

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Across the province, Ontario's universities remain committed to supporting student and community resilience by increasing access to mental health supports, resources and programming.

Universities continue to do this by offering a wide array of flexible and high-quality resources, such as on-campus and virtual mental health supports, work-integrated learning opportunities, reskilling and upskilling courses, as well as the development of innovative mental health research.

To further support students, universities are also partnering with postsecondary mental health organizations, including the **Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health** and **Good2Talk**, which provide students with tools and strategies to help manage their mental health, as well as access to free, 24/7 crisis support.

Below are more examples showcasing how Ontario's universities continue to define and implement best practices, provide timely and accessible care to students and encourage a 'whole-of-community' approach that contributes to better outcomes for students and community members.

● Helping students access on-campus and virtual mental health supports

● Helping students access mental health resources ahead of their first day on campus can help them develop the foundational tools they need to build resiliency. In partnership with Canadian health tech firm Tailwind, **Algoma University** launched an online mental wellness awareness program for incoming students that connects them to mental health and wellness orientation training, as well as all available university mental health resources.

● Through hands-on workshops or by speaking with a trained Peer Health Educator, the Student Health and Wellness HUB at **Brock University** provides students with a safe space to learn about a variety of topics, such as nutrition, sleep and mental health, to name a few. Through these sessions, students can learn new strategies to improve their overall health and wellness.

● To help students learn more about the mental health and wellness resources available and determine the supports that will work best for them, Student Wellness Navigators at the **University of Guelph** are a first point of contact for students. Through in-person appointments, Student Wellness Navigators are available to discuss students' concerns and help identify appropriate campus or community services and supports that can help meet the needs of students.

● As students, faculty and staff transition back to campus, **McMaster University** created the Compassionate Communication Toolkit to help members of the campus community keep mental health and wellbeing top of mind when communicating with others. The toolkit builds on existing best practices and incorporates suggestions from students, faculty and staff with the goal of fostering compassion on campus and inspiring hope, energy and connection.

● Peer support offers students the opportunity to speak to someone who can relate to the challenges they may be facing. **OCAD University** launched a Peer Wellness Program to help support student-created wellness initiatives and provide a safe space for students to connect with other students. The program works closely with community workers, including Peer Wellness Educators, Social Workers, Art Therapists and Accessibility Advisors to create collaborative and effective programming.

● For students looking to meet with a counsellor through individual appointments, the **University of Ottawa** offers one-on-one in-person and online counselling to help students identify and understand the challenges they are facing and develop coping strategies. The university also has a walk-in clinic for students who wish to see a counsellor the same day. Through these appointments, counsellors can also provide specialized referrals to a range of community-based mental health services to complement their own counselling-based supports.

● By joining the Living Well Lancers volunteer program at the **University of Windsor**, students can volunteer to bring mental health and wellness awareness and information to the campus community. The program gives students the opportunity to support their peers while also developing their own mental health skills and strategies for success.

● Through its Student Counselling, Health & Well-Being Office, **York University** offers free, online skills workshops that provide students with the opportunity to develop skills to help them manage key stressors. The workshops address a range of topics, such as understanding stress, identifying signs of burnout and developing positive coping strategies.



● Innovative mental health and wellness programming

● In partnership with **Carleton University's** Health and Counselling Services and Student Affairs Office, the university's Psychology Wellness Centre provides psychology graduate students with work-integrated learning opportunities as part of a capstone course. As Peer Wellness Coaches, students provide online coaching support to the campus community to help improve student well-being and wellness goal setting.

- For kinesiology students who want to broaden their understanding of the connection between physical activity and mental health, **Laurentian University** offers a course on mental health and wellness. Through the course, students study how to promote positive mental health and wellness. It also provides interested students with the opportunity to pursue mental health certifications as a complement to their degree.
- As Ontario experiences a growing demand for health-care professionals who can support the unique needs of patients living with mental illness, **Ontario Tech University** is delivering a suite of mental health micro-credentials for nurses in partnership with Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Science. The micro-credential program aims to enhance the job-readiness of Ontario's nursing workforce by preparing them to care for patients living with mental illness while creating a common set of standards for mental health care in Ontario.
- To help students learn more about common university stressors and how to manage and prevent them, **Queen's University** created the Science of Mental Health, Well-being & Resiliency course available to all undergraduate students. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of mental health by examining psychology, sociology, medicine, kinesiology and applied neuroscience to understand the science behind mental health, well-being and resiliency in adults, as well as provides students with tools for supporting their own well-being.



- For students interested in pursuing a career in mental health, the **University of Toronto** launched a major specialization in Mental Health Studies. The program enables students to explore the causes of mental illness, its impact on everyday life and treatment methods. The program aims to prepare students for careers across a range of fields, such as clinical psychology, psychiatry or social work.



- A children and youth mental health micro-credential for educators offered by **Wilfrid Laurier University** is helping teachers and other education professionals develop the skills to help support student well-being. The program provides educators with the opportunity to learn how to respond, support and appropriately refer students who may be struggling with mental health challenges.



● Supporting community health and wellness through research

- Building and practicing healthy coping strategies can help young people better navigate everyday stressful situations and transitions. Researchers at **Lakehead University** are testing a new smartphone app created to help students and other youth build emotional regulation skills, called JoyPop.

- An AI-powered smartphone software developed for police by researchers at **Nipissing University** will help police better identify mental health crises and streamline the approach for assisting youth in crisis through data sharing with community partners. The software uses algorithms that can quickly compute risk and behavioural levels to help ensure youth receive the appropriate care.
- The use of digital health tools, such as LUCID – an AI-powered digital music therapy solution created by alumni from **Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU)** – can help in the management of anxiety and other mental health conditions. In fact, in a clinical trial conducted by TMU researchers, LUCID shows that adults with moderate anxiety experience a significant reduction in symptoms after a single session with LUCID.
- To better understand the onset of mental illnesses and the effectiveness of treatment options, **University of Waterloo** researchers at the Centre for Mental Health Research and Treatment (CMHRT) are studying a range of mental health topics, such as anxiety, child and adolescent neuropsychology and cognitive development. CMHRT also offers accessible mental health services for adults, adolescents, children and families in the Region of Waterloo through a referral-based service to help support diagnosis and treatment in the local community.
- By addressing gaps in research, practice and policy and implementing evidence-based practices in Ontario schools, the Centre for School Mental Health at **Western University** is supporting the promotion of child and youth mental health. Through this approach, researchers aim to enhance the quality and consistency of child mental health and early intervention in schools across the province by supporting knowledge mobilization and school-community partnerships.

