

COLLEGE POLICY

Vanier College Student Mental Health Policy

Title: Vanier College Student Mental Health Policy
Policy no.: xx
Division or Sector: Director General
Responsibility: Director General

Recommended by...

Approved by Vanier College Board of Directors: date

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1. Preamble

Vanier College is committed to ensuring a healthy, safe, inclusive, and supportive campus climate and environment that promotes and supports thriving student mental health.

This Policy meets the measure 2.1 of the Quebec Ministry of Higher Education [Plan d'action sur la santé mentale étudiante en enseignement supérieur 2021-2026](#), to develop an institutional policy in support of student mental health.

2. Policy Statement

Vanier College, hereinafter the College, recognizes that mental health is essential to academic perseverance and success. The College is committed to offering students a learning environment that promotes positive mental health, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The College values and encourages community-wide collaboration in support of these efforts and commitment.

3. Purpose

This Policy aims to outline the College's commitments regarding student mental health. The College commits to:

- providing students with an environment that supports perseverance and academic success through the implementation of measures that promote well-being and mental health, while respecting the diverse needs of its population;
- creating conditions conducive to the accountability of all institutional stakeholders with regard to mental health, and;
- ensuring that Vanier College is an environment that supports the development and well-being of all.

4. Scope of Application

This Policy applies to all Vanier College employees, students, contractors, volunteers, and visitors, engaged in activities on Vanier's grounds, under the administrative control of Vanier, utilizing Vanier's facilities and equipment, and representing Vanier in outside events or training.

5. Definitions

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality pertains to the treatment of information. Private and personal information and information relating to the health and welfare of an individual should be accessed only on a strict need-to-know basis and handled and stored with care, and in accordance with the Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information.

Intersectionality:

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Oxford Dictionary).

Learning Environment:

The diverse spaces (virtual or physical), approaches, contexts, and cultures in which teaching and learning take place; inclusive of the academic environment¹.

Members of the College community:

Vanier College students and employees.

Mental Health:

The capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity².

Mental Health Promotion:

Mental health promotion refers to measures that aim to maximize the mental health and well-being of individuals and communities. It targets the entire population and focuses on the determinants of mental health that contribute to increasing the ability to act and the adaptive capacities of communities as well as individuals. Mental health promotion therefore involves creating individual, social, and environmental conditions that support the development of optimal mental health³.

1 Canadian Standards Association (2020). CSA Z2003:20 National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students.

2 Public Health Agency of Canada (2014). *Mental Health Promotion*. <http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/mental-health/mental-health-promotion>

3 Jane-Llopis, E. & Barry, M. (2005). What makes mental health promotion effective? *Promotion & Education, Suppl. 2*, 47-54.

Positive Mental Health:

Positive mental health focuses on the positive mental aspects of a human being and their potential for growth, such as strengths and abilities, happiness, qualities such as responsibility, courage, creativity, and perseverance, as well as the material and social resources that promote or support them. A person with a high level of positive mental health is said to have thriving mental health, and a person with a low level is said to have languishing mental health⁴.

Prevention of Mental Disorders:

The prevention of mental disorders aims to reduce the incidence of illness by acting on the risk factors that threaten individuals' mental health before problems arise. It includes actions on risk factors associated with mental disorders and pathogenic conditions, as well as those targeting groups of people at risk of developing mental health problems⁵.

Student Community:

Any person enrolled in a course of study or training activity organized by the College.

Systemic Approach:

A systemic approach takes a comprehensive view, recognizing that the whole campus has a role to play in supporting positive student mental-health and well-being.

Trauma-Informed:

A framework that assumes that every individual is more likely than not to possess a history of trauma, it recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role trauma may play in one's life and experiences. A trauma-informed approach is informed by five guiding principles which are: safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment. It is a means of ensuring that the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual safety of individuals and groups is addressed and considered⁶.

Well-Being:

The presence of the highest quality of life in its full expression of the following dimensions: cultural, emotional, mental, physical, social, financial, spiritual, and environmental⁷.

⁴ Julien, D. & Bordeleau, M. (2021). La santé mentale positive: étude du concept et de sa mesure, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 48 p.

⁵ Institut national de santé publique du Québec. (2008). Avis scientifique sur les interventions efficaces en promotion de la santé mentale et en prévention des troubles mentaux, 162 p.

⁶ Buffalo Center for Social Research. (n.d). *What is Trauma-Informed-Care?*, <http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care>

⁷ Adapted from Canadian Standards Association (2020). CSA Z2003:20 National Standard of Canada for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The College supports a systemic approach with regards to mental health. As such, the entire community shares in the responsibility to participate in the creation and maintenance of an environment conducive to well-being and mental health. The College values the participation and commitment of all stakeholders, through both personal and collective accountability. With regards to this Policy, the responsibilities are shared as follows:

All members of the College community:

- Read, understand and respect this Policy and the role that one must play in its application;
- Collaborate in efforts aimed at nurturing a culture of respect and caring that supports positive mental health, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion;
- Support initiatives that promote student engagement and social participation in their institution or surrounding community;
- Build capacity and further knowledge about student mental health, by participating in awareness initiatives, trainings and professional development, or other means, and;
- Respect student confidentiality and privacy of all personal information, as per legal requirements and College policies.

Board of Directors:

- Adopt this Policy.

Director General:

- Ensure implementation and governance of this Policy;
- Ensure that this Policy is consistent and complementary to other policies, including those aimed at preventing and countering sexual violence in higher education, harassment and discrimination.
- Review and update policies from diverse and representative lenses.

College Standing Committee:

- Review and monitor this Policy on an annual basis to measure impact, progress, effectiveness, and relevance, and make recommendations.
- This committee includes representatives of senior management, faculty, professionals, support staff, and member(s) of the student community, in part, selected by the Vanier College Student Association (VCSA).

Managers:

- Ensure continuous improvement of student mental health and well-being by actioning the [Vanier College Strategy for Supporting Student Mental Health and Well-Being 2023-2026](#);
- Build foundational institutional policies, structures, and values that reinforce positive mental health and reduce barriers that cause student distress;
- Strengthen awareness and understanding of student-supporting policies;
- Build an understanding of mental health to increase help-seeking, decrease stigma, reduce shame and improve overall well-being;
- Structure and plan complementary activities for all community members to facilitate connection;
- Improve accessibility of physical environments (e.g. wheelchair accessibility);
- Increase community members' ability to recognize early indications of student distress to ensure a swift response and guidance to appropriate support services;
- Foster a campus community that responds effectively and efficiently following a crisis on campus to ensure a well-rounded campus response and;
- Ensure timely, accessible, diverse mental health supports to reinforce a thriving campus.

Academic Sector (Faculty, Professionals, Support Staff):

- Ensure continuous improvement of student mental health and well-being by actioning the [Vanier College Strategy for Supporting Student Mental Health and Well-Being 2023-2026](#);
- Support an inclusive and trauma-informed learning environment, within areas of responsibility, and ensure awareness and application of accommodations and supports, as well as applicable policies, and;
- Develop consistent mental health promoting statements, communicating the importance of student mental health on academic success, and directing students to available supports when required.

Students:

- Learn to practice and adopt healthy habits pertaining to domains of well-being;
- Be informed and advocate for one's own mental health;
- Participate in the promotion of mental health with peers;
- Build a support network;
- Learn to recognize behaviors of concern and factors that contribute to poor mental health symptoms, and;
- Consult with College resources about concerns, seek out services, and use available resources, as needed (voluntary).

7. Continuum of Services

The College refers to [Cadre de référence sur la santé mentale étudiante](#), available on [Québec.ca](#), for the implementation of a continuum of services.

Awareness-raising, promotion, and prevention measures

The College is committed to implementing impactful actions at different levels, including mental health promotion, prevention, and awareness-raising initiatives from an intersectional perspective.

Services and intervention

The College commits to offering services, to and for students, that is responsive to needs.

8. Effective Date

This Policy comes into effect upon adoption by the Board of Directors.

9. Policy Revision

Vanier College will review and amend the Vanier College Student Mental Health Policy as required, or at least every 5 years following its adoption.

10. Related documents

- National Standard: CSA Z2003:20 Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students, 2020
- The Cawley Group Student Mental Health Audit Summary and Recommendations, 2022
- Plan d'action sur la santé mentale étudiante en enseignement supérieur 2021-2026, Gouvernement du Québec
- Plan d'action pour la réussite en enseignement supérieur 2021-2026, Gouvernement du Québec
- Cadre de référence sur la santé mentale étudiante, Gouvernement du Québec, 2022