

# Student Mental Health and Wellness Policy

Office of Administration	Office of the Associate Vice-President, Students
Approval Authority	Executive Team
Approval Date	January 21, 2025
Next Review	January 2026
Review History	New

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote the mental well-being of all students at Laurentian University, to create an inclusive and supportive environment, and to ensure that students have access to the resources and support they need to thrive academically and personally.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Laurentian University community, including senior administration, faculty and staff and all students of Laurentian University.

## 3. Principles/Policy Statement

Laurentian University recognizes that mental health and wellness is an integral part of overall health and well-being. The university recognises further that, to support the mental health and wellness of students, the mental health and wellness of Laurentian staff and faculty must also be prioritised. The university is committed, therefore, to fostering a culture that prioritizes mental health and wellness of students, staff and faculty, reduces stigma, and ensures that students, staff and faculty have access to the necessary resources and support services.

Laurentian University is a signatory to the Okanagan Charter and is committed to responding effectively to its two Calls to Action:

1. Embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates.
2. Lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally.

Laurentian University is committed to meeting, as far as is possible for an institution of its size, location and resources, the expectations set out in the National Standard of Canada (CSA Z2003:20) “Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students”.

In doing so, we accept the guiding principles of that document and adopt them as the guiding principles of this Policy:

- a) Student-centred;
- b) Equity, diversity and inclusion;
- c) Knowledge-informed;
- d) Health promotion and reducing harm;
- e) Thriving community and culture of well-being; and
- f) Continuous improvement.

## 4. Objectives

1. **Promote a sense of Community and Belonging:** Work with students, staff and faculty to address social isolation among students.
2. **Provide Resources to students, staff and faculty:** Ensure that all members of our community have access to a range of culturally appropriate mental health and wellness services and supports, including counseling, workshops, and peer support as well as easily accessible, less formal supports.
3. **Promote Awareness both of resources available and to destigmatize mental health challenges:** Increase awareness and understanding of mental health and wellness services available on campus and off campus among students, faculty, and staff. Further, promote education and awareness with a goal of destigmatizing mental health challenges in the community.
4. **Address Existing Structural and Administrative Challenges:** Students have identified that much of their ongoing stress and frustration arises from challenges created by Laurentian's own systems; work with students to identify and address such challenges.
5. **Encourage Help-Seeking:** Foster an environment that encourages students to seek help and support when needed.
6. **Support Academic Success:** Implement strategies to support students facing mental health challenges in achieving their academic goals.
7. **Promote Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** Take appropriate steps to ensure that students with mental health challenges can participate in all aspects of the Laurentian community in an equitable, inclusive fashion, and to identify and remove barriers to such participation.
8. **Collaborate with Community Partners:** Work with community partners, student organizations, and mental health professionals to enhance the mental health and wellness resources available to students, staff and faculty.
9. **Respond to Changing Student Needs:** Create and maintain a consistent process by which students, staff and faculty can adjust mental health and wellness supports to address changing student needs.

## **5. Implementation Strategies**

### **1. Awareness and Education**

- Develop and maintain an online space to support this policy and its implementation.
- Develop and deliver mental health and wellness awareness campaigns throughout the academic year, which will include campaigns and educational programs addressing stress reduction, positive coping strategies, mental health literacy and de-stigmatization.
- Provide training for faculty and staff on recognizing and responding to mental health concerns in students.

### **2. Accessible Services and Information**

- Ensure that mental health and wellness services are easily accessible, including on-campus counseling services, crisis support, and online resources.
- Offer regular workshops and seminars on stress management, mindfulness, coping strategies and related issues.
- Ensure that information on the University's student mental health programs, policies, services and supports is available and easily accessible for all students, staff and faculty. For a complete list of services available, visit <https://laurentian.ca/support>.
- Ensure that information on the mental health programs, policies, services and supports in the external community that are available to Laurentian students, staff and faculty is available and easily accessible.

### **3. Support Systems and Crisis Response**

- Enhance peer support programs to create a network of students who can provide informal support to their peers.
- Consider adding additional supports that are less formal and more accessible to the Laurentian community.
- Implement referral processes to connect students with appropriate mental health and wellness resources.
- Continue to support the Counselling Office with adequate resources to provide ongoing mental health and wellness support to students, which will include referrals to external services where the needs of a student are more complex than the Office is designed to support.
- Support a CARE Team that includes representatives of key university services to identify, respond to and support students facing mental health and wellness challenges, including crisis situations.

### **4. Accommodations and Flexibility**

- Develop policies for academic accommodations for students experiencing mental health challenges, including extensions and flexible attendance policies.
- Ensure that students are informed about their rights and available accommodations.

## 5. Address Structural and Administrative Barriers

- Work collaboratively with students and Laurentian partners to identify and remove structural and administrative barriers.
- Implement referral processes for students to connect with appropriate offices to address concerns related to structural and administrative barriers.

## 6. Privacy and Confidentiality

- Ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of students who seek mental health and wellness information, services and support is appropriately protected.
- Ensure that information in relation to how the University protects the privacy and confidentiality of individuals accessing campus mental health and wellness information, services and support is available and easily accessible for all students, staff and faculty.

## 7. Evaluation and Improvement

- Regularly assess the effectiveness of mental health and wellness services and programs in responding to changing needs through student feedback and mental health outcomes.
- Continuously update and improve policies and resources based on assessment findings and best practices in mental health and wellness support.

## 6. Confidentiality

All interactions with health and mental health services will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, in accordance with relevant privacy laws and the [Policy on Access to Information and Protection of Privacy](#).

## 7. Responsibility

The implementation of this policy is the shared responsibility of all university community members, including:

- **University Administration:** Ensure adequate funding and resources are allocated to health, mental health and well-being services and programs.
- **Associate Vice-President, Students:** Act as administrative lead for the implementation of this policy and ensure that reporting requirements are met.
- **Counseling Services and Student Health Centre:** Provide professional mental health and wellness support and services, including appropriate referrals to external supports and services.
- **Faculty and Staff:** Promote a supportive environment and encourage students to utilize available resources; participate in ongoing training and awareness about mental health and wellness so as to be able to respond appropriately to students seeking and to refer such students to appropriate supports.
- **Students:** Engage in promoting mental health awareness and supporting one another.

## **8. Report**

The Associate Vice-President, Students, or designate, shall report annually to the Laurentian Board of Governors on the implementation and effectiveness of this student mental health policy.

At a minimum, this report shall contain the following elements:

- Statistics in relation to the use of mental health support services;
- Information on activities carried out over the course of the previous year focused on education, awareness and culture change in relation to student mental health and wellness;
- Changes in the level of resources allocated to mental health and wellness activities under this policy;
- Proposals as to how the requirements of this policy will be implemented in the next year;
- Requests, if any, for additional resources required to support the implementation of this policy and student mental health and wellness in general.

This report shall be delivered to the Board of Governors at its last meeting of the calendar year and, once accepted by the Board, shall be delivered to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities by January 31st. It shall also be made publicly available on a dedicated webpage.

## **9. Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Associate Vice-President, Students, in consultation with students and appropriate Laurentian partners to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in meeting the mental health needs of students at Laurentian University. A full community review will take place every five years.

## **10. Conclusion**

Laurentian University is dedicated to the mental well-being of its students, staff and faculty. By implementing this policy, we aim to create a supportive and healthy environment where all students, staff and faculty can succeed academically, professionally and personally.