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# MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

ADVANCING A MENTALLY HEALTHY CAMPUS

York University is Canada's third largest university, with a diverse population of more than 60,000 students, faculty and staff. We are committed to promoting a mentally healthy campus for our whole community, which in turn will help foster student academic success and create a better workplace.

York University takes pride in being a socially responsible institution - one where people matter. Human rights, social justice and equity are woven into the very fabric of the University. Our values underscore openness, inclusivity and respect in all we do. In short, we care deeply about our community.

Demonstrating that commitment to care, York University has mobilized resources to provide an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes positive mental health and well-being among all members of our community and provide appropriate supports to those who experience mental health challenges. We want our students, our faculty and our staff to flourish.

This document provides an overview of York University's commitment and approach to advancing a mentally healthy campus, and illustrates our actions, our initiatives and some of our key successes to date.

Sincerely,

**Rhonda Lenton**

*Vice-President Academic & Provost*

**Gary Brewer**

*Vice-President Finance & Administration*

**Janet Morrison**

*Vice-Provost Students*





# INTRODUCTION

In 2012, York University established a Mental Health Action Group with a mandate to provide advice on developing and implementing a pan-university mental health strategy. The group considered existing institutional policies and procedures and the emerging needs of the community, and undertook extensive consultation with students, faculty and staff.

The result is the University's Mental Health Strategy, which is built on four strategic priorities, grounded in the York University Academic Plan (UAP) 2015-2020:

1. leadership
2. planning and promotion
3. campus engagement
4. service delivery

**The vision:** to advance a mentally healthy campus.

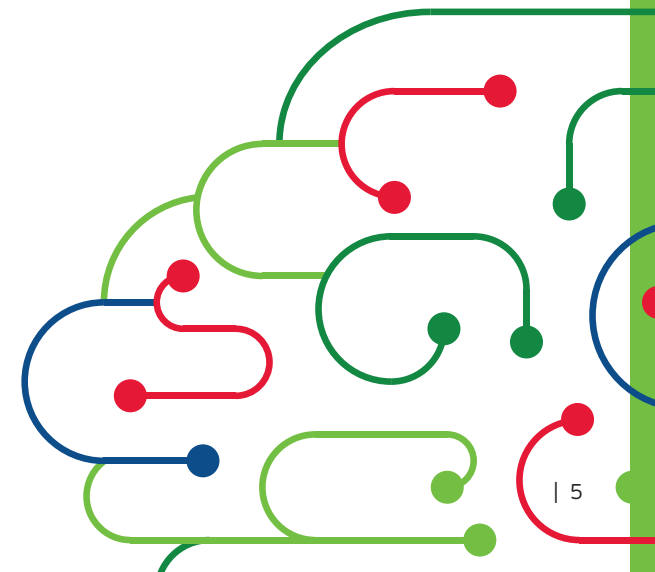
**The mission:** to assume responsibility for creating an inclusive environment based on mutual respect and implement a mental health strategy for all members of our community - students, faculty and staff.

We must "embed a focus on mental health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates."

*Adapted from the Okanagan Charter: an International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges, 2015*

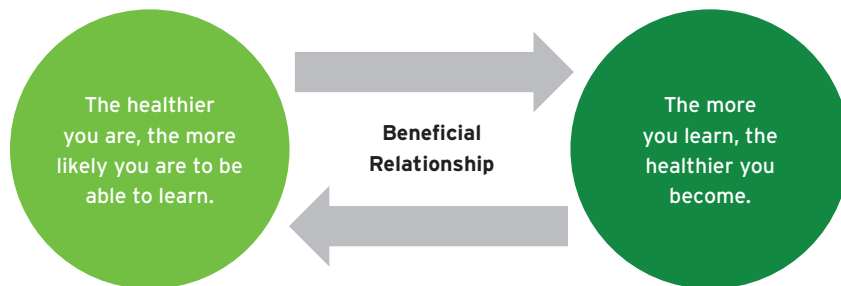
**Objectives:** to inaugurate and implement a pre-eminent mental health and well-being strategy for faculty, staff and students that includes the following:

- embedding mental health in the classroom;
- developing new and improved services;
- building the skills of our community members so they can identify when help is needed and provide direction on how and where to find it; and
- supporting mental health before help is needed (UAP 2015-2020).



# MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

York University's Mental Health Strategy was developed using a holistic systems approach. It promotes the health and well-being of students, faculty and staff as a foundation for academic, work and life success, and considers what an environment that sustains good health would look like. Further, it acknowledges that all members of the University community have a role to play in changing the conditions and dialogue around mental health.



*Adapted from "Healthy Settings Model," [healthyuniversities.ac.uk](http://healthyuniversities.ac.uk)*

York University's Mental Health Strategy was informed by the Mental Health Framework developed by the Canadian Association of College & University Student Services (CACUSS) in coordination with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). The strategy reflects York's comprehensive mental health and wellness commitment to three foundational pillars:

1. health and wellness promotion
2. facilitation of care and support
3. collaboration and discussion

CACUSS and the CMHA recognize that institutional policy is a key component of a community-wide approach to campus mental health. Institutional policy, programs and practices can shape campus environments by reinforcing or promoting certain beliefs, values and behaviours, while discouraging others (CACUSS & CMHA, 2013).

Many existing campus policies, programs and practices are directly or indirectly linked to mental health and have an impact on the ways their campus community members interact, communicate, learn and function. Some promote positive mental health and a healthy environment while others focus on support for campus community members who are experiencing mental health problems. Understanding this, York University has committed to reviewing our own programs and practices around mental health and well-being and following a framework to guide our approach.

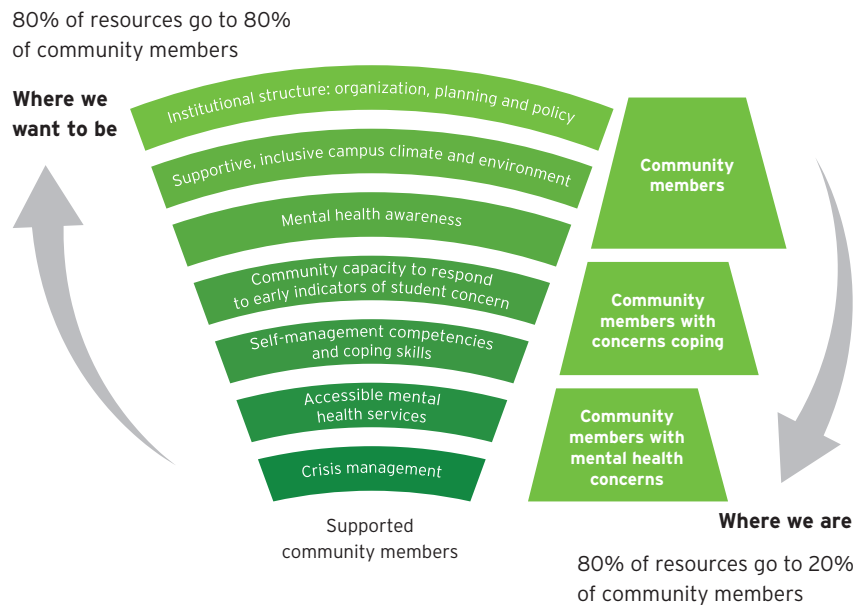




“Mental health  
is a campus-wide  
responsibility. Everyone  
needs to share in this.”

*(staff group)*

# YORK UNIVERSITY'S FRAMEWORK FOR ADVANCING A MENTALLY HEALTHY CAMPUS



*Adapted from "Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach," Canadian Association of College & University Student Services and Canadian Health Association, 2013*

### Principles of York University's Mental Health Strategy:

- deliver a long-term approach for the management of mental health challenges;
- outline initiatives to help achieve improved mental health outcomes for members of the University community;
- identify supports aimed at helping individuals become more involved in managing their own mental health;
- advocate for accessible services to be made available to the community, both on and off campus; and
- focus on partnership within the University community and working together to achieve a mentally healthy campus.





“We need an  
environment that can  
nurture instead of  
waiting for the crisis  
to happen.”

*(Glendon group)*

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# IMPLEMENTING YORK UNIVERSITY'S MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY THROUGH ITS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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## LEADERSHIP

Supporting a mentally healthy campus from the highest levels of student, faculty and staff leadership

- Secure the financial commitment required to support a mentally healthy campus mandate.
- Collaborate with leaders to ensure the implementation of the University's Mental Health Strategy in the University Academic Plan (UAP) and Integrated Resource Plans (IRP).
- Champion the development and review of academic and non-academic policies to ensure they support the advancement of a mentally healthy campus mandate.

## PLANNING AND PROMOTION

An integrated and coordinated approach to create awareness and support the community

- Collaborate with key stakeholders to ensure mental health and well-being is considered within the built environment.
- Attend to mental health as an equity issue, recognizing the intersection of mental health with forms of oppression and marginalization.
- Enhance coordination of communication strategies promoting mental health services awareness.
- Develop opportunities to enhance mental health competencies for community members.

- Promote existing programs and develop new programs to support holistic well-being.
- Coordinated promotion of student, faculty and staff programs that support resilience and wellness.

## CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

Promoting connectivity to ensure the voices in the community are heard

- Ensure the community voice is central to the development of a mentally healthy campus model.
- Promote opportunities for social connectivity.
- Advocate for mental health and wellness as preconditions for work and learning.
- Recognize students, faculty and staff contributions to the advancement of a mentally healthy campus.
- Create a collaborative platform for mental health research and knowledge mobilization.
- Create opportunities for local delivery of mental health awareness initiatives.

## SERVICE DELIVERY

Ensuring supports and resources are available and processes are in place to foster a mentally healthy campus

- Develop mental health competencies to recognize early indicators of concern as well as more serious distress.
- Implement best practices in the provision of peer and collegial support.
- Develop, implement and promote an early alert system to better allow community members the opportunity to centrally report early indicators of concerns.
- Ensure programs and processes are in place to address transitional stressors.
- Develop relationships with on- and off-campus partners to better support mental health and well-being services and referrals.
- Ensure accessibility to services both on and off campus.
- Ensure processes for accommodations are consistently aligned with relevant legislation and University policies.
- Establish and maintain a multidisciplinary crisis response team.



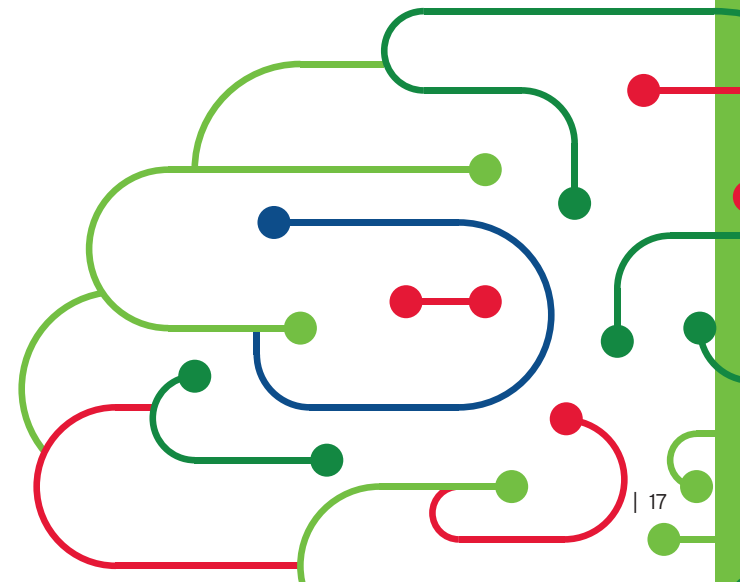
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## HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR PROGRESS ON ADVANCING A MENTALLY HEALTHY CAMPUS

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- Mental Health has been identified as a priority in the UAP.
- Mental Health workshops will be developed for new faculty and staff.
- The Teaching Commons has integrated Mental Health into its New Faculty Orientation.
- Mental Health training was developed and provided to Orientation-Week leaders.
- Following meetings with the Health Leadership & Learning Network, a customized psychological standard training for staff and faculty will be piloted.
- Discussions are on-going with the Vice-President Research and Innovation for the establishment of a Mental Health Research Hub.
- York University's annual Let's Talk Mental Health Day continues to garner interest and support from the entire community.
- Members of York's community and GTA hospitals have held consultations regarding the transitioning of students into care.

- York University takes a leadership role within the community by welcoming more than 600 Grade 12 students from the York Region District School Board to campus annually to generate awareness about mental health. This multidivisional initiative involves members of York's Division of Students, Faculties and administration coming together to provide a day full of games and lectures dedicated to educating young people about mental health.
- In 2015, York University conducted more than 50 community consultation sessions with students, faculty and staff as part of a process to advance a mentally healthy campus.





“...We [service providers]  
need to work together  
to support folks instead  
of living on islands hoping  
people are OK.”

*(MachForm Post)*

# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

## A STRATEGIC, LONG-TERM APPROACH

### Advancing a mentally healthy campus

Health and well-being are key to academic, work and life success. York U is committed to a mentally healthy campus, on where faculty, staff and students can thrive and flourish.

To support our community, York U provides access to resources, services and programs to manage mental health challenges and enhance well-being.

### MENTAL HEALTH AT A GLANCE

#### GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) mental illness is **A LEADING CAUSE OF DISABILITY IN THE WORLD.**



#### CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

**20% OF CANADIANS** will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime.

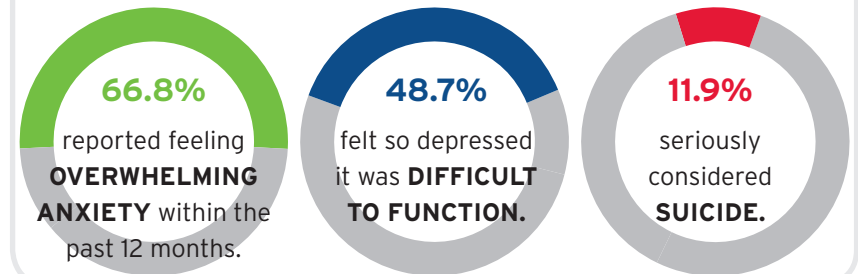


#### YORK STUDENTS

#### TOP 3 FACTORS

THAT NEGATIVELY IMPACT students' academic performance

STRESS • SLEEP DIFFICULTIES • ANXIETY



#### YORK STAFF

STRESS (workplace)

ANXIETY

**2 OF THE TOP 3 COUNSELLING ISSUES** for York University staff members

**27%**

2014 EAP data

of counselled York employees reported **moderate to severe level of depression.**

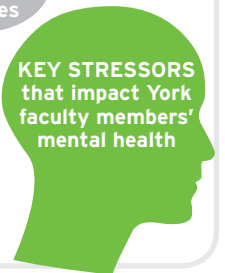


#### YORK FACULTY

In a recent survey of faculty members from more than 56 Canadian universities, **faculty reported high levels of occupational distress.**

Lack of awareness of mental health services  
Stigma issues  
Feelings of isolation  
Workload issues

**KEY STRESSORS** that impact York faculty members' mental health





“York University is committed to promoting a mentally healthy campus for all students, faculty and staff, fostering student academic success and a better workplace.”

**Mamdouh Shoukri**  
*President and Vice-Chancellor*  
York University

### What's the plan?

York U's mental health strategy will serve and support the mental health and well-being of our community members.

It was developed after extensive community consultation to address the needs and issues unique to York University.

By re-evaluating our progress every three years, we hope to ensure a progressive movement toward creating and maintaining a mentally healthy campus that empowers our community to thrive.

**WE WANT  
TO HEAR  
FROM YOU!**

We want to hear what your priorities are and how you can help champion campus mental health initiatives.

To learn more or provide feedback: [mhinfo@yorku.ca](mailto:mhinfo@yorku.ca)

Full details of our Strategic Plan can be found at  
[yorku.ca/mentalhealth](https://yorku.ca/mentalhealth)



York University is committed to a mentally healthy campus and will continue to provide the supports and resources needed for its community to thrive and flourish. This includes an ongoing dedication to creating and sustaining a supportive campus culture without stigmatization and discrimination with regard to mental health.

We recognize the shared responsibility of the institution and all community members to support mental well-being on campus, and encourage collaboration among all students, faculty and staff to achieve our strategic vision.

Visit [yorku.ca/mentalhealth](https://yorku.ca/mentalhealth) to learn more about available resources and how you can help advance a mentally healthy campus.

## REFERENCES:

*York University Academic Plan 2015-2020*

*Healthyuniversities.ac.uk*

*"Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach," Canadian Association of College & University Student Services (CACUSS) and Canadian Health Association, 2013.*

*The Okanagan Charter, an outcome of the 2015 International Conference on Health Promoting Universities & Colleges.*

