McGill’s New Student Wellness Hub: A Holistic Approach to Student Mental Health

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McGill University

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Territory Acknowledgement

- McGill University is on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations - a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations.
Learning Goals

• Share our process to identify gaps and pain points in student mental health
• Gain insights into the development process of a student mental health plan
• Learn about our progress on the hub development and evaluation plan
About McGill

• Located in Montreal, Quebec, Canada
• Public university, founded in 1821
• One of Canada's best-known institutions of higher learning and one of the leading universities in the world.
• Students come to McGill from over 150 countries
• Over 40,000 students
  • over 10,000 graduate students
  • 31% International
McGill’s Student Services

- Career Planning Service
- Campus Life and Engagement
- First Peoples’ House
- International Student Services
- Office for Students with Disabilities
- Office of Religious & Spiritual Life (MORSL)
- Scholarships and Student Aid
- Student Wellness Hub
McGill’s Student Services

Increased Demand

• The number of students accessing counselling and psychiatric services at McGill dramatically increased 57% in 3 years.

• Since 2016,
  • on average 6,000 unique students (or 15% of the McGill Student body) sought support for mental health on an annual basis,
  • with over 40,000 appointments
Increasing anxiety and depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>2013 McGill</th>
<th>2013 Canada</th>
<th>2016 McGill</th>
<th>2016 Canada</th>
<th>McGill % difference</th>
<th>Canada % difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felt overwhelmed by all you had to do</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>▲ 2%</td>
<td>▲ 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt exhausted (not from physical activity)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>▲ 3%</td>
<td>▲ 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Felt very sad</strong></td>
<td>67%*</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>75%*</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>▲ 8%</td>
<td>▲ 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt very lonely</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>▲ 5%</td>
<td>▲ 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Felt things were hopeless</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>▲ 5%</td>
<td>▲ 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Felt overwhelming anxiety</strong></td>
<td>53%*</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%*</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>▲ 12%</td>
<td>▲ 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt so depressed that it was difficult to function</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>▲ 6%</td>
<td>▲ 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Felt overwhelming anger</strong></td>
<td>35%*</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%*</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>▲ 9%</td>
<td>▲ 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seriously considered suicide</strong></td>
<td>7%*</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%*</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>▲ 5%</td>
<td>▲ 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally cut, burned, bruised, or otherwise injured yourself</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>▲ 3%</td>
<td>▲ 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>▲ 1%</td>
<td>▲ 1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Comparisons with other institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% At least once in lifetime</th>
<th>Seriously considered attempting suicide</th>
<th>Made a suicide attempt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McGill</td>
<td>18% (22% in 2014)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAU Group</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US National Average</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Association of American Universities (AAU)

**p<.01 – Statistically significant; ns=non significant

Source: Student Psychological Wellbeing Survey (2014) / NASPA Benchmark Student on Counselling and Mental Health
Comparisons with other institutions

• In comparison to peer institutions, McGill students report:
  
  • Higher levels of academic distress*
  
  • Lower ratings on supportive campus environment benchmark**

Sources: Student Psychological Wellbeing Survey
**National Survey of Student Engagement
Possible explanations

• Reduction in stigma?

• Improved treatment allowing more access to post-secondary education?

• Parenting style?

• Lower-resiliency / coping skills?

• Technology / social media?
At McGill - Students wanted change…

“The casualization of mental illness has made it hard to determine who is stressed/distressed.”

“We need to better utilize our resources. If you sprain your ankle, you don’t have to see a doctor; someone certified in first aid can assist you. We can apply this to mental health and supporting students.”

“It [mental health supports] just needs to be more accessible. It is not acceptable that someone struggling with mental illness has to wait more than a month to see someone when their mental health will further deteriorate during that time and will affect their school work, causing them more stress.”
Pain Points

- Complexity accessing support services
- 4-week wait time to access services
- “Bouncing” between services
- Insufficient internal capacity
- Inconsistent health & wellness promotion
- Lacking a holistic approach
Responding to the challenge…

- Use of data, student surveys, reviews and campus conversations about mental health to identifying gaps and pain points
Responding to the challenge (Continued)…

- Consulting with colleagues at McGill and across the country

- Campus Consultations
  - Health and Wellness Strategy Report
  - Student Wellness Action Plan (SWAP)
    - Communications
    - Connections & Referrals
    - Programming
Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach (2013)

- Institutional structure: organization, planning and policy
- Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment
- Mental health awareness
- Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern
- Self-management competencies and coping skills
- Accessible mental health services
- Crisis management

- Supported student
- All students
- Students with concerns about coping
- Students with mental health concerns
Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

Figure 1: Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness

- Optimal mental health ("flourishing")
- Optimal mental health without mental illness
- Optimal mental health with mental illness
- Serious mental illness
- No mental illness symptoms
- Poor mental health without mental illness
- Poor mental health with mental illness
- Poor mental health ("languishing")

MacKean, 2011. Adapted from: The Health Communication Unit at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario; based on the conceptual work of Corey Keyes.
one centralized location

Virtual Hub

student-centered space

health & wellness promotion and outreach

local wellness advisors

multiple access points
The Student Wellness Hub Model

- Holistic student wellbeing (wellness wheel)
- Academic success
- Strengths-based resiliency model
- Mental fitness
- Student access to information and choices
- Service excellence

- Awareness, prevention and early intervention
- Short-term episodic care
- Collaborative / interprofessional approach
- Hub and spoke
- Community connections / partners
At the Hub: Centralized Location

Integrating the Student Health Service, Counselling Service and Psychiatric Services into one centralized location.

A “one-stop shop” service area for students with expanded capacity for physical or mental health concerns.
At the Hub: Student Centered Space

Creating a vibrant, welcoming, student-centered space expanding throughout the Brown Building.
Accessing the Hub

Services are available from Nurses, Doctors, Dietitians, Counsellors, Access Advisors and Psychiatrists.

Same-day appointments are available without an appointment with a doctor, nurse, access advisor, or counsellor.

All drop-ins begin being processed at 9 a.m.
• Drop-ins fill up quickly
• Book an appointment if it isn't urgent
At the Hub: Access Advisors

A new additional drop-in Mental Health Service in the Hub

Their role:
- Help students to find the right kind of help
- Rapid Assessment
- Connection to services on campus, in the community
- Brief intervention
- Does not replace counselling drop-in
At the Hub: What to Expect in a First Session with a Counsellor

Initial assessment to understand presenting concerns, contributing factors, sources of support, risk factors etc..

Together, a wellness plan is created which may include:
• One-on-one counselling (short-term)
• Group therapy
• Peer support
• Referral to a psychiatrist
• Another form of support
Hub Spokes: Local Wellness Advisors

A hub-and-spoke model, including 12 trained clinicians who work as *local wellness advisors (LWAs)*, providing accessible services to students where they live and study.

**Faculties:**
- Arts
- Agricultural & Environmental Sciences
- Engineering
- Education
- Law
- Music
- Management
- Science
- Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

**Services:**
- Athletics (Varsity)
- International Student Services
- Residences
Hub Spokes: Local Wellness Advisors

**What does an LWA do?**

- Works with departments on wellness awareness, prevention and early intervention
- Offers wellness programming tailored to their faculty and service units
- Connects students to other health and wellness supports on campus
- Equips students with tools and resources for mental health
- Available for one-on-one appointments
Healthy Living Annex

Increased emphasis on health & wellness promotion and outreach to all campus partners through the \textit{Healthy Living Annex (HLA)}. 

Dedicated to outreach, health promotion and peer support activities.

\textbf{The HLA includes:}
\begin{itemize}
  \item Healthy McGill's Peer Health Ambassadors
  \item Family Care
  \item The Shag Shop
\end{itemize}
Virtual Hub

A single, dynamic “Virtual Hub” to access on- and off-campus services and an extensive resource map

https://mcgill.ca/wellness-hub/
Our Method: Implementation Science

Implementation Stages

2 - 4 Years

Exploration
- Understand and decide

Installation
- Plan and prepare

Initial Implementation
- Test and refine

Full Implementation
- Maintain and grow

Sustainability

Source: National Implementation Research Network
Our Progress

- Launched:
  - Hub soft launch – July 2019
  - Integrated processes and procedures across professions and for front-line staff
  - All Hub staff training and manual
  - Increased mental health capacity across professionals
  - Virtual hub
  - Local wellness advisors in place
  - Healthy Living Annex: launched calendar series
Our Evaluation Plan

• Developmental evaluation – using quality improvement techniques, such as Plan, Do, Study, Act

• Benchmark studies including the student voice:
  – Prevalence
  – Health promotion
  – Resilience

• Developed key performance indicators based in:
  – Access
  – Student experience and satisfaction
  – Customer service
  – Building capacity in mental health literacy and responses
  – Student outcomes
  – Collaborations and cultural change
Lessons Learned

- Project management
- Clinical space requirements and challenges in local areas
- Extended timeline
- Change management
- Public health challenge
- Leadership
What’s Next

- Co-creation of a student suicide framework
- Expanding peer support programming
- Resilience program partnership and research
- Increasing partnerships with communities
- Strategic plan for all of Student Services
Resources

- Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach
- Assessment and Inventory Planning Guide:
  - http://cacuss-campusmentalhealth.ca/about.html
- An Environmental Scan of Canadian Campus Mental Health Strategies (2019)
- National Implementation Science Research Network:
  - https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/
- Upcoming Postsecondary Student Standard:
  - https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/studentstandard
References

A Strategic Primer on College Student Mental Health (2014)


Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health Evaluation Toolkit


Healthy Campuses (2013): http://healthycampuses.ca/
References


Patton MQ. Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use: Guilford Press; 2010.

University of Calgary Evaluation Toolkit https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/programevaluationtoolkit
Questions?

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THANK YOU