

Improving Post-Secondary Mental Health

Post-Secondary Student Mental Health

Albertans deserve a government that makes life better. The Government of Alberta is improving things that make a difference in Albertans' lives like ensuring mental health supports are accessible and available when post-secondary students need them.

Student mental wellbeing is linked to academic achievement, learning, retention and future success.

In 2016, ten Alberta post-secondary institutions participated in the National College Health Assessment survey to better inform their health and wellness programming.

The survey highlighted, over the past 12 months:

- 57.5 per cent of students felt hopeless.
- More than 90 per cent felt overwhelmed.
- 65 per cent felt very lonely.
- More than 42 per cent felt so depressed it was difficult to function.
- Almost 64 per cent felt overwhelming anxiety.
- 13.1 per cent seriously considered suicide, and 2.1 per cent attempted suicide.
- 18.9 per cent had been diagnosed or treated by a professional for anxiety and 15.4 per cent for depression.

Mental Health funding

The global amount provided last year was \$4.2 million. This included funding to the University of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge, Mount Royal University and MacEwan University and the Alberta Students' Executive Council.

While these funds provided innovative and vital services to students, improvements were necessary to ensure sustainability and equality for students across the province.

Over the next three years, the government has committed \$25.8 million, which represents a significant increase in funding to support post-secondary mental health in Alberta.

Advisory Panel on Post-Secondary Mental Health

Advanced Education established an expert advisory panel to develop recommendations for a long-term approach to post-secondary mental health funding and support.

The Advisory Panel included post-secondary students, faculty, staff, Alberta Health Services and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

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Next Steps

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The Government of Alberta is taking steps to ensure Alberta's post-secondary institutions promote positive mental health and well-being, so students are prepared for success.

The next steps were informed by the work of the Advisory Panel and align with government's vision of an integrated, community-based health care system as demonstrated through the Alberta Mental Health Review Committee's recommendations.

The seven steps include:

- **Providing equitable funding to publicly-funded post-secondary institutions.**
 - Consistent, annual funding directly to post-secondary institutions.
 - Support on-campus health promotion, wellbeing programs and training for staff.
- **Defining roles of post-secondary and public health systems in improving post-secondary student mental health.**
 - Working with government partners to clarify roles and responsibilities.
 - Post-secondary system manages health promotion and early intervention, while the health system will provide clinical care services.
 - Students will benefit from a more coordinated system that is accessible and easy to navigate.
- **Integrating on-campus mental health supports with larger regional systems.**
 - Regional student service coordination by post-secondary institutions, AHS, primary care, and others.
 - Community-based plans to address access to clinical services.
 - Three-year transition as integrated service plans unfold.
- **Providing a one-time, two-year grant opportunity to support Indigenous post-secondary students' mental health.**
 - Interim grant available to all institutions by application.
 - Allows Advanced Education time to thoroughly consult with Indigenous Peoples Post-Secondary Institutions, communities, and other stakeholders on appropriate long-term mental health approach.
- **Funding Healthy Campus Alberta Community of Practice.**
 - Students will benefit from consistent approaches and a strengthened post-secondary mental health system.
- **Improving access to 24-hour universal supports throughout the province.**
 - Work with Health, AHS and Children's Services to enhance the 24-hour crisis line, 211 referral service and web tools and better serve students.
 - Provide on-demand virtual 24-hour care to post-secondary students, regardless of where they study in Alberta.
 - Access will be available to all students, including distance learning students.
- **Reviewing student aid policies.**
 - Advanced Education is reviewing its student financial assistance policies and will consider how to support students experiencing mental health concerns.

The Government of Alberta is working with post-secondary institutions to implement these steps to promote and support mental wellness and build more resilient campus communities, so that students get the care they need.