

COLLEGE POLICY

POLICY #:	SS02
POLICY:	Student Mental Health Policy
POLICY HOLDER:	Director, Student Services & Success
APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE:	January 28, 2025
SUPERSEDES POLICY:	None

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline Sault College's commitment to supporting student mental health, as well as to provide information on available programs and services. The policy also details the College's reporting requirements. The policy aims to foster a culture of positive mental health that enhances student potential and incorporates culturally safe, inclusive, and holistic approaches to wellness.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students at Sault College, as defined below. The policy expresses the College's principles and commitment to student mental health and well-being and includes information on services and resources available to students.

3. Definitions

Crisis: A crisis is any situation that puts someone at risk of harming themselves or others and/or puts them at risk of being unable to care for themselves or function in a healthy manner.

Culturally Safe Spaces: Environments that foster respect, inclusivity, and emotional safety for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. They ensure that all students feel valued, supported, and empowered to express their identities and experiences without fear of discrimination or judgement. These spaces promote cultural understanding, open dialogue, and create a sense of belonging.

Distress: Distress is a state of emotional suffering associated with stressors and demands that are difficult to cope with in daily life.

Mental Health: Mental health is a holistic sense of emotional, spiritual, and cultural wellness that recognizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of respect for culture, equity, diversity, social justice, and dignity while fostering a sense of belonging and community.

Mental Illness: Mental illness may arise from organic, genetic, psychological, or behavioural factors (or combinations of these) that occur in an individual and are not understood or expected as part of normal development or culture – these can be acute or chronic and may fall within the definition of a “disability”.

Student: A student is any individual enrolled in the institution, either full-time or part-time. This includes students active in a program who may be on a study break or vacation but are returning to study in the following term.

Wellness: Wellness refers to the capacity to live a fulfilling life and to have resilience to deal with life's challenges. Indigenous wellness can include cultural and community supports, traditional teachings, and land-based practices.

4. Principles

- 4.1. Student-centered:** The needs and perspectives of students are paramount in all aspects of this policy, and all other College policies and procedures that this policy might influence.
- 4.2. Holistic:** Sault College recognizes the interconnectedness of mental health with other aspects of well-being, including: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, occupational, environmental, financial wellbeing; and cultural and community connection.
- 4.3. Inclusive:** Sault College recognizes the importance of equitable access to culturally appropriate services and support for all students, particularly those from marginalized communities, regardless of background or identity. Including Indigenous students, the 2SLGBTQIA+ student community, racialized student populations, and students with disabilities, is especially important. The policy should reflect and inspire trauma-informed practice and approach.
- 4.4. Preventative:** Sault College recognizes the importance of promoting proactive measures such as mental health literacy, wellness programming, and stigma reduction initiatives, tailored to diverse cultural contexts.
- 4.5. Collaborative:** Student mental health is a shared responsibility and the College encourages collaboration among students, faculty, staff, and community partners.
- 4.6. Evidence-informed:** Sault College is committed to an evidence-informed approach that recognizes the value of diverse knowledge systems. This policy will be guided by research and best practices, including publications such as the National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students, the Okanagan Charter, and ongoing resources provided by organizations such as the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Additionally, the policy acknowledges Indigenous teachings, knowledge traditions, and ways of being as evidence-based and integral to holistic mental health and well-being strategies.
- 4.7. Continuous Improvement:** The College recognizes the importance of currency and innovation in policy and practice to reflect the evolving needs of students as well as best practices in the field.

5. Policy Statements

- 5.1.** Sault College recognizes that mental health is essential to academic success and overall well-being.
- 5.2.** Sault College commits to mainstreaming a student mental health lens into all policies, programs, and practices.
- 5.3.** Sault College commits to fostering a supportive and inclusive campus environment that values mental health and challenges stigma.
- 5.4.** Sault College will provide a range of mental health services – including prevention and promotion initiatives, early intervention, and crisis referrals – along with clear procedures for accessing these services.
- 5.5.** Sault College will integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and traditional practices into its mental health programs, ensuring culturally safe spaces and access to Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and land-based healing. Collaborations with local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities will inform the development of services and resources, while faculty and staff will receive ongoing training in trauma-informed and culturally respectful practices.
- 5.6.** Sault College will protect the privacy and confidentiality of students accessing mental health services, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. This includes confidentiality around reporting.
- 5.7.** Sault College will regularly review and update this policy in consultation with students, faculty, staff, and community partners. This includes incorporating new evidence-based documents and practices and evaluating various biopsychosocial-spiritual factors impacting mental health.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Sault College recognizes that supporting student mental health is a shared responsibility that requires participation from all members of the college community. The following outlines the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders:

6.1. All Sault College Community Members:

- Review this policy and the responsibilities defined in it.
- Contribute to a respectful and inclusive campus environment that supports mental health.
- Be aware of available mental health resources and assist in guiding others to appropriate services when appropriate.
- Participate in mental health awareness and literacy education and training activities.
- Be mindful of their own mental health and engage in self-care practices.

6.2. Student Wellness Advisory Committee

- Monitor and provide feedback on activities that support student wellness in the College, with attention to culturally relevant practices.
- Review the current policy and make recommendations for revision. This includes consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- Make recommendations on College policies and procedures that need review using a mental health and wellness lens, and participate in those reviews. Participate in the development of new College policy where appropriate.
- Review reporting metrics and help to prepare the College's annual report on student mental health and wellness.

6.3. College Executive:

- Oversee the implementation of the policy and ensure that it is consistent with Sault College's mission and values.
- Provide sufficient resources to support culturally appropriate mental health services and initiatives.
- Review reporting under the policy annually, and policy revisions every five years.

6.4. Administrators/Managers:

- Provide leadership and direction in the implementation of the policy.
- Ensure that mental health and well-being considerations are integrated into all aspects of Sault College's operations, including academics, student life, and human resources.
- Ensure that this policy and the College's commitment to student mental health and well-being is considered in the development and revision of other College policies.

6.5. Faculty/Staff:

- Make reasonable adjustments to their teaching and work practices to accommodate student needs.
- Maintain confidentiality and respect students' privacy.

6.6. Student Services

- Monitor and report on the effectiveness of mental health initiatives for all learners, with attention to Indigenous and marginalized groups.
- Provide and promote procedural documents for students and staff to support them in their response to student distress or crisis situations.
- Ensure the provision of and promote mental health training for staff and students.

6.7. Students:

- Take an active role in their own mental health and well-being.
- Seek support from available resources when needed.
- Contribute to a supportive, respectful and inclusive campus environment.

7. Reporting

In accordance with the privacy guidelines identified in this policy and other statutory privacy obligations, the College shall collect data regarding student mental health through service use statistics and participation in health promotion/upstream well-being and awareness programming:

7.1. Data Collection

- 7.1.1. Service Utilization:** This includes tracking such information as the number of students accessing mental health services (including the number of students accessing culturally specific supports), wait times for appointments, types of services utilized, and student satisfaction with services. Tracking this data helps the College understand the demand for services and identify potential gaps in service provision.
- 7.1.2. Mental Health Literacy and Awareness:** This includes tracking information about the reach and impact of mental health awareness campaigns, participation in training programs for faculty and staff, and peer support programs. This data collection will help the College assess the effectiveness of these initiatives in promoting mental health awareness and literacy and reducing stigma.
- 7.1.3. Inclusive Data Collection:** Ensure that data collection processes are sensitive to and inclusive of Indigenous and minority group identities and experiences, including acknowledgment of varying cultural perspectives and definitions of wellness.

7.2. Reporting Mechanisms

- 7.2.1. Annual Report to the Board of Governors:** The Director, Student Services & Success (or designate) shall prepare an annual report summarizing key data and provide analysis of the data for the purposes of validating past activity and outlining needs/gaps. The report should also highlight progress made towards achieving policy goals, identify challenges encountered, and recommend areas for improvement. The report will include information on the mental health needs of Indigenous students and provide recommendations for improvements. This report will be presented to the Board of Governors to ensure accountability and transparency.
- 7.2.2. Communication to the Campus Community:** The Director, Student Services & Success will share the findings from the annual report with the broader campus community and external community stakeholders. This will help to promote transparency, raise awareness of mental health initiatives, and foster a culture of shared responsibility for student well-being.

7.2.3. Timeline: The Director, Student Services & Success will use the Ministry funding reporting schedule to prepare annual data (June), from which they will prepare the report and get feedback from the Student Wellness Advisory Committee (in September) before presenting it to the Board of Governors (each Fall). The report will be posted to the College Website prior to January 31 each year, starting in 2026.

8. Policy Review

8.1. Review: The Director, Student Services & Success is responsible for initiating the policy review process. The Student Wellness Advisory Committee can also recommend a policy review out of schedule, where deemed appropriate, and should play a central role in reviewing the policy, evaluating its effectiveness, and recommending changes to improve its implementation.

8.2. Consultation: During a policy review, The Student Wellness Advisory Committee will seek feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, mental health professionals, and community partners. They will ensure that the consultation process is inclusive and actively seeks input from marginalized and underrepresented groups, and is intentionally designed to be culturally safe, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of the campus community.

Appendix A: Sault College Mental Health Resources

Crisis Resources

Crisis Services (SSM) Tel: 705-759-3398 or 1-800-721-0077	Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team (SSM) Tel: 705-949-6300 (SSM Police non-urgent line)
Emergency Services Tel: 911	Suicide Crisis Helpline Tel: 988 Text: 988

College Supports & Services

Student Health Centre Room A0174 Tel: 705-759-2554 Ext. 2720	Elders-in-Residence Barbara Nolan, Elder (Barbara.Nolan@saultcollege.ca) Ted Recollet, Elder (Ted.Recollet@saultcollege.ca)
Counselling (E1101) Tel: 705-759-2554 Ext.2703	
I.M. Well Tel: 1-877-554-6935	

Community Supports & Services

"Good2Talk" <u>Ontario's Postsecondary Student Helpline</u> Tel: 1-866-925-5454 (toll-free) Text: GOOD2TALKON to 686868	<u>Hope for Wellness Helpline</u> (All Indigenous people) Tel: 1-855-242-3310 (toll-free)
<u>Post-Secondary Mental Health Information Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health</u>	Sault Ste. Marie Indigenous Friendship Centre (SSMIFC) Offers services such as cultural programs, counseling, family services, and housing support. Tel: 705-256-5634
	Sault Area Hospital - Indigenous Patient Navigator Provides culturally sensitive support for Indigenous patients and their families. Tel: 705-759-3434 ext. 5031

Appendix B: Student Wellness Advisory Committee - Terms of Reference

Purpose:

- To advise senior administration on matters related to student mental health and well-being.
- To provide input on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Student Mental Health Policy and related initiatives.
- To promote collaboration and communication among students, faculty, staff, and community partners on issues related to student mental health, including the integration of Indigenous values, traditions, and healing practices.

Membership:

The committee will be composed of representatives from the following groups:

- Students (through SCSU and ISU)
- Faculty
- Staff
- Mental Health Professionals
- Community Partners (as appropriate)
- Indigenous Services/Staff

The committee will strive to include a diversity of perspectives and lived experience, including representation from:

- Students with disabilities
- Racialized students
- Indigenous students
- 2SLGBTQIA+ students
- International students

Meetings:

- The committee will meet at least 3 times per year (in September, January, and May).
- Meetings will be facilitated by the Director, Student Services & Success (or designate)

Responsibilities:

- Review and provide feedback on the Student Mental Health Policy and related procedures.
- Advise on the development and implementation of mental health initiatives.
- Identify and address gaps in services and supports for students with mental health needs, ensuring that Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized student perspectives and traditions are respected and integrated.
- Promote awareness of mental health issues and resources on campus.
- Advocate for policies and practices that support student mental health and well-being.
- Develop and implement a communication plan to keep the campus community informed about mental health resources and initiatives.

Reporting

The committee will report annually to the senior administration on its activities and recommendations.