

Student Mental Health Annual Report (2025-2026)

Institution Name: Conestoga College

Reporting Period: January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025

Date of Submission: January 30, 2026

Submitted to: Board of Governors and Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security

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Policy Overview

Policy Title: Student Mental Health Policy

Date of Last Review: January 29, 2025

Next Scheduled Review: January 1, 2030

Link to Public Policy Page: [Student Mental Health Policy](#)

Summary of Policy Objectives:

Conestoga College is committed to embedding mental health into all aspects of the campus culture to support student success and well-being, and ensure students have access to a wide variety of supports and resources as outlined in the Student Mental Health Policy. The policy promotes equitable, culturally responsive, and accessible supports through early intervention, individualized assistance, and centralized access. Services include counselling, health care, Indigenous supports, and partnerships with community providers. By reducing stigma and fostering inclusion, the College creates a safe, supportive environment that enables students to thrive academically and personally.

Programs, Services, and Supports

Category	Description	Delivery Method	Target Population	Accessibility Notes
Clinical Supports	Student Health & Wellness provides integrated clinical supports. Services include counselling by registered counsellors and health care from nurse practitioners and nurses.	In-person, virtual and telephone appointments	Full and part-time students	Counselling services offers immediate access as students can often book same-day appointments. The Medical Clinic provides access to required immunizations for academic placements. Nurse practitioners can service uninsured international students to increase access to on campus supports.

Peer Support Programs	<p>Peer Wellness Services offers a welcoming, low-barrier environment called the Breathing Space. This space is staffed by trained student Peer Wellness Navigators (PWN). The PWNs provide students supportive listening, resource connection and ensure the environment promotes wellness through daily facilitated wellness activities.</p>	In person at the Doon campus	All students attending the Doon campus	The Breathing Space is a physically accessible space that supports diversity and inclusion.
Student Wellness Workshops	<p>Student Health & Wellness offers a range of interactive wellness workshops focused on suicide prevention, resilience, meditation and other health specific topics. Some workshops are facilitated by counsellors and others are led by our student Peer Wellness Navigators or co-facilitated with other Student Success staff.</p>	In person and virtually depending on the workshop.	Some workshops are for targeted student groups like student leaders, students in specific academic programs and others are for any student who attends the Breathing Space for daily wellness activities at the Doon campus.	Workshops are developed based on trends noted in counselling services and focus on intentional prevention offerings. These are often delivered in collaboration with other specific Student Success areas to increase reach and relevance.
Self-Guided Resources	<p>Conestoga 101 is a required self-directed course that all new students must complete. It focuses on introducing students to the supports, services and opportunities at the college.</p> <p>Promotion of Good2Talk and 988 suicide hotline is</p>	<p>Online module</p> <p>Online resources linked to our centralized</p>	<p>New students</p> <p>All students</p>	<p>Mandatory module within student's course shell.</p> <p>The Student Success Portal is the centralized platform with</p>

	<p>promoted through physical resources within service areas and common locations on campus. There is also a variety of self-guided resources available on the Student Success Portal to support health and wellness.</p>	<p>student platform, Student Success Portal</p>		<p>resources, and links to services and supports. All registered students have access to the platform making resources and information easy to locate.</p>
Care Team	<p>The team includes members across the college who have experiences in student support, wellness and community safety. The team ensures early identification and elevated levels of support for students in need.</p>	<p>Referrals are made through an open online referral form. A Care Team case manager connects with students via email, in person, virtually and/or telephone.</p>	All students	<p>Referrals to the Care Team are promoted through digital signage, faculty/staff presentations, on our website and centralized Student Success Portal. The referral form is open to all members of the college and is accessed via the website and Student Success Portal.</p>
Mental Health Coordinator	<p>The Mental Health Coordinator role is within our Student Health & Wellness services and triages students presenting to the Medical Clinic with mental health concerns. The Mental Health Coordinator completes risk assessments for students presenting in distress and is a single point of contact for local hospitals when students are being discharged and need to be connected to Conestoga resources.</p>	<p>In person, virtual and telephone appointments</p>	Full and part-time students	<p>Collaborates with Care Team case managers; meets regularly with hospital staff, increases immediate access to supports for students in need.</p>
Residence Programming	<p>Campus Living Centre offers workshops and events that promote</p>			

	healthy habits, self-care, and overall well-being for students living in residence. Programming includes orientation to college resources, and activities designed to help students build life skills and connect with on and off campus resources.	In person within the residence	Students living in the residence	Direct reach out to students living in residence via newsletters and in-person events held within the residence.
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Narrative Summary:

To strengthen student mental health supports, the College introduced several new and expanded initiatives this year in the following areas:

Foundational Strategy:

A cross-functional working group advanced development of foundational pillars for the College's five-year Student Success Mental Health Strategy, which will guide future planning and service delivery across key areas.

Physical Spaces to Support Student Wellness:

At the Doon campus, we opened a new Student Health & Wellness office, co-locating counselling and medical services in a centralized, calming environment. This integrated model is designed to reduce stigma and improve accessibility for students seeking care.

A new location for The Breathing Space, our student wellness lounge, was launched adjacent to the Student Health & Wellness office. In The Breathing Space, student Peer Wellness Navigators provide supportive listening, resource navigation and facilitate daily wellness activities. The lounge offers distinct zones for individual relaxation, small group socialization and guided wellness activities, creating a welcoming environment for all students.

Enhanced Roles and Responsibilities to Support Student Wellness:

Additionally, the creation of the Mental Health Coordinator was a new role in 2024. Since its creation the role continues to adapt to student needs and bridge the gap/build relationships with community resources. The Mental Health Coordinator role has strengthened partnerships with local hospitals to support smooth transitions for students requiring inpatient care. The coordinator works closely with college and community stakeholders to deliver a coordinated approach for students with complex needs and provides risk assessments and timely intervention when students present in distress, ensuring appropriate responses based on level of risk.

Challenges:

The wide geographic distribution of where students reside and commute from, creates barriers to building holistic community partnerships and ensuring consistent access to local mental health resources. International students continue to face difficulties related to insurance coverage for pre-existing conditions and prescription costs. In some communities, the lack of direct billing requires students to pay upfront, creating significant financial strain. The College continues to work

with the insurance provider, through the student government to increase direct billing and establish additional relationships with mental health and wellness support services in and around the campuses where Conestoga students live and study.

The College is committed to continuously monitoring patterns in student engagement with support services. As student demographics evolve, we see distinct differences in how subsets of student populations access and utilize resources. These shifts underscore the need for ongoing analysis to ensure our services remain responsive, culturally informed and, and equitable.

Utilization and Impact Metrics

Metric	Value	Notes
Number of unique students accessing mental health services	1,663	<p>Breakdown of total includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique students attending counselling appointments = 833 • Unique students access medical services for mental health = 192 • Unique students seen by Mental Health Coordinator = 127 • Number of proactive Care team outreach due to reported mental health concerns = 511
Average wait time for clinical appointments	0-7 days	<p>Same day or next day appointments are the average wait time to access a counselling appointment. Students requesting a specific appointment type (a particular counsellor or campus location) may experience a bit longer of a wait.</p> <p>Nurse Practitioner appointments typically have a wait time of 1-7 + days depending on time of semester.</p>
Engagement in self-guided resources	15,921 clicks on the Student Success Portal's wellness pages	<p>Breakdown of clicks on SSP pages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling page = 4,613 • Medical Clinic = 7,907 • Peer Mental Wellness = 1,067 • Wellness & Health Promotion = 2,334 <p>The College's Student Success Health & Wellness webpage</p>

	13,673 clicks on the College's Health & Wellness webpage Average Completion rate for Conestoga 101 = 84%	provides links to mental health resources (Good2Talk, emergency resources) and information about the College's mental health services. Completion rates of Conestoga 101 by term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter 2025 = 87% • Spring 2025 = 76% • Fall 2025 = 90%
Student workshop attendance	138 unique students participated	This value reflects attendance at planned workshops. It does not include the various health promotion resource booths (i.e., Bell Let's Talk Day, Sexual Health resources, healthy nutrition etc.). Breakdown of total value includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Talk Training = 57 • Understanding Culture Shock and Cultural Adaption = 39 • Thrive Series = 25 • Supporting Sleep and Overall Mental Health as a Student with ADHD = 14 • Laughter Yoga = 3
Peer support engagement	1,105	This value reflects the number of students who utilized the Peer Wellness Services in the Breathing Space and who participated in peer-led wellness events in the space (1,105 total students attending the space, 108 students participated in peer led wellness events). The Breathing Space relocated to a newly renovated central location at the main Doon campus. Of the 1,105 students, 504 accessed the new space since September 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 228 were first-time users • 276 were returning users
Satisfaction rating from the Ontario College Student Experience Survey	65% of students using a core	Satisfaction rating for 2024-2025:

	mental health support indicated the service usually/always met their expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services = 65% (4, 560 respondents) • Medical Clinic = 64% (4, 970 respondents) • Accessible Learning = 67% (4, 181 respondents)
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Policy Implementation and Effectiveness

A centralized, visually appealing platform for the Student Mental Health Policy was launched in the summer of 2025. To increase student awareness, promotional initiatives began during the summer and fall and will continue in subsequent years. These efforts included social media campaigns, digital signage, and a start of semester email sent directly to students. The email highlighted the Student Mental Health Policy and provided a link to the student portal, where all related college resources and professional wellness supports are available.

To guide long-term planning, a dedicated working group was established to integrate student feedback and best-practice research into the development of the Student Mental Health Strategy. This strategy outlines five key pillars that will shape operational priorities over the next five years: (1) Access & Service Provision, (2) Mental Health Literacy & Capacity Building, (3) Responding to Mental Health Emergencies, (4) Student-Centered Physical Spaces that Promote Wellbeing, and (5) Inclusive, Supportive & Encouraging Campus Community

Effectiveness Assessment:

Conestoga remains committed to embedding mental health and well-being into the fabric of campus life. Grounded in student voice and informed by internal data, staff consultations, national standards and best-practice post-secondary frameworks, the College has developed a multi-phase Student Success Mental Health Strategy. Phase One focused on creating a framework to guide initiatives across the five core pillars.

In March 2025, the College completed the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey. Analysis of the results is currently underway, and insights will inform action plans during Phase Two of the strategy.

Equity Considerations:

Conestoga's diverse student population is a defining strength, and equity remains central to our mental health approach. The Student Mental Health Policy commits to cultural competency training for staff, ongoing relationships with community partners, including faith leaders, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, and Elders, and hiring practices that reflect the diversity of our student body. The Student Success Mental Health Strategy reinforces this commitment through its equity and inclusion pillar, ensuring all initiatives support equity-deserving groups and foster inclusive campus environments.

Challenges and Opportunities

Barriers Identified:

Our student demographic is increasingly diverse, and there is no longer a “traditional” student profile. Some learners face basic needs challenges, while others manage complex mental and

physical health concerns. This complexity often shifts services toward reactive response rather than proactive prevention.

Student engagement patterns have also changed. Many students balance academics with work and family responsibilities and do not engage with services in the same way as in previous years. This requires rethinking outreach and designing flexible, accessible supports that meet students where they are.

Opportunities for Improvement:

Continuous integration of student feedback will remain central to our approach, helping to identify emerging themes and guiding initiatives that strengthen the foundational pillars of the Student Success Mental Health Strategy. One key opportunity is to enhance the orientation experience and improve communication of available supports, ensuring students can easily access information when needed.

Another opportunity is building staff capacity through targeted training, equipping employees with the knowledge and confidence to recognize signs of distress, respond effectively, and support students at risk of suicide or experiencing mental health challenges.

We also see significant value in expanding mental health literacy among students, including increasing awareness, reducing help-seeking stigma, and fostering coping skills. These efforts align closely with the College's Indigenous Success Strategy, with a particular focus on reducing barriers and stigma for Indigenous learners.

Additionally, opportunities exist to leverage partnerships with community agencies, and hospitals. These collaborations will help create a more integrated and responsive mental health framework that meets the evolving needs of our students.

Future Plans

Planned Enhancements:

The Student Success Mental Health Strategy aligns with a five-year roadmap that integrates with other institutional priorities, including the Indigenous Success Strategy. Phase one is complete, having focused on data collection from students, staff, institutional surveys, as well as developing a guiding framework with five key pillars. Programming and service delivery will evolve as we incorporate feedback into action plans designed to achieve the strategy's specific goals.

The policy will be updated in 2030, unless earlier changes are necessary.

Timeline for Implementation:

During Phase Two (2025-2027) the College will develop specific, measurable action plans aligned with the five pillars, establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress, and integrate feedback from the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey and other data sources into program and service design. In Phase Three (2027-2028), the College will create an evaluation and reporting framework with semesterly and annual check-ins. Finally, in Phase Four (2028-2029), a formal report on the outcomes of Phases Two and Three will be produced, along with a process for identifying priorities for the next strategic cycle based on evidence and student input.

Declaration

I confirm that this report complies with the requirements outlined in the Minister's Directive on Student Mental Health and reflects the institution's commitment to supporting student well-being.

Signature: 

Name & Title: Trish Weigel Green, Vice President, Students and Registrar's Office

Date: January 30, 2026