



Insights on Implementation of the National Standard for Mental Health and Well-being for Post-Secondary Students

The **National Standard for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students** (the Standard) is a set of flexible and voluntary guidelines that presents an opportunity for post-secondary institutions to reaffirm their commitment to promote positive student mental health and well-being. It offers a platform for collaboration to support institutions in identifying their strengths, where there may be gaps, and areas for further action.

In 2023, approaching the three-year anniversary of the release of the Standard, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) engaged post-secondary institutions implementing the Standard to hear about their experiences and learn about the barriers and enablers they are facing in their work in campus mental health.

Institutional-level factors

Barriers

Institutional silos

Campus mental health initiatives require buy-in and collaboration across various roles and departments that tend to be decentralized and siloed from one another.

Conflicting priorities and initiatives

The complexity of work in campus mental health means that existing initiatives focused on pressing student needs, like housing or food security, can be seen as priorities that are separate from and compete with work in mental health.

Enablers

Institutional culture

An existing culture of mental health and well-being facilitates meaningful integration of the Standard in institutional strategic plans and frameworks.

Leadership engagement and support

Dedicated champions for work with the Standard and interdepartmental collaboration support connecting existing projects to the Standard and strengthen work being done in campus mental health and well-being.

Resourcing and capacity

Barriers

Nature of funding and continuity

Institutions may struggle to secure long-term funding for work in campus mental health. As a result, many initiatives remain focused on the most pressing, short-term needs.

Portfolio fragmentation

Tasks that are part of a wellness or student mental health portfolio are often divided among various staff, creating gaps in continuity of the work when one or more of these staff leave.

Enablers

Dedicated funding and staffing support

Where possible, ongoing funding and dedicated staff resources to coordinate work with the Standard support continuity and momentum in campus mental health initiatives.

Training and education initiatives

Supporting staff through mental health literacy training programs helps to increase staff capacity to meet students' needs, feel equipped in their roles, and advance a holistic view of mental health and well-being across departments.



“As a student, if you don’t have your health, you don’t have anything.”
– 2023 Mental Health Commissioner of the Students' Society of McGill University

A holistic approach to well-being

The Standard guides institutions toward paying holistic attention to mental health and well-being to promote a culture where emotional, mental, and physical wellness are prioritized. Integrating mental health and well-being considerations across all aspects of campus life – from academic structures to social initiatives and institutional policies – acknowledges the interconnectedness of various factors affecting wellness that can enhance student success and help them flourish.

Access the Standard and implementation resources at:
mentalhealthcommission.ca/studentstandard

Supporting your implementation journey

The Campus Mental Health Action Tracker is the free, go-to resource to assist post-secondary institutions in implementing the Standard. It breaks down the recommendations and guidelines of the Standard to streamline the self-evaluation process and support collaborative assessment of priorities, gaps, and progress. The Tracker can help coordinate the moving pieces of work in campus mental health and support data-driven decision-making to ensure that efforts are comprehensive and inclusive.

Learn more at mentalhealthtracker.ca

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Explore more resources:

