

Mental Health Strategy

Mamâwī – wēcikīkohmatowihn

*A joint venture
to aid human
growth and
development*

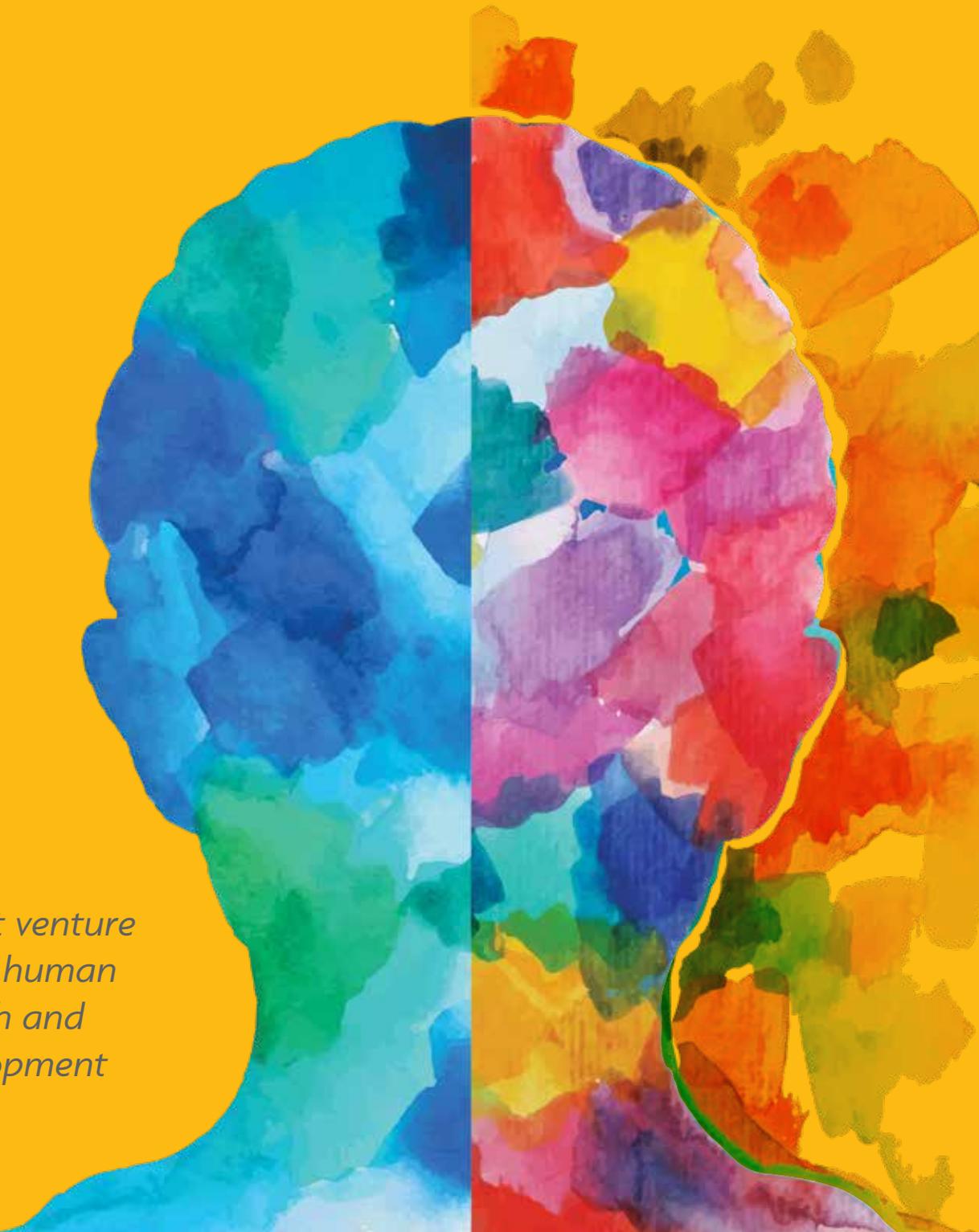
A large, stylized watercolor illustration of a human head profile, facing right. The head is filled with various colors, including shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, red, and purple, creating a vibrant, abstract effect. The background is a solid yellow color.

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Overview

In spring 2019, NorQuest College launched a Mental Health Working Group comprised of learners and employees to develop and recommend a college-wide mental health strategy to the institution.

NorQuest's primary interests in promoting the mental health of learners and employees are as follows:

- **Supporting learners** because mental health has been proven to impact academics
- **Supporting employees** because mental health has been proven to impact work
- **Having healthy workspaces** because that is at the heart of where we learn and work
- **Helping learners and employees to help themselves** as self-help and self-awareness are key to mental health

NorQuest recognizes that mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress are the most common mental health issues impacting post-secondary learners (American College Health Association, 2016), and work is a primary stressor for employees in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019). Mental illness is also the number one work-related disability for Canadians (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2018). Post-secondary institutions in Alberta, Canada, and beyond are recognizing the need for mental health strategies to promote mental health awareness, well-being, and crisis management. These issues plus mounting student enrolments at NorQuest suggest we be proactive in our approach towards mental health.

These recommendations are meant to guide the college towards strategies and actions over the next two years and will also be embedded in the culture and workings of NorQuest in the future. As the college continues its focus on mental health, it strengthens the community's capacity to create an environment to support resiliency and wellness.



Methodology

The working group began with a background briefing document and with endorsement from the college's senior leadership team and executive committee.

A situational analysis to determine current institutional supports related to mental health for learners and employees was conducted, and results were reviewed by the Mental Health Working Group. A brief survey of current supports and assumptions regarding the same was also conducted with members of the group.

From there, the working group reviewed the results of the situational analysis and survey, and drafted key recommendations using a version of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services Mental Health Framework Model expanded to include employees in addition to learners. The Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, has developed a systemic approach mental health framework as described in the *Post-secondary student mental health: Guide to a systemic approach to mental health and learning* (CACUSS & CMHA, 2013).

The draft recommendations were further expanded to include key actions and timelines.

A Mental Health Advisory Committee comprised of key groups from the broader community was also formed, and members of the Mental Health Advisory Committee, employees and learners were invited to stakeholder consultation sessions to provide input and feedback into the draft recommendations in fall 2019. Stakeholder consultations included 65 individuals.

The input was then taken into consideration, the recommendations redrafted and taken back for review to the Mental Health Working Group.

“Everyone knows someone who is struggling.”

(NorQuest student)



NorQuest’s approach to mental health – highlights

Our strategy is for everyone: every learner and every employee.

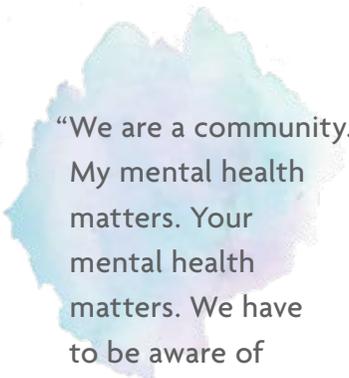
Mental health promotion can include creating environments and taking steps to enhance supports for mental health, either through direct or indirect means, such as services or education and awareness. Mental health promotion contributes to the betterment of all aspects of society and the functioning of individuals in their everyday lives such as work and education (WHO, 2004).

The well-being of the NorQuest College community impacts the health and success of the college. “Mental health and well-being are fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living, and enjoy life” (“Investing in Mental Health”, 2013, p. 5). It impacts the success of our learners and the work of our employees.

Institutions have been reporting rises in student mental health needs. Institutions have responded with increased supports for learners in crisis. Examples of this include increased access to services, resources in student judicial affairs, learners of concern, increased emphasis on student rights and responsibilities, food banks, and awareness of supports. However, “...it is difficult to determine whether more learners are truly experiencing symptoms of distress, or whether improvements in the de-stigmatization of mental illnesses has led to increased help seeking, creating an artificial increase in prevalence” (Linden, Grey & Stuart, 2017). Increased enrolments, however, mean that more learners are requesting mental health support.

Employees in Canada indicate that work is their primary stressor. In fact, 62 per cent of workers say this with a full 27 per cent indicating that they experience “high to extreme” stress daily (Statistics Canada, 2019). On the employee front, leaves of absence for stress-related reasons and usage of benefits related to the same has increased.

NorQuest College continues to grow and embraces diversity and inclusion; we must ensure that our strategies do as well. Our college is interested in deepening our understanding of diversity and inclusiveness to support flourishing individuals, respect difference, and develop shared values. 57 per cent of our learners are born outside of Canada and, 115 languages are spoken on campus. 728 of our credit learners self-identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit), and 625 of our learners have used disability services over the past year. LGBTQ2S+ employees and learners are valued members of our college community. Our learner population continues to grow, and the anticipated growth is great. We serve 19,354 learners, and that number is expected to increase to 40,000 by 2025.



“We are a community. My mental health matters. Your mental health matters. We have to be aware of how mental health impacts our diverse community.”

(NorQuest employee)

What is mental health?

Mental health is a state of well-being. “Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. (World Health Organization, 2014). It is more than the “absence of mental disorders” (WHO, 2014).

Mental health can also be viewed along a continuum ranging from “optimum” to “languishing”. The mental health continuum model (Keyes, 2002) recognizes that an individual’s mental health and mental illness may occur on a continuum moving from poor mental health (languishing) to optimal mental health (flourishing).

“The people around you know you best. That's why relationships are so important.”

(NorQuest employee)

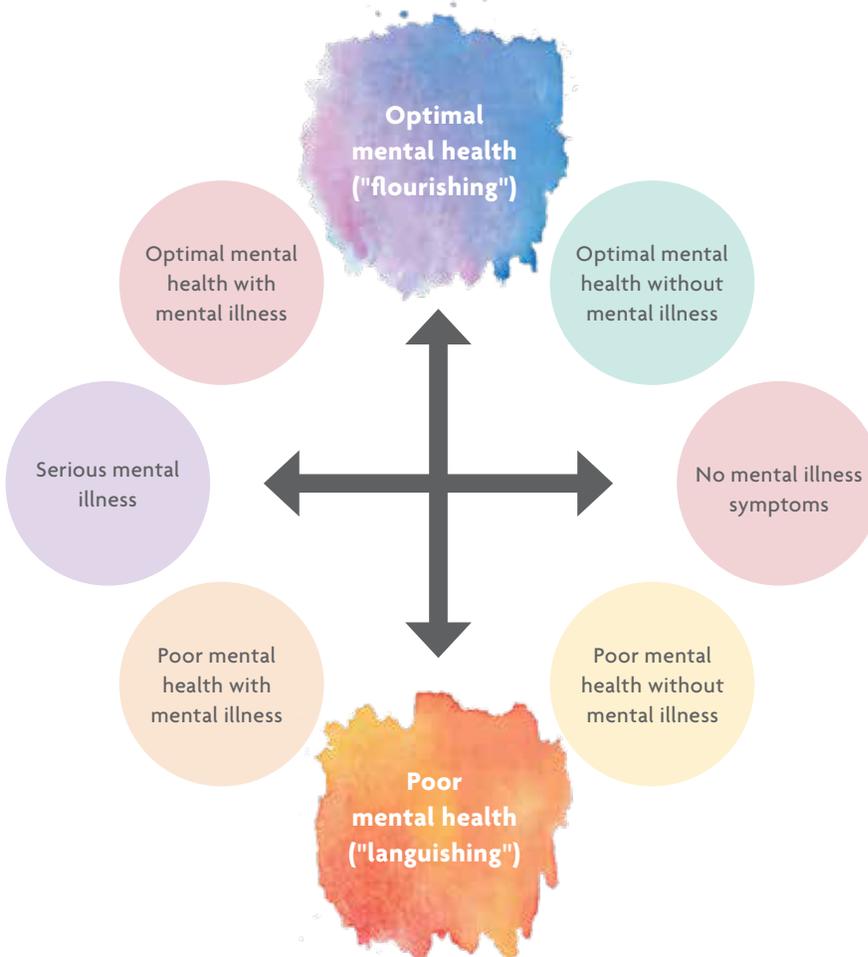


Figure 1 MacKean 2011 Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness based on the conceptual work of Corey Keys as cited in CACUSS, 2013

The Canadian Mental Health Association (2013) suggests that the characteristics that comprise good (optimal) mental health include ability to enjoy life, resilience, flexibility, balance, self-actualization.

Learners and mental health

Post-secondary learners face significant mental health challenges which negatively impact their academics. The common sentiment heard within post-secondary institutions is that mental health issues are on the rise in Canadian and international post-secondary institutions; however, there is not enough literature and research to support this. It is clear is that Canadian post-secondary students are seeking counselling most often for issues related to their studies, relationships, careers, stress, anxiety, and depression (Cairns, Massfeller, Deeth, 2010). However, that does not account for the learners who may already face the perceived stigma of mental illness, face personal or other pressures about facing hardships, and/or have misperceptions, misinformation, or misgivings about services available to assist (Giamos, Lee, Suleiman, Stuart & Chen, 2017).

The mental health challenges that post-secondary learners face negatively impact their academic performance and may also negatively impact employees, other learners and the college environment in general. Based on the Canadian Reference Group results of the 2016 American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment¹, as a result of mental health challenges, Canadian post-secondary learners reported negative impacts on their academic performance including lower exam or project grades, incomplete grades, dropping a course, course or work-integrated learning disruption, or similar (ACHA-NCHA, 2016).

The most common mental health issues impacting post-secondary learners as determined by this study was anxiety (32.5 per cent), depression (20.9 per cent) and stress (42.2 per cent); conversely, according to the same study, only 35 per cent of learners said stress has not had a negative influence on their academic standing. Further, LGBTQ2S+ learners, males, and online learners are more at risk for either not having services specific or accessible to their needs. In that same survey, 4.5 per cent of learners said alcohol use had a negative impact on their academics and 2.2 per cent said drug use had the same impact (ACHA-NCHA, 2016).

Similar to this study, we see our NorQuest College learners seeking mental health supports for anxiety, stress, adjustment, acculturation, and academic concerns (Student Wellness, 2017–2018).

Post-secondary learners can be reluctant to seek assistance for mental health challenges. Post-secondary learners typically report concerns such as “confidentiality, lack of time, not believing the problem warranted professional help, uncertainty that the professional help would be beneficial, and preferring to rely on other sources of support (i.e. friends, family, romantic partner)” as reasons for not using campus or other services (Linden, Grey, Stuart, 2017). Linden et al's (2017) literature review also notes that certain types of learners, such as LGBTQ2S+, ethnic minorities, and international students experience unique additional stress due to cultural differences or difficulties adjusting to a post-secondary environment.

Indigenous persons have additional challenges. As reported by Indigenous Services Canada (2018) in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research, 2003, Indigenous Peoples' mental health challenges are most likely related to major depression, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Loss of culture and identity as a result of assimilation, colonization, residential schools, and intergenerational trauma all lead to mental health issues.

NorQuest's own data about learners shows that for 2017–2018, the top student mental health concerns were anxiety and stress, adjustment and acculturation, depression, and academic concerns. In addition, there were 42 learners at significant risk for suicide or self-harm (Student Wellness, 2017–2018).

¹ The American College Health Association (ACHS) has a nationally recognized college health assessment and student wellness survey that is considered the standard in the U.S. and Canada for obtaining information about student health and wellness. There is a Canadian Reference Group delivery of the survey consisted of data from 43,780 Canadian post-secondary learners.

What is mental health?

Employees and mental health

Mental health impacts the workplace, too. The number one cause of work disability in Canada, according to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC, 2018), is mental illness, and it impacts employee absenteeism, presenteeism (working while sick), and turnover.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, every year, one of five Canadians personally experience mental health illness or problems with a full 8 per cent experiencing major depression at some point throughout their lifetime with about 50 per cent of Canadians experiencing mental illness by age 40 (“Fast Facts”, 2019).

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has determined that each week, about half a million Canadians do not attend work because of a mental health issue (Wang & Karpinski, 2016). These statistics hold true for Alberta as well (Valuing Mental Health, 2015).

The economic cost of mental illness to Canada is large and estimated at approximately over \$48 billion annually (Smetanin, Stiff, Briante, Adair, Ahmad & Khan, 2011) to as high as \$51 billion per year.

To ensure support for individuals with mental health issues and addiction in the workplace, Alberta Health Services has recommended mental health training tools, preventing discrimination, and providing support by implementing national standards for psychological health and safety. Additional recommendations include addressing workplace harassment or bullying, following employment standards, and addressing addiction and mental health through occupational health and safety (Valuing Mental Health, 2015). However, the focus of these actions is for individuals with mental health issues and addiction and not necessarily to promote health and wellness.

While it is harder to find information related to employee mental health challenges in higher education, one can be sure that they exist. Price and Kerschbaum (2017) reference the results of their own survey of 323 self-identified faculty with mental health histories, and arising from that survey there were three main areas of concern: overall productivity was decreased given academic pressures that build a tense environment; campuses that ignore or stigmatize these types of issues create further problems; and learners are less likely to get help for their own problems in a silent environment.

NorQuest’s own data about employees shows that mental health is the number one issue among employees who receive employee assistance (internal aggregate data).



Approach to mental health

Approaches to mental health have shifted in higher education from strategies that focused on student issue identification and risk mitigation to more holistic and systemic approaches. While several models were researched, NorQuest decided to expand the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services Mental Health Framework for usage.

Canadian Association of College and University Student Services framework

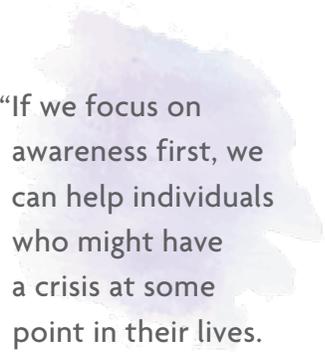
The Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, has developed a systemic approach mental health framework as described in *Post-secondary student mental health: Guide to a systemic approach to mental health and learning* (CACUSS & CMHA, 2013). The guide is comprehensive, viewing “the whole campus as the domain to be addressed and as responsible for enhancing and maintaining the mental health of community members” (CACUSS, 2013). While the focus is on involving the campus community in creating thriving conditions to promote and support student mental health and student learning, many campuses (like NorQuest) have broadened their efforts to include all constituents.

The framework recommends seven key elements for strategy development in a systemic approach to mental health including:

- 1 institutional structure: organization, planning and policy;
- 2 supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment;
- 3 mental health awareness;
- 4 community capacity to respond to early indications of student concern;
- 5 self-management competencies and coping skills;
- 6 accessible mental health services; and
- 7 crisis management (CACUSS & CMHA, 2013).

The framework is unique in that it not only addresses those with mental health concerns, but also all those with concerns about coping.

While the framework is to ensure learners are supported, in an institutional proactive approach to mental health, the framework could be adapted for learners and employees to the level(s) desired by the college.



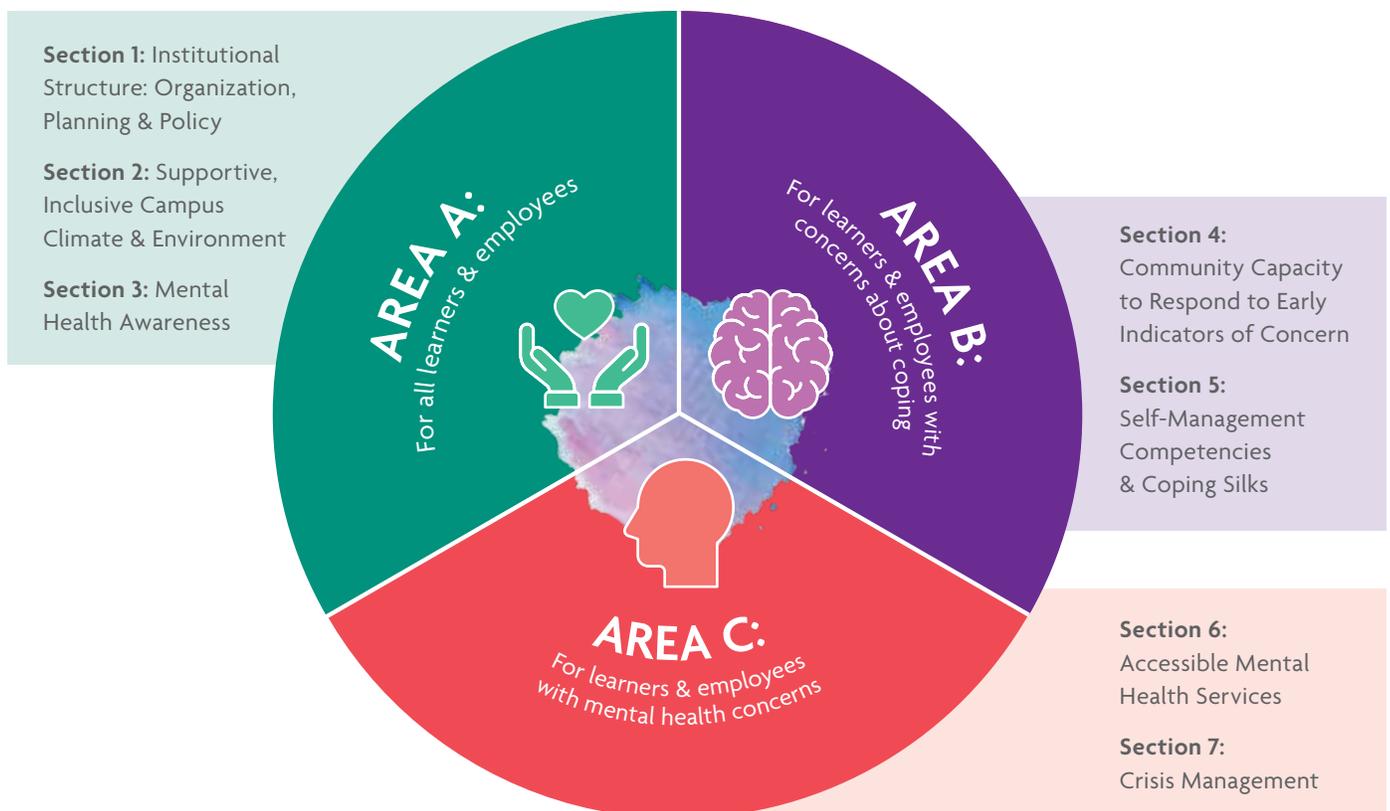
“If we focus on awareness first, we can help individuals who might have a crisis at some point in their lives. We really need to emphasize education and awareness.”
(NorQuest student)

NorQuest's mental health framework

To address the recommendations, and to embed these concepts within our college culture, NorQuest must establish an ongoing Mental Health Working Group comprised of learners and employees to monitor both the indicated measures and the overall efficacy of the ongoing work resulting from the recommendations. Further, two sub-working groups are proposed: a curricular sub-working group and a mental health process sub-working group.

The recommendations resulting include actions that span a two-year time frame, from 2021 to 2022.

The recommendations are structured into seven sections in three primary areas:





Recommendations

Area A: For all learners and employees

Section 1: Institutional Structure: Organization, Planning and Policy

1. Develop curriculum that supports mental health and emphasizes the whole learner (including consideration of Indigenous pedagogy and international cultures) and explores embedding mental health (wellness, inclusion activities, mental, spiritual, and physical health) in curriculum.
2. Undertake processes such as empathy mapping, journey mapping, and/or policy and procedure review to identify gaps, contradictions, or absences in policy, procedure, or process that may influence positive mental health experiences and the opportunities for accommodation for learners and employees (beginning with applicable policies or procedures within judicial affairs and people divisions).
3. Online, off campus, regional, evening and weekend learner and employee process and/or structure deficiencies addressed as they relate to mental health.
4. Ensure continued cross campus dialogue and support for mental health through linking initiatives with current strategic priorities.
5. Align the mental health strategy at NorQuest with other relevant strategies (such as the inclusion strategy and culture transformation), and embed mental health considerations within our college language.
6. Co-locate and communicate information about mental health in the institution.

Section 2: Supportive, Inclusive Campus Climate and Environment

7. Prioritize connectivity and relationship-building opportunities for learners both inside and outside the classroom.
8. Give priority to preparing and delivering education on mental health literacy and what that means within the context of our educational environment and within the different cultures we serve.
9. Create a developmental approach to supporting mental health through the learner/employee life cycle utilizing orientation and the revised College-wide Learning Outcomes. Focus efforts on current evidence-based initiatives.

Section 3: Mental Health Awareness

10. Provide access and awareness to mental health professional development opportunities.

“The stigma about mental health is one of the largest obstacles. ‘Just man up’. How many clichés can you think of that we have all heard?”

(NorQuest student)



Area B: For learners and employees with concerns about coping

Section 4: Community Capacity to Respond to Early Indicators of Concern

11. Understand early indicators of concern and assist the college community to respond as appropriate for a post-secondary environment including trauma and psychological safety. Bring together college constituents to pool a variety of resources to create road maps for learners and employees to understand and respond to early indicators of concern.

Section 5: Self-Management Competencies and Coping Skills

12. Investigate supports for agency and accountability such as self-management and coping for learners and employees.



Area C: For learners and employees with mental health concerns

Section 6: Accessible Mental Health Services

13. Provide opportunities for dialogue on accessibility in the college community for learners and employees.
14. Ongoing collaboration and sharing about the challenges and solutions of positive mental health will enhance the college community.

Section 7: Crisis Management

15. Define mental health crisis and triggers and provide education and resources in relation to the same.



Appendix A: Recommended Actions and Possible Measures

NorQuest’s mental health recommendations



Area A: For all learners and employees

Section 1: Institutional structure: organization, planning and policy

Recommendation	Recommended action	Possible measure
Develop curriculum that supports mental health and emphasizes the whole learner (including consideration of Indigenous pedagogy and international cultures) and explores embedding mental health (wellness, inclusion activities, mental, spiritual, and physical health) in curriculum.	<i>Create a curricular sub-working group to align inclusive curriculum across the college (2021).</i>	<i>Create terms of reference and identify participants for ad-hoc working group.</i>
Undertake processes such as empathy mapping, journey mapping, and/or policy and procedure review to identify gaps, contradictions, or absences in policy, procedure, or process that may influence positive mental health experiences and the opportunities for accommodation for learners and employees (beginning with applicable policies or procedures within judicial affairs and people divisions).	<i>Determine a plan and path to empathy map or journey map relevant institutional policies/procedures for impact on positive mental health experiences (2021).</i>	<i>Plan and resources intact.</i>
	<i>Map Office of Student Judicial Affairs policy, procedure or process and employee absence process using mental health lens (2021).</i>	<i>Complete mapping of one Office of Student Judicial Affairs policy, procedure or process and employee absence process.</i>
	<i>Review communication and education pertaining to employee absences for mental health (2021).</i>	<i>New communications/education regarding employee absences for mental health.</i>
Online, off campus, regional, evening and weekend learner and employee process and/or structure deficiencies addressed as they relate to mental health.	<i>Use existing mental health related workshops for downtown learners as a model to develop online resources (2021). Include a survey to determine further needs.</i>	<i>Number of net new online resources related to mental health established for learners.</i>
	<i>Use existing mental health related workshops for downtown employees as a model to develop online resources (2022). Include a survey to determine further needs.</i>	<i>Number of net new online resources related to mental health established for employees.</i>
	<i>Develop community connections within the mental health sector in key college regions (2022).</i>	<i>Number of mental health community connections established in each region.</i>
	<i>Expand online listening tools as a support system for members of the college community (2022).</i>	<i>Number of online listening tools available for college community.</i>
Ensure continued cross campus dialogue and support for mental health through linking initiatives with current strategic priorities.	<i>Align the Mental Health strategy with Imagine 2025 (2021, 2022).</i>	<i>Annual report of progress on framework through mental health working group.</i>
Align the mental health strategy at NorQuest with other relevant strategies (such as the inclusion strategy and culture transformation) and embed mental health considerations within our college language.	<i>Explore the similarities and differences between various strategies (2021) and provide report.</i>	<i>Discussion and report from working group regarding alignment, opportunities for collaboration, and places to celebrate difference.</i>
Co-locate and communicate information about mental health in the institution.	<i>Organize information in the institution related to mental health by providing a portal to information on the NorQuest web site while leaving the source of information relevant to departments or “owners” of information (2022).</i>	<i>Web site mock-up and web site review by working group.</i>

APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND POSSIBLE MEASURES
NorQuest’s mental health recommendations

Section 2: Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment

Recommendation	Recommended action	Possible measure
Prioritize connectivity and relationship-building opportunities for learners both inside and outside the classroom.	<i>Determine further opportunities for formal connectivity and relationship-building opportunities for learners inside and outside the classroom (2021).</i>	<i>Activities developed and promoted for faculty to use inside the classroom.</i>
Give priority to preparing and delivering education on mental health literacy and what that means within the context of our educational environment and within the different cultures we serve.	<i>Define and communicate mental health from multiple world views using college community engagement (early 2021).</i>	<i>Listening survey and institution-wide community engagement.</i>
Create a developmental approach to supporting mental health through the learner/employee life cycle utilizing orientation and the revised College-wide Learning Outcomes. Focus efforts on current evidence-based initiatives.	<i>Include information about employee wellness and other resources to support employee mental health in employee orientation (2021).</i>	<i>Employees are provided with information about wellness in orientation/onboarding activities. Information is accessible and also readily provided throughout the employee life cycle.</i>
	<i>Develop learner led mental health initiatives and opportunities for peer connection (2022).</i>	<i>Number of student-led mental health initiatives.</i>
	<i>Translate work of new College Wide Learning Outcomes and culture into classroom activities to address learner loneliness and experience (2022).</i>	<i>Activities developed and promoted for the college community.</i>
	<i>Promote resilience through community-building opportunities and external pathways for employees and learners (2021).</i>	<i>External pathways more clearly defined for mental health resources for employees and learners.</i>

Section 3: Mental health awareness

Recommendation	Recommended action	Possible measure
Provide access and awareness to mental health professional development opportunities.	<i>Determine available options to provide access and awareness to mental health professional development opportunities with input from relevant community agencies, especially those involved in advisory committee (2022).</i>	<i>Count of mental health professional development opportunities offered and taken and increased awareness of mental health.</i>



Area B: For learners and employees with concerns about coping

Section 4: Community capacity to respond to early indicators of concern

Recommendation	Recommended action	Possible measure
Understand early indicators of concern and assist the college community to respond as appropriate for a post-secondary environment including trauma and psychological safety. Bring together college constituents to pool a variety of resources to create road maps for learners and employees to understand and respond to early indicators of concern.	<i>Create and communicate road maps and related information on early indicators of concern and appropriate paths for learners and employees (2022).</i>	<i>Creation and communication of early indicators road maps for learners and employees.</i>

Section 5: Self-Management Competencies and Coping Skills

Recommendation	Recommended action	Possible measure
Investigate supports for self-management and coping for learners and employees.	<i>Find existing self-management/coping supports for employees and allow for easy access to the information through web site (2022).</i>	<i>Exposure/usage measured via clicks on web site.</i>
	<i>Find existing self-management/coping supports for learners and allow for easy access to the information through web site (2022).</i>	<i>Exposure/usage measured via clicks on web site.</i>





Area C: For learners and employees with mental health concerns

Section 6: Accessible Mental Health Services

Recommendation	Recommended action	Possible measure
Provide opportunities for dialogue on accessibility in the college community for learners and employees.	<i>Provide communication and education that supports employees using collaborative solutions and provides tools to have conversations.</i>	<i>Count of opportunities and participants.</i>
Ongoing collaboration and sharing about the challenges and solutions of positive mental health will enhance the college community.	<i>Enact this strategic plan and ensure the working group and sub-working groups continue the work of this document (2021, 2022).</i>	<i>Working group and sub-working groups established.</i>
	<i>Highlight mental health initiatives, services and work via internal and external communications (2021, 2022).</i>	<i>Number of stories.</i>

Section 7: Crisis Management

Recommendation	Recommended action	Possible measure
Define mental health crisis and triggers and provide education and resources in relation to the same.	<i>Develop and communicate resources for mental health crisis/triggers (2022).</i>	<i>Resources developed and communicated.</i>



Centre for Growth and Harmony

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centreforgrowthandharmony@norquest.ca
780-644-6155

Disability Services

disabilityservices@norquest.ca

The Students' Association of NorQuest College

1-114 Singhmar Centre for Learning
student.association@norquest.ca
780-644-6250

Tutorial and Academic Coaching

2nd Floor, Singhmar Centre for Learning
tutorial.coaching@norquest.ca
780-644-5864

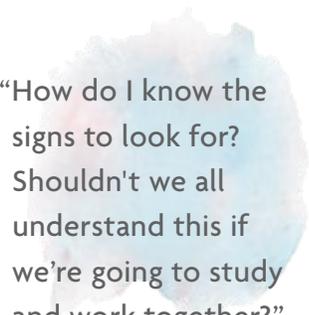
Learner Centre

2nd Floor, Singhmar Centre for Learning
library@norquest.ca
780-644-6070

Appendix B: Mental Health Resources and Services

For Learners

- The Centre for Growth and Harmony provides free and confidential student-centred care within an inclusive, respectful, and private environment. The team includes counsellors, social workers and nurses who are available to support students with mental health support, health support, newcomer support, basic needs and community supports, and educational workshops.
- The Centre for Growth and Harmony ensures that there is daily drop-in access to a mental health professional who is available for crisis intervention, crisis management and support. This service does not require an appointment and is available during regular Centre for Growth and Harmony hours (Monday to Friday, 8:15 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.).
- The Centre for Growth and Harmony has informational brochures on a number of common topics of interest, including managing anxiety and stress, healthy sleep, and mindful meditation. The brochures are available for students and staff throughout the year and are promoted during orientations, events and presentations that the Centre for Growth and Harmony participates in. Students can also access a number of mental health-related brochures in the Students' Association of NorQuest College Resource Hub.
- Throughout the school year, the Centre for Growth and Harmony hosts a number of informational booths on campus, highlighting a range of mental/physical health and wellness topics from healthy sleep and winter wellness, to sexual violence and influenza awareness. Students are able to read facts and stats, take printed resources, and discuss the topics with staff members. Students' Association of NorQuest College partners on some of these booths, such as Healthy Relationships and Sexual Violence.
- The staff from the Centre for Growth and Harmony participate in student orientations and classroom visits throughout the year to promote the services available at the centre. In addition to this, the Wellness Team also delivers classroom presentations on various specific mental health and wellness topics as requested by individual instructors, such as Stress Management and Tackling Test Anxiety. These can be requested by instructors by contacting the Centre for Growth and Harmony.
- NorQuest College promotes the awareness and utilization of *7 Cups of Tea*, an international peer-support platform. *7 Cups of Tea* connects those who need a listening ear and are looking for support with a range of topics or concerns from a trained online listener. As well as one-to-one chats with listeners, users also have access to group chats, online message forums, and a vast range of mental health resources, from self-help to information and contacts to local mental health organizations.
- Employees in the Centre for Growth and Harmony use translation services to aid with communication during appointments with counsellors and social workers. The services are utilized for verbal conversations as well as paperwork and documentation for students who are unable to communicate in English.
- Where possible, our counsellors and social workers will make appropriate referrals to specialty community supports (i.e. grief and bereavement support groups, addictions groups, etc.) in order to ensure that students can access the most suitable level of care and support available to them.



“How do I know the signs to look for? Shouldn't we all understand this if we're going to study and work together?”

(NorQuest student)

Appendix B: Mental Health Resources and Services

- The Learner Centre has a display of informational brochures on topics such as anxiety and stress that are readily available for students to access. These publications include information about what each condition is, how it might present, and techniques to manage them.
- Through *My Wellness*, an online mental health platform, students can access 24/7 text support and have access to online video counselling services. Additionally, there is a wellness toolbox with information, videos, self-help strategies, resources and interactive tools that focus on specific topics such as stress, depression, sleep disorders, bipolar disorder and many more.
- Through Campus Well, students have access to *Student Health 101*, an online magazine targeted specifically towards college and university students. The magazine features a comprehensive self-care guide, articles, top tips, resources, self-help strategies, and recommendations for external resources such as apps and other websites related to mental health and wellness.
- The Inquiring Mind is an evidence-based program designed to address and promote mental health and reduce the stigma of mental illness in an educational/student setting. The course objective is to give university students the practical knowledge of mental health and mental illness so they can: use the mental health continuum to recognize changes in their mental health and that of others; be prepared to use skills to improve their coping and resiliency; reduce both public and self-stigma; and be willing to be a part of a supportive campus environment. The Centre for Growth and Harmony hosts Inquiring Mind training several times per year.
- Peer Connections is an open initiative created by the Centre for Growth and Harmony to reduce loneliness and isolation, and to connect students with others who they might not ordinarily meet. An online self-registration process allows students to sign-up at any time throughout the year and be matched. The intention is to provide students with a familiar face on campus, and to encourage connection in order to reduce loneliness and social isolation among the student community.
- During exam periods, the Learner Centre sets up a range of passive activities for students to take some time to relax. These range from LEGO stations to arts and crafts, and at the end of each term, the Learner Centre team brings in a therapy dog or bunnies for students to interact with and de-stress.
- In partnership with the Centre for Growth and Harmony, the Learner Centre displays relaxation content on their digital screens throughout the library. These range from calming visuals, self-guided meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and feel-good movies.
- Through the Academic Support Centre, the Learner Centre has online guides such as Academic Skills for Success, and Test-Taking to assist students. These resources include information about effective time management, reducing test anxiety, goal-setting, and finding the right study environment, all of which promote wellness strategies to succeed academically.
- The Academic Support Centre offers individual and group coaching sessions for students wishing to learn skills to aid with successful studies and test-taking. Among academia-specific topics, the team provides coaching on test-taking, academic skills, time management, relaxation, and visualization techniques. They have a range of resources to aid students in these realms, including the use of apps such as Breathe2Relax, Calm (guided meditation), MindShift, White Noise Ambience HD Lite, and White Noise Free.

Appendix B: Mental Health Resources and Services

- The Students Association of NorQuest College holds multiple stress-free zones and pet therapy days throughout the school year in order to help students and employees to take a break and practice self-care on campus. Activities include free massages, mandala colouring, cereal bars, cartoons, comfy beanbag chairs, and the opportunity to interact with therapy animals. These opportunities are a great way to reduce stress and anxiety, and to connect with others during high-stress periods.
- Disability Services offer training sessions to introduce Read & Write to students. Read & Write is a tool that can help students develop strategies for organization and study skills. In using this tool, students can begin to take control of their own learning in a more organized way.
- The Academic Upgrading instructors host a study program called Lighthouse, which provides students with outside-of-class study support, helping to reduce anxiety and stress that is often caused by academic pressures. In addition to this, it is also a social event where many students come to get this support, which creates a community of learners that promotes the positive mental health of students.
- The Centre for Growth and Harmony hosts two to three *Question, Persuade, Refer* suicide prevention training sessions throughout the year. This training educates people on the early signs of suicide risk, practical strategies for persuading somebody to access professional help, and how to refer an individual to local services and/or emergency intervention.

For Employees

- Through the college's Learning Registration Network, NorQuest employees have access to a number of informational training sessions and workshops such as Mental Health First Aid.
- In partnership with the Students' Association of NorQuest College, the Centre for Growth and Harmony hosts First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training sessions for employees and students. This two-day comprehensive training is hosted through the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services and is intended to provide participants with information and practical tools to effectively respond to disclosures of sexual assault and sexual abuse.
- The Centre for Growth and Harmony has information about local crisis helplines, community services, and resources.
- Mental Health for Everyone and Mental Health for Managers – two online courses developed by NorQuest in partnership with Trajectory IQ – are available to all employees. Any college employee who is interested in these valuable courses can sign up at any time at the Trajectory IQ web site.



“Early intervention
can start with
listening or a
conversation.”

(NorQuest employee)

Employee Wellness Resources

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EAP/EFAP) - Lifeworks

lifeworks.com
User ID: norquest
Password: eap
1-877-207-8833

Talent Team

employeeservices@norquest.ca

Sexual Violence

hrtalent@norquest.ca

Mental Health Online Training

norquest.trajectoryiq.com/login

Occupational Health and Safety

safety@norquest.ca

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EAP or EFAP) helps employees relieve personal problems including personal or work-related issues, otherwise capable of risking their health, well-being or job performance. These programs offer free access to assessments and counseling.

Employees can improve their well-being in a confidential manner that meets their needs and preferences, while warding off risks to their productivity, like absenteeism or sick leave.

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