



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Consensus Conference on the Mental Health of Emerging Adults

Making Transitions a Priority in Canada

Transitions between Secondary and Postsecondary

Catherine Willinsky, MHSc.

Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health

Nov. 3, 2015





- How are emerging adults faring in the transition between secondary and postsecondary?
- What are the major issues at a population level?
- What about distinct populations?
- How can we do a better job of preparing youth for the transition?
- How can campus culture better support mental health and wellbeing?

Objectives

- Examine the context and identify key issues in the transition between secondary and postsecondary for general EA population and special populations
- Highlight universal and targeted promising practices in supporting youth through transitions to postsecondary
- Share information about important tools and resources that are currently available

Context: Educational transitions and emerging adults

- “Emerging adulthood” has particular relevance within the educational context - it’s a new life stage that’s not going away
- The transition from high school to college is a critical milestone for many young people
- 9 out of 10 high school students expect to continue their education
- 78% believe that one of the most important keys to success in life is a college or university education
- From 1990 -2007, tuition costs have tripled
- 84% of college graduates believe their education was a good investment
- Postsecondary enrollment continues to grow

What we know

Where youth are at:

- Canada has one of the highest postsecondary participation rates in the world: 74.7%
- Increasing numbers of international students
- Widening gap in participation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students 24.3 % lower rate of enrollment
- Today's students: higher levels of debt, fewer job prospects upon graduation, higher expectations for student success, less preparation for independent living

Is there a crisis on campus?

- 1992-2007 – 32% increase in student enrollment but 320% increase in students using Access/Disability services: especially Mental Health Accommodation
- 50 % of students use campus mental health services
- 10 % percent are seen in urgent / crisis situations
- Greater numbers of students coming to campus with a diagnosed mental disorder
- Greater awareness of student mental health - more students seeking help, greater complexity of issues – mostly anecdotal
- Very little data about campus populations and mental health
- NCHA 2013 survey of students on Canadian campuses: about 60 % “so depressed that it was difficult to function.” Almost three quarters felt “overwhelming anxiety.”

Prevalence of major mental disorders in the population has not increased

What we know

- Mental health challenges may be intensified during transition into postsecondary schools
- First-year of postsecondary is full of emotional challenges that span far beyond academics – for all students
- Beyond lack of academic preparation, lack of emotional and mental health literacy
- New study: majority of students (60%) wish they had gotten more help with emotional preparation for college
- Isolation and anxiety, especially for students who are leaving home for the first time for a prolonged period of time
- Overall, about 16 % of students drop out of postsecondary, and 14 % of those do so in the first year.

What we know

- Certain populations are particularly vulnerable, including LGBTQ, Aboriginal and Int'l students and require additional supports
- Three most common factors affecting academic performance:
 - Stress (38%)
 - Sleep difficulties (26%)
 - Anxiety (26%)
- Depression predictive of lower GPA and higher probability of dropping out of school (Eisenberg, 2005)
- Treated Depression does not show this same pattern of drop-outs (Hysenbegasi, 2005)

Implications

Bridge the gaps between educational systems and generations:

- Students are less prepared than previous generations for independent living
- Educational system needs to fill role of providing mental health and emotional literacy support, not just academic preparedness
- Address the disconnect between secondary and postsecondary in terms of documentation requirements and access to academic accommodations

Shift campus culture:

- Create proactive, universal design approach to campus mental health policy— review, revise and develop policies to support student mental health and well-being
- Set strategic goals and allocate resources

Implications

Enhance services and supports:

- Increased demand for service has strained the existing capacity on campuses
- Focus on early identification of students who are struggling
- Help young people who have a mental disorder or substantial mental health problem in obtaining rapid access to effective evidence-based care
- Improve collaboration between campus and community supports
- Effective models exist

Recommendations

Secondary

- More emphasis on developmentally-appropriate mental health literacy and self-care as part of broader life skills development
- Integrate social / emotional learning and mental health literacy into required high school courses
- Promote whole school approaches in addition to classroom-based curricular approaches
- Embed competencies in existing staff- build on strengths and infrastructure
- Provide targeted supports to populations with unique needs
- Support greater collaboration between secondary and post-secondary- standardize documentation requirements for academic accommodations

Recommendations

Postsecondary

- Every postsecondary across Canada to develop a comprehensive mental health strategy, with goals, budgets and targets
- Increase collaboration between institutions- sharing best practices and processes for effective strategy development, and implementation, development of meaningful mental health indicators
- Share best practices and strategies for promoting MH: peer support, mentoring, supportive learning environments, etc.
- Enhance awareness, early identification and help seeking and rapid access to effective care
- Academic accommodations- focus on functional impairment for those with identified MH disorders, not diagnosis and disclosure
- Provide focused supports for special populations such as students with identified mental health and addictions concerns, LGBTQ, aboriginal, international students

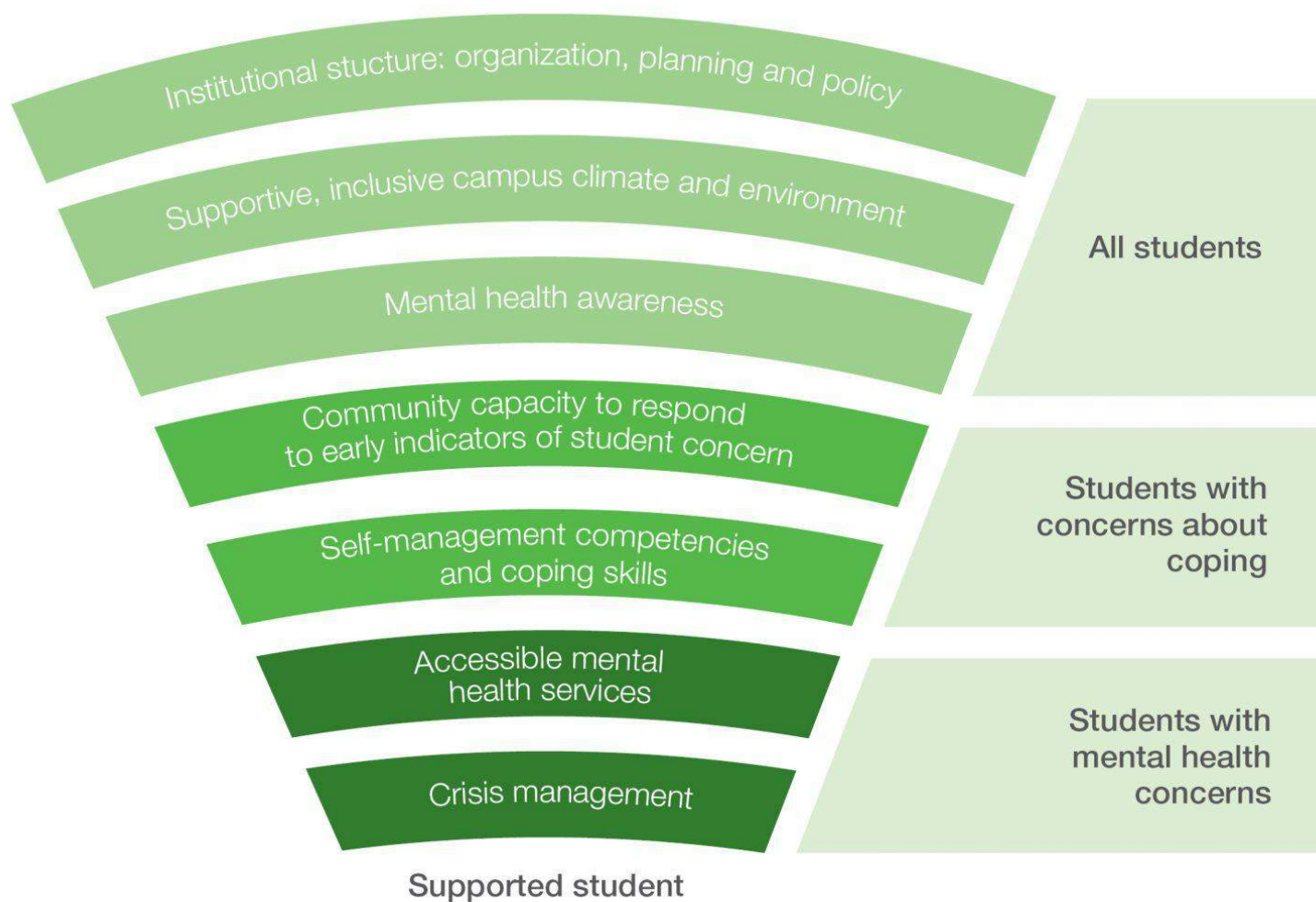
Recommendations



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Figure 2: Framework for Post-Secondary Student Mental Health



Summary

Secondary	Postsecondary Population health	Postsecondary special populations
Integrate social / emotional learning and mental health literacy into required high school courses	Sharing of best practices and strategies for promoting MH, enhancing awareness, help seeking and rapid access to care	Early identification and rapid access to evidence-based care
Promote whole school approaches in addition to classroom-based curricular approaches	Every post secondary across Canada to develop a comprehensive mental health strategy	Standardize documentation requirements for academic accommodation, focus on functional impairment
Embed competencies in existing staff	Collaboration between institutions- sharing best practices and processes for effective strategy development, and development of meaningful mental health indicators	Provide focused supports for special populations such as students with identified MH and addictions concerns, LGBT, aboriginal, international students