconnected campus mental health and wellness services to ensure optimal responsiveness and ease of access.
- Further develop effective partner relationships between Carleton mental health-related services, provincial and municipal resource networks, and community partners, and maintain effective liaison and referral protocols in partnership with external mental health resources.

Recommendations

- Update related documents that outline student services and programs, and align with a streamlined “Stepped Approach” depending on need for the range of mental health and wellness services available at Carleton.
- Update and regularly provide referral training for faculty, staff, and students in key roles, including providing template responses when referring students to additional supports that takes into consideration the individual and cultural needs of our diverse student body.
- Integrate faith-based and spirituality resources and approaches as an integral component for supporting mental health and wellness.
- Assess and respond to student demand and need for additional counselling services using an equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility lens.
- Review the delivery structure of student mental health and wellness services at Carleton to respond to student mental health and wellness challenges in a coordinated way, while simultaneously addressing cultural barriers to service use.
- Continue to promote the Care Report to the entire campus community and encourage its use to flag indicators of concern so that our community can respond in the most appropriate way.
- Maintain and foster new collaborative partnerships with community partners that allow for better student access to community-based mental health services, including working with hospitals on coordinated discharge processes, and liaising with off-campus services for after-hours care.



Campus Culture of Wellness

Objectives

- Increase awareness of signs of mental health distress, crisis, and suicidality; and enhance the appropriate coordinated responses and resources for referral.
- Strengthen institutional awareness of the impact of policies and practices that may create unintended stress for our students.
- Cultivate awareness of the importance of student mental health promotion and integration at all levels of the university, with a renewed commitment to continuous improvement and a particular emphasis on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Work collaboratively with faculty to establish a community of practice for integrating mental health and wellness into the curriculum and in the classroom.



Recommendations

- Enhance the availability of training that is culturally aware and sensitive for faculty, staff, and student leaders to support students in crisis.
- Develop a university postvention strategy to reduce suicide risk and promote healing after a death by suicide.
- Ensure collaboration with the employee mental health strategy and Healthy Workplace Strategic Plan, so as to have faculty and staff well supported as they support students.
- Sign and implement the Okanagan Charter, committing to its calls to action to embed health into all aspects of campus culture and to lead health promotion action and collaboration.
- Ensure continued collaboration with Carleton's many documents, frameworks, and strategies, including, but not limited to, the Coordinated Accessibility Strategy, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan, Honouring Each Other, and Kinàmàgawin.
- In line with Kinàmàgawin Call to Action # 8, develop a Circle of Care Protocol for Indigenous students in crisis, in consultation with the Centre for Indigenous Support and Community Engagement, Health and Counselling Services, and the Office of Student Affairs.
- Investigate ways to incorporate green spaces and environmental wellness into mental health and wellness programming in consultation with key stakeholders.
- Create opportunities for staff and faculty to work together and learn from each other when integrating mental health and wellness practices, seeking to integrate research and evidence-based practices inside and outside of the classroom.
- Develop and distribute a mental health toolkit for faculty that includes curriculum infusion, how to recognize when a student may need support, and how to support their own mental health.
- In consultation with faculty, investigate and implement best practices for supporting student mental health and wellness into the curriculum and classroom, including course design and delivery.



Implementation and Evaluation

The implementation of the Student Mental Health Framework 2022-2026 will be accomplished through the combined efforts of the entire Carleton community. The Office of the Associate Vice-President (Student Health and Wellness) takes ownership and accountability for this Framework under the Office of the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment). This office will engage the cross-functional Student Mental Health Advisory Committee to undertake annual strategic planning for the Framework, including prioritizing the recommendations, assigning ownership, developing work plans that are measurable, and creating a four-year implementation plan for continued support.

There will be numerous ways for faculty, staff, students, and external community partners to be involved in the implementation of the various recommendations. The Student Mental Health Student Engagement Committee will continue to explore ways to create engagement and

foster the conversation about mental health and wellness on campus, including the development of promotional campaigns and events. This committee of students will also have an important role in providing continuous feedback on the implementation of the Framework.

As the recommendations are prioritized and implemented, an additional assessment process will be established for individual recommendations in order to evaluate their impact and effectiveness in line with the National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-being for Post-Secondary Students and related guiding documents. Necessary adjustments will be made where the recommendations do not achieve the intended results. New research and emerging best practices will also inform the ongoing implementation and evaluation of the Framework. Evaluation and research are critical for the ongoing public accountability of the Framework and enable us to optimally support student mental health and wellness.





Reporting and Review

The Student Mental Health Framework 2022-2026 charts our course for the next four years, identifying both short-term recommendations and longer-term objectives. To ensure we are continually working towards supporting student mental health and wellness, a planning, reporting, and review process has been outlined. To support transparency, an annual report on the implementation of the Framework will be shared with the campus community. This will help Carleton to highlight the innovations, contributions, and successes of the Framework, while also remaining accountable to its aspirations, values, and goals.

This Framework will undergo a collaborative consultation and review process every four years. Although this review will occur every four

years, it does not preclude students, faculty, and staff from providing ongoing feedback on the implementation of this Framework. The Student Mental Health Advisory Committee and Student Mental Health Student Engagement Committee encourages all members of the Carleton community to engage with the Framework and provide continuous feedback to contribute to the mental health and wellness of our student community.

Striving for wellness is an ongoing process that demands continuous improvement, and we are grateful to the entire Carleton community for their dedication and engagement to this critical work.



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