



MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION STRATEGY

CONTEXT

The York Region District School Board (YRDSB) values positive mental health and inclusion as fundamental to student well-being and achievement. Mental health can be viewed as a continuum from health to illness, where individuals can thrive and cope at all points along the continuum. Schools are ideal settings for mental health promotion, illness prevention and supportive interventions because the work of building resilience and healthy relationships can flourish in an environment where stigma is reduced and pathways to care are clear.



BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY

Building Knowledge and Capacity for staff, students and families involves developing understanding, skills, guidelines and resources that promote positive mental health and resilience for students of all abilities, social identities, linguistic backgrounds. This is particularly important for those with marginalized identities including Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ students, ELLs, students with special education needs, children and youth in care and those students in difficult economic circumstances.

ACTIONS

System

Apply a tiered approach to creating mentally healthy environments using the Aligned and Integrated Model (AIM) for school mental health and well-being

Establish a YRDSB Student Well-Being Committee to encompass and align the objectives of the four components of Well-Being (Positive Mental Health, Safe and Caring Schools, Equity and Inclusive Education and Healthy Schools) using the AIM model. The Steering Committee will help schools to enrich their SIPSAs with all four components of Well-Being through the development of a School Well-Being Reflective Tool.

A Student Mental Health Leadership Team will work alongside the Student Well-Being Steering Committee addressing the development and implementation of Student Mental Health initiatives, protocols and practices

Establish a Student Well-Being Advisory Council comprised of stakeholders that include various community members representative of: students' social identities, parents, students, trustees, the four components of well-being, union and federation partners, association representation and YRDSB senior managers

School

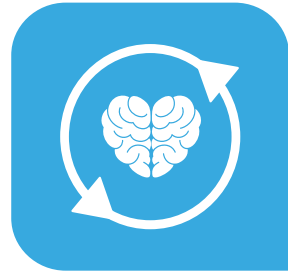
Use evidence-informed, culturally responsive practices to build collective understanding of mentally healthy environments as well as the conditions that support student mental health

Use the School Mental Health Decision Support Tool to support safe practices when engaging in school-based well-being and mental health initiatives

Continue to implement a School Well-Being Team that represents the goals under each of the four components of Well-Being. The School Well-Being Team will help to inform their school's SIPSA

Classroom

Build a collective understanding of mentally healthy environments for students of all abilities, social identities and linguistic backgrounds, with particular attention to students of marginalized identities using [Supporting Minds "The Mentally Healthy Classroom"](#) learning module (as well as additional Supporting Minds Learning Modules)



DEVELOPING MENTALLY HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

Developing Mentally Healthy Environments involves proactive, responsive and inclusive approaches to create and sustain the conditions for well-being and optimal mental health.

ACTIONS

System

Build a collective understanding of mentally healthy environments for students of all abilities, social identities, linguistic backgrounds and marginalized identities (including Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ students, ELLs, students with special education needs, children and youth in care and those students in difficult economic circumstances) using Supporting Minds "The Mentally Healthy Classroom" learning module and (as well as additional Supporting Minds Learning Modules) Leading Mentally Healthy Schools (a resource for school administrators)

Create a collective understanding of mentally healthy environments as well as the conditions that support student mental health through the use of a School Well-Being Reflective Tool that aligns with the AIM model.

Provide systematic and evidence-based professional learning for support staff and educators regarding the conditions that support a mentally healthy environment with a focus on mattering and belonging

Continue to develop Social Emotional Learning (SEL) resources which are responsive to the interconnectedness of self awareness, social identity, environment, self management, relationship skills and responsible decision making

School

Use the School Well-Being Reflective Tool that aligns with the AIM model to inform SIPSAs and promote student mental health

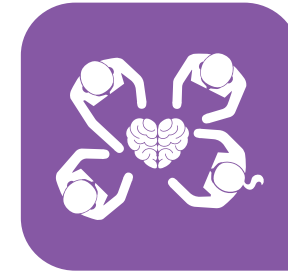
Participate in professional learning provided by [Supporting Minds "The Mentally Healthy Classroom"](#) learning module (as well as additional Supporting Minds Learning modules and Leading Mentally Healthy Schools)

Align the Healthy Schools Action Plan with comprehensive whole-school mental health promotion

Classroom

Create learning environments (social, physical, emotional, cognitive), foster relationships and use evidence-informed resources to promote inclusion, well-being and mental health

Build and apply knowledge of student mental health promotion through the use of [SMH ASSIST's "Everyday Mental Health Practices"](#)



REDUCING STIGMA

Reducing Stigma involves acknowledging that physical health and mental health are equally important to overall health and well-being. By promoting Mentally Healthy environments we will help reduce Stigma through challenging existing attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours, and behaviours.

ACTIONS

System

Use [Supporting Minds "The Mentally Healthy Classroom"](#) learning module (as well as additional Supporting Minds Modules) to build a collective understanding of mentally healthy environments for students of all abilities, social identities, linguistic backgrounds and marginalized identities, including Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ students, ELLs, students with special education needs, children and youth in care and those students in difficult economic circumstances

The "Mentally Healthy Classroom" module discusses the dual continuum of mental health and the barriers created by stigma

Collaborate with York Region Public Health Nurses in the development and implementation of a student-led, board wide mental health awareness and stigma reduction program (grade 7-12). Students will be leading the program with the support of caring adults in their schools. The program will align with the resources developed jointly by the [Registered Nurses Association of Ontario](#) and School Mental Health ASSIST

Implement a monthly student mental health newsletter for parents and staff, including tips on how to promote student mental health and reduce stigma

School

Collaborate with students, families, staff members and community partners to plan, implement and model strategies that increase awareness and reduce stigma for all identities and experiences represented on the mental health and addiction continuums

Ensure interdepartmental (i.e. Student Services, Student Success, Guidance) communication and coordination for a comprehensive approach to stigma reduction

Develop a communication and recruitment process whereby student leaders can join their School's Student Leadership Mental Health Stigma Reduction team

Develop a Staff / Caring adult induction program to support in implementing the school's Student Leadership Mental Health Stigma Reduction team

Encourage school staff to participate in the week long acknowledgement of Children's Mental Health Awareness Week using board developed activities for the classroom

Classroom

Through the use of their school's Student Leadership Mental Health Stigma Reduction team, engage students in learning about how stigma can hurt all people especially those struggling with mental health and addiction difficulties

Engage students in understanding that physical health and mental health are equally important to overall health and well-being

Engage students in the stigma specific discussion within the Health And Physical Education Curriculum (Healthy Living) to better understand the impact of stigma

Engage students in classroom discussion about stigma through the use of the evidence-informed tools available through ["Bell Let's Talk"](#)



CREATING COLLABORATIVE CARE PATHWAYS

Creating Collaborative Care Pathways engages all stakeholders in an inclusive community that provides clear access to, through and from mental health and addiction supports and services.

ACTIONS

System

Create and implement a Student Mental Health Response Guideline that outlines, for the board, schools and families, the professional supports that are available for students (provided by Regulated Mental Health professionals such as Psychology and Social Work), the services that are available for students and the related referral processes

Create and implement a Student Suicide Intervention Protocol that outlines, for the board, schools and families, the process for intervening with students who have thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviours. The Suicide Intervention Guideline will clearly identify the steps involved when supporting a student with suicidal thoughts/behaviours including responsibilities of administrators, staff, student and parent / guardian. The Guideline will align with the LivingWorks Education models for intervention (ASSIST) and suicide awareness (safeTALK)

Refine and implement a Student Mental Health Crisis Response Guideline. The Student Mental Health Crisis Response Guideline will clearly outline the types of incidents that may warrant a crisis response, members who comprise the Crisis Response Team, the process involved for accessing the Crisis Response Team, communication considerations, types of response services provided, as well as follow up and debrief

Develop an online application process for interested Community Mental Health partnerships to improve access to and screening of diverse stakeholders/agencies wishing to deliver responsive and differentiated mental health, substance misuse and addiction services in schools with an inclusive and anti-oppressive lens. The process will align with the Ministry Of Education's Policy and Program Memorandum regarding partnership development

List approved Student Mental Health Partnerships on the YRDSB website

Review partnerships through a YRDSB Collaborative Relationship For Extended Services Committee comprised of the Mental Health Lead, school board stakeholders from various employee groups, unions, federations and management

Strengthen working relationships and protocols with community partners so that school based mental health activities align with anti-oppressive practices and the School Mental Health Decision Support Tool

School

Respond to the mental health and addiction needs of all students of all social identities (including Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ students, ELLs, students with special education needs, children and youth in care and those students in difficult economic circumstances) by engaging the appropriate and culturally relevant school, district and community partnership supports and resources (e.g., In-School Team, Interdisciplinary Team, Student Success, COMPASS, MHAN Nurse, Addiction Counsellors)

Communicate the Mental Health Response Guidelines, Suicide Intervention Guidelines and Mental Health Crisis Response Guidelines to staff via a staff meeting presentation and consistent reminders via internal communications

The CRES Committee (Collaborative Relationships with External Services) will track and monitor the delivery of Community Mental Health Partnership Agreement activities through the board by school location.

Track and monitor the delivery of mental health services delivered by school social workers and school psychology staff, the number of suicide interventions and the number and type of mental health crisis responses. Use the data to refine service delivery by region/ community

Classroom

Be responsive to student learning needs by accessing and utilizing multiple sources of information available about students (e.g., IEP, Growth Plan, Transition Plan, IAP and Safety Plan)

RESOURCES

Aligning resources effectively, purposefully and efficiently to focus on what matters most is a key leadership function. Resources have been identified to support the implementation of the Mental Health and Addiction Strategy.

They are organized into categories:

- Core Resources
- Parent/Guardian/Family Resources
- Supporting Specialized Populations Resources
- Substance Misuse and Abuse