

SA17 Student Mental Health and Wellness

Classification:	Student Affairs
Responsible Authority:	Director, Student Support Services
Executive Sponsor:	Vice President, Student Services
Approval Authority:	Algonquin College Executive Team
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PURPOSE

This Policy outlines the College's commitment to deliver services to support student mental health and well-being. This policy outlines the College's commitment to improve students' awareness of, and ease of access to resources, services and supports.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees who provide or are responsible for the provision of mental health and wellness services to students.

DEFINITIONS

Word/Term	Definition
Algonquin College Executive Team	The Algonquin College Executive Team is the group responsible for providing strategic leadership within Algonquin College. The group is comprised of the President, Vice Presidents, and Director of the President's Office and Communications of the College.
Campus	A Campus refers to a set of grounds and buildings of Algonquin College in a geographical area.
Centre for Accessible Learning	The Centre for Accessible Learning is a service area within Student Support Services that determines appropriate academic accommodations and provides supports for student with disabilities.
College	College, when capitalized and not otherwise qualified in other ways, refers to the Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology.
College Community	The College Community refers to Algonquin College students, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

Complaint	The expression, either oral or written, of the student's dissatisfaction with the learning/teaching experience, the College services, its employees or other students.
Confidentiality	Confidentiality is the principle that information is protected from unauthorized access, disclosure, or use, and is accessible only to individuals, systems, or processes that have been explicitly authorized based on legal, regulatory, contractual, or business requirements.
Employee	An Employee is a full-time or part-time College support staff, a faculty member, or an administrator of the College.
Equity	Means treating individuals and groups fairly, not necessarily equally or the same; recognizing that there are barriers to employment, participation, access and inclusion in the workplace. The principle of equity acknowledges that systemic barriers exist and action is needed to address historical imbalances.
Evidence-Based Practice	Evidence-based practice aims to maximize the effectiveness of psychological interventions through adherence to principles informed by empirical findings, clinical expertise, and client characteristics.
Executive Sponsor	In the context of Policy Governance, the Executive Sponsor is the member of the Algonquin College Executive Team who will present the policy for approval and has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy.
Inclusion	Means intentionally creating a sense of belonging where all employees are recognized and valued for their uniqueness; and collectively promoting a working environment where individuals can be their authentic selves.
Indigenous	Indigenous refers to the First Peoples who inhabited and continue to inhabit what is now known as Canada, including three distinct groups - First Nations, Inuit and Metis Nations.
Mental Health	Mental health is having the capacity to live in a resourceful manner, and the resilience to deal with the challenges and obstacles which life may present.
Mental Illness	Mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses can be associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.
Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004	The Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) is an Ontario law established in 2004 that sets rules for how personal health information is collected, used, and disclosed by health information custodians, such as healthcare providers and hospitals. It aims to protect the privacy of individuals while ensuring they have rights to access and correct their health information.

Student	A Student is any person who is currently enrolled in a course or program at Algonquin College, but who may not yet have registered; who has applied for admission to the College; or who was enrolled in a course or program at the College.
Trauma-Informed Care	Trauma informed care is an approach that acknowledges the widespread impact of trauma and seeks to create a supportive environment by understanding and responding to its effects. It emphasizes safety, trust, and empowerment, while integrating trauma knowledge into all aspects of care to promote healing and prevent re-traumatization.
Vice Presidents	An official or executive ranking below a president. All general references are intended to include Associate Vice President roles

POLICY

Algonquin College is committed to ensuring a psychologically healthy, inclusive, caring, and supportive living and learning environment conducive to positive mental health and student well-being. This policy has been developed with the understanding that inequality and discrimination in areas of race, sexual orientation and gender, disability, poverty, childhood adverse experiences, domestic violence, sexual violence, housing and food insecurity, substance abuse and trauma have an adverse impact on mental health. Algonquin College is committed to supporting students impacted by these societal challenges, along with students that have faced, or are currently facing any manner of challenges that impact their mental health and wellness. The College recognizes that students may experience overlapping and compounding forms of marginalization, and services will be designed and evaluated using an intersectional lens.

Algonquin College Campuses are located on the traditional unceded, unsurrendered territory of the Anishinàbe Algonquin People. Algonquin College recognizes the unique impact that colonialism has had on the mental health and wellness of multiple generations of Indigenous peoples. Algonquin College is committed to reconciliation, especially in providing culturally responsive services and interventions that support the mental health and well-being of Indigenous students at the College.

It is expected that this policy informs practices, programming and service design and delivery across the College in the Spirit of continuous improvement.

Mental health and wellness resources, programming, supports and services are delivered by the following teams at Algonquin College:

- Counselling Services
- Health Services
- The Centre for Accessible Learning
- The Student Health and Wellness Zone

- The Mamidoeswin Centre
- The Residence

Details of services and supports available to students can be accessed within the Student Support Services web site

<https://www.algonquincollege.com/studentssupportservices/>

Algonquin College is committed to:

1. Working towards full compliance with the National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post Secondary Students. The Standard identifies five areas of focus for post-secondary institutions:
 - Campus culture and environment
 - Supports and Services
 - Crisis prevention and management
 - Education and awareness
 - Sustainability and evolution
2. Aligning the College's services and supports with the Okanagan Charter, which encourages health-promoting universities and colleges to infuse health into everyday operations, business practices and academic mandates.
3. Utilizing the Stepped Care model of service delivery for all mental health and wellness-related services, supports and programming at Algonquin College. The types of service provision identified by the Stepped Care model are:
 - Informational, self-directed.
 - Interactive, self-directed.
 - Peer support
 - Workshops.
 - Guided self-help.
 - Intensive group programming.
 - Flexible individual intensive programming.
 - Chronic care and specialist consultation.
 - Acute and crisis care
4. Using student centered principles in the development of all services, resources and programming related to student mental health and well-being.
5. Ensuring easy access to information on programs, policies, services and supports available with respect to student mental health, including resources on campus and in the community.

6. Providing information to students on how the institution protects privacy and confidentiality for individuals accessing mental health and well-being services.
7. Developing and delivering programming, supports and services related to health promotion, mental health intervention and crisis response.
8. Adopting evidence-based practices and taking proactive measures to promote the mental health and wellness of Algonquin College's student population, recognizing that student mental health and wellness are key components of academic success.
9. Reducing stigma around mental health through education, training, health promotion, campaigns, and peer-to-peer programming.
10. Offering equitable access, culturally responsive and trauma-informed care that meets the unique needs and complexities faced by students.
11. Maintaining a student Mental Health and Wellness website that provides a comprehensive range of mental health and wellness-related services and supports both internally and externally.
12. Providing education, health promotion and support to students in areas critical to mental health and wellness, including suicide prevention, sexual violence prevention and substance use management.
13. Providing training, education and consultations on mental health and well-being related topics to college employees.
14. Creating opportunities for students that foster a sense of belonging, create, build, and strengthen connections and relationships with fellow students, and within the wider community through activities, events, speakers, volunteering, and celebrations.
15. Ensuring student confidentiality through abiding by provincial privacy laws (e.g., [Personal Health Information Protection Act](#) & Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act) and the codes of practice for provincial regulatory colleges (e.g., College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario and Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers).
16. Ensuring confidentiality in addressing student complaints or concerns around any aspect of service delivery, including privacy in accordance with Policy SA03 and through a compassionate and trauma-informed lens.

17. Mental health services, communications, digital tools, and physical environments shall be designed using Universal Design principles to ensure access without the need for individual accommodation wherever possible.
18. Algonquin College is committed to delivering student mental health services that are equitable, culturally safe, accessible, and responsive to the diverse and intersecting identities of its student population. The College will identify, monitor, and address systemic barriers affecting access to mental health supports and publicly report on progress towards reducing disparities in mental health outcomes and service utilization.

PROCEDURE

	Action	Responsibility
1.	Under the direction of the Vice President of Student Services, (Executive Sponsor) the Mental Health Steering Committee meets quarterly to work towards full compliance with the National Standard and alignment with the Okanagan Charter.	Mental Health Steering Committee
1.1	All clinical employees from Counselling Services, the Centre for Accessible Learning, Health Services and the Mamidosewin Centre supporting student mental health and wellness are trained in the Stepped Care model and PHIPA.	Student Support Services & Mamidosewin Centre
1.2	Health promotion programming is coordinated and delivered on the Ottawa and Pembroke campuses and within the Residence.	Student Support Services & Algonquin College Residence
1.3	The Student Support Services Mental Health and Wellness website is updated annually.	Student Support Services
1.4	Each semester there is an anti-stigma and service awareness campaign.	Student Support Services
1.5	The Centre for Accessible Learning will support students requiring academic accommodations due to their mental health as per Policy AC01: Academic Accommodation for Accessible Learning.	The Centre for Accessible Learning
1.6	The College supports student activities, such as, but not limited to, events, speakers, volunteering, and celebrations that encourage connection and belonging.	Algonquin College & Algonquin College Residence
1.7	An annual report is presented to the Algonquin College Executive Team and the College's Board of Governors, detailing progress towards the implementation of the student mental health policy.	Student Support Services

RELATED POLICIES

AA49: Electronic Student Record Retention
IT01: Information Security
SA02: Ombudsman
SA03: Student Complaints
SA07: Student Conduct

RELATED MATERIALS

Algonquin College Services

[Student Support Services Web Site](#)

Additional Resources

[The National Standard for Mental Health & Wellbeing for Post Secondary Students](#)

[The Okanagan Charter](#)

[Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health web site](#)

[Stepped Care 2.0 website](#)