

Student Mental Health Annual Report: 2024-2025

INSTITUTION INFORMATION

Institution: Sault College of Arts and Technology

Reporting Period: September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025

Submitted to: Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES)

Contact Person: Kevin Hemsworth, Director, Student Services & Success

1. COMMITMENT TO MENTAL HEALTH

Sault College is committed to supporting student wellness, including student mental health. We look to foster a culture of positive mental health that enhances student potential and incorporates culturally safe, inclusive, and holistic approaches to wellness. We recognize that student mental health is critical to their success academically, and are committed to supporting them through: a student-centred approach to policy and programming; a holistic view that recognizes the connectedness of mental health to other determinants of health; inclusion and access to services that meet the needs of all students; proactive programming to increase mental health literacy and reduce stigma; collaboration across the College and the acknowledgement that student mental health is a shared responsibility; an evidence-informed approach that recognizes the value of diverse knowledge systems; and finally, a commitment to continuous improvement. More can be found on these core principles in our Student Mental Health policy.

2. PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND SUPPORTS

Recognizing that student life often comes with stress, transition challenges, and mental-health pressures, Sault College offers an array of mental health and well-being supports to our students. These supports are provided out of our Student Support Centre through Counselling, the Student Health Centre, Student Accessibility Services, Student Behaviour, and Student Success.

Counselling helps students identify areas of concern and connect with resources, through:

- Free, confidential counselling for students, including one-on-one sessions with professional counsellors, short-term therapy, all in support of academic success. These services can address issues like stress, anxiety, depression, relationship problems, and academic-related pressures.
- Crisis intervention and support for complex mental health concerns (including suicide risk, trauma, substance use, and addiction)
- Programming, peer support groups, and mentoring programs that support healthy living skills and behaviours such as mental health literacy, self-advocacy, social networking and integration, and food literacy

Student Accessibility Services supports students with disabilities to succeed in their studies, including with mental health challenges, through:

- Supports for academic accommodations that work to level the playing field academically
- Providing one-on-one sessions to help students develop learning strategies and use assistive technology
- Testing supports such as private rooms, distraction-reduced environments, and other supports that can help mitigate testing anxiety and other disabilities
- Transition to College programming for students with disabilities prior to beginning of academic term to acclimatize them, set expectations, and connect them to supports
- Specialized services such as note-taking and sign-language interpretation for hearing impaired students to assist with in-class learning support

Student Behaviour leads the investigation and review of student misbehaviours, and supports student mental health through:

- Trauma-informed student behaviour policy and process
- Transparency in reporting, investigating, and decision-making, while respecting privacy and confidentiality
- Multiple methods of reporting student misbehaviour
- Restorative justice approach to behavioural outcomes
- Tracking of student misbehaviour and analysis to identify trends and support preventative awareness and outreach

Student Success offers success sessions, hallway outreach, and presents in classrooms to better connect students to services, through:

- Early identification and referral of students by faculty leads to connection to support earlier in the academic term
- Connects students with faculty to improve communication and remove barriers to success
- Sessions with students that help with planning, study skills, notetaking strategies, etc.
- Connections to counsellors and other resources to expand support network

3. PARTNERSHIPS & REFERRALS

EXTERNAL:

Sault Area Hospital Emergency Department
For any emergent wellness issues.

"Good2Talk" Ontario's Postsecondary Student Helpline
Provides free, confidential support services for post-secondary students in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Crisis Services (Sault Ste. Marie)
Offers safe, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive care to individuals during a crisis. Available by phone or in person.

Mobile Crisis Response

Provide support in low-risk situations to individuals in need who are willing to meet and speak with the team in mutually agreed-upon community locations, including Sault College.

INTERNAL

Assessment & Care Team

Ad hoc team assembled when students are identified at risk of harm. Includes representatives from counselling, Student Services, Academic Schools (Dean), and the VPAISS.

Counselling

Appointments between 8:30-4:30 Monday to Friday, including culturally appropriate counselling services for Indigenous students from one of two Indigenous Student Counsellors.

I.M. Well

Provides 24/7 mental health supports and counselling for all Sault College students, in over 240 languages. Students can call or chat with a counsellor through the mobile app.

Guard.me

Provides around the clock wellness supports for International students, including 24/7 mental health supports

4. ACTION, ACCESS, AND AWARENESS

Staffing

Our Counselling team consists of six counsellors – four full-time (including two Indigenous Counsellors), and two part-time Counsellors. With the impending retirement of one of our Indigenous Counsellors, we secured the continued resources necessary to maintain the position, undertook a search, and were able to hire an experienced Indigenous Counsellor to fill the role, starting in early August.

More Feet on the Ground

Sault College staff and faculty were encouraged to take the online More Feet on the Ground Training, designed to help recognize, respond and refer students experiencing mental health issues on campus. Counsellors followed up with in-class session for those looking for clarification or more information.

Faculty Onboarding

Student Services staff attend faculty onboarding sessions to discuss student mental health and offer strategies for new faculty to help students in distress or crisis.

Peer Supports

Peer mentoring programs provide peer support, while counsellor-led activity like the student neurodivergent group and the Building Your Coping Toolbox programming offer soft skills training and help students create social connections on campus.

Service Navigation

Facilitated information, referral, triage, and care planning services are available through Student Services associates in the Student Support Centre, by phone, email, or walk-in.

Healthy Living Wellness Breaks

Sault College faculty and students run a variety of fitness programs that are free to staff and students to join, and are intended to promote healthy, active living

Intramural Activities and Varsity Sport

Athletics provides intramural activities for students

5. DATA ANALYSIS & FEEDBACK

Sault College tracks service utilization to assess impact and solicits feedback to help with future planning.

Counselling Services:

- 381 non-disability Counselling appointments in 2024-25, dealing with academic (96), career (23), financial (12), personal (75), and mental health (167) counselling, as well as crisis (8) – a 45% increase YOY
- 5287 points of counsellor contact with students
- 302 referrals by Counsellors to internal and external partners

Health Services:

- 232 medical appointments provided in 2024-25
- 33 Students were referred to the doctor by their Counsellor

Accessible Learning:

- 484 students registered, with 160 identifying with mental health disabilities
- 1694 disability-related appointments

Student Feedback

- Student feedback is sought through inclusion on our Student Wellness Advisory Committee, as well as scheduled bi-weekly meetings between the VPAISS, the Director, Student Services & Success, and the SCSU President
- Information about students is gathered during orientation week through the First-Year student survey
- Student-led Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee meets regularly to discuss student ideas/concerns and relay to staff

6. POLICY REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Student Mental Health Policy (Approved January, 2025) will be reviewed every five years, or sooner if the Student Wellness Advisory Committee recommends changes.

The review and amendment process will include consultation with representatives of the College community, including a diverse selection of students, faculty, and staff.

7. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Sault College respects the Privacy and Confidentiality of students accessing mental health services, and ensures that in accordance with all statutory and regulatory requirements. The Policy identifies our commitment to privacy and confidentiality in Section 5.6 under Policy Statements.

8. FUTURE PLANNING

- Continued meeting of the Student Wellness Advisory Committee
- Implementation of the Canadian Campus Wellness Survey in Winter 2026
- Consideration of adopting the Okanagan Charter, committing the College to: “embed(ding) health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates; lead(ing) health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally.” (from the [Okanagan Charter website](#))
- Adding student health and safety resources to classrooms/meeting areas to assist students and staff to get health support for students
- Increasing peer-to-peer networking and opportunities for connection for students
- Engagement with local community leaders on the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Advisory Committee, which is developing a CSWB Plan. This includes Violence and Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) training opportunities in conjunction with community partners
- Continued engagement with community partners to enhance referral network