

# Dawson

## Dawson College Mental Health Policy

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## Preamble

The *Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur* (MES) has affirmed its commitment to supporting the CEGEP network in implementing measures that support well-being and the development of flourishing mental health among members of the student population through the Student Mental Health Action Plan (*Plan d'action sur la santé mentale étudiante en enseignement supérieur* or *PASME* for short).

## 1. General Principles

Dawson College, hereafter referred to as the College, recognizes that mental health is an essential component of student and employee retention and success. Students have the right to an educational environment that enables them to cultivate positive mental health. Similarly, the College recognizes its employees have the right to work in an environment that supports their psychological well-being.

The entire college community shares responsibility for creating and maintaining a healthy climate through an ecosystemic approach.

Members of the community in a position to do so will play a key role in implementing and supporting various organizational practices that are known to have a positive impact on well-being.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this institutional policy is to demonstrate Dawson College's commitment to ensuring a healthy, safe, and caring environment that is conducive to thriving mental health for all the members of the College community. It recognizes the importance of community-wide collaboration in supporting mental health, which involves the participation and commitment of all stakeholders, through both personal and collective accountability.

This policy outlines the broad directions that will foster well-being and positive mental health for all students and employees. Thus, in order to support the mental health of the Dawson community, the College will:

- offer students an environment that supports perseverance and academic success through the implementation of measures that promote well-being and mental health, while respecting the diversity of needs;
- establish conditions conducive to the empowerment of all stakeholders with respect to mental health, such as awareness campaigns, workshops and psychological interventions;
- participate in the improvement of the well-being and mental health of students;
- cultivate a work environment that is beneficial for the psychological welfare of its employees through awareness campaigns and workshops on well-being and other related topics; promotion of the Employee Assistance program; offerings of specialized training like *agir en sentinelle* for suicide prevention; and flexible work arrangements (in accordance with established policies and the approval of the supervisor);
- ensure that its campus is an environment that supports the development of all people, in particular marginalized populations through principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.

### 3. Definitions

**College community:** Consists of all students and employees.

**Ecosystem-based approach:** An individual's behavior is seen as a consequence of interactions and interdependencies over time between said individual and the different systems in which they evolve. The individual, with their characteristics, psychosocial competences and life habits, interacts with their living environment, greater systems, and the global context.

**Employee:** Permanent, non-permanent or occasional employee, remunerated or otherwise, in any category of employment.

**Harm reduction:** An approach that focuses on reducing the negative consequences of self-harming behaviours.

**Mental health:** A state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being that enables people to cope with the normal stresses of life, to work productively and fruitfully, and to contribute to their communities.

**Person with special needs:** Any person working or studying at Dawson College with a disability (hearing, visual, motor, or organic impairments, learning disabilities, neurological and/or mental health disorders).

**Positive mental health:** A concept that focuses on the positive mental aspects of individuals and their potential for growth, such as their strengths and abilities, happiness, and qualities (sense of responsibility, courage, creativity, and perseverance).

**Student:** Any person enrolled in a program, course, or training activity organized by the College.

### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

Because mental health is influenced by many factors, all stakeholders at Dawson College are collectively committed to helping create an environment that supports thriving mental health. Here are their roles and responsibilities.

#### Community Members

- Familiarize yourself with available services and, as needed and when appropriate, consult with a mental health resource to receive support.
- Be aware of this policy and the roles and responsibilities that go with it.
- Collaborate in creating and maintaining the conditions that promote positive mental health, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Be a positive role model by caring for one's own mental health.

#### Employees

- Participate and maintain a welcoming, healthy, safe, caring, and inclusive environment at the College.
- Support the needs of marginalized populations and those with special needs.

- As needed, and when able, promote psychosocial services and refer students to appropriate resources.
- Attend proposed mental health training courses.

#### Director General

- Ensure the application of this policy.
- Allocate the human, financial and material resources required to implement the action plan.

#### Directors of Human Resources and Student Services

- Ensure the implementation and promotion of this policy to the community.
- Ensure that this policy is consistent with, and complementary to, other College policies, including those aimed at preventing and addressing sexual violence in higher education, discrimination, harassment, and abuse of power.
- Ensure that mental health support, accompaniment, education, promotion, and prevention services are in place, and that information about these services is readily accessible.
- Encourage interdisciplinary and inter-network collaborations with community organizations to integrate them as additional resources for students and employees, as well as mental health promotion activities, where appropriate.

#### Management Team

- Ensure that this policy's principles are applied to their areas of responsibility and that information about support services is accessible.
- Assist the Dawson community in balancing school, work, and family life by considering accommodations, when possible, that may help allow for the combination of these different spheres of life.
- Support initiatives that promote individual involvement and social participation at Dawson College or in the surrounding community.
- Ensure the presence of representatives of marginalized and special needs populations on decision-making committees.

#### Student Union

- Participate in the dissemination of information on mental health resources available inside and outside the College and guide the student community to them.
- Publicize mental health awareness, promotion and prevention activities.
- Promote a positive school climate that is inclusive, safe, caring, open, respectful, and free of violence and bullying.
- Ensure that the diversity of student voices is represented, including those of members of special needs and marginalized populations.

## 5. Institutional Committee

Dawson College is committed to establishing a permanent committee addressing mental health within its community. This group will include representatives of management, faculty, professionals, and support staff, as well as members of the student body. Its mandate will be to:

- Plan actions to foster the positive mental health of the Dawson community, including the development and implementation of the promotion, prevention, awareness and training activities in mental health;
- Make recommendations to senior management in order to improve the support offered to the College community;
- Conduct an annual assessment of the actions carried out by the committee to create a report for the Director General and the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur;
- Evaluate the implementation of this policy.

This committee is composed of the following members:

- Coordinator of Human Resources (co-chair), or delegate
- Coordinator of Student Services (co-chair), or delegate
- Two representatives from Counselling Services (one Psychologist and one Social Worker)
- Representative from Health Services (Nurse)
- Representative of the student body, appointed by the DSU
- Member of the faculty, appointed by the DTU
- Member of the professional staff, appointed by the ADP
- Member of the support staff, appointed by the DSSU
- Member of the management personnel, appointed by the ACCQ
- Other members as deemed necessary by the committee

## 6. Awareness, Promotion and Prevention Measures

Dawson College shall ensure that it implements actions in the area of mental health awareness, promotion and prevention, in accordance with the needs of the College community. These actions may focus on mental health, harm reduction, healthy lifestyle habits or any other relevant theme related to the various determinants of mental health.

### Training measures

Mental health training is available to the entire Dawson College community and focuses on relevant current topics. Community members are encouraged to register for training opportunities promoted through the various platforms. Additionally, specific workshops are given to subgroups like sports teams, student clubs, student leaders and other groups, as needed or as requested.

## 7. Services and Intervention

Dawson College has mechanisms in place for receiving and processing requests for support and makes them known to the Dawson community. In order to provide appropriate support for students, an assessment service has been implemented to evaluate needs in order to refer them to appropriate resources.

### Assessment of impact

Dawson College will assess the impact of its actions, guided by this policy, on the mental health of its community. A number of assessment tools, including (but not limited to) surveys, focus groups and data collected from use of services, can be used to measure the impact of positive mental health initiatives.

For example, the following elements may be considered in terms of whether they are in place, the degree to which they are implemented, and their impact on the College community:

- Inclusion of student and employees in committees involved in decision making;
- Assessment of various psychosocial factors, like competencies, workload, inclusion, recognition, etc.;
- Consideration of documents (reports, studies, etc.) provided by various organizations including student associations. Documents of particular interest are studies that relate to mental health in higher education;
- Collaboration and complementarity between the various professional resources within the Dawson community;
- Collaboration with external partners such as the health and social services network and community organizations.

The data collected makes it possible to assess the implementation of the policy, to analyze the obstacles encountered and to make the necessary changes. A yearly report summarizing actions undertaken by the college and their impact will be submitted to the Director General and forwarded to the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur.

## 8. Dissemination of the Policy

The policy is accessible to all the community members via the Dawson College website. In addition, the policy is promoted regularly via various methods.

## 9. Implementation

This mental health policy comes into effect upon adoption by the Board of Governors.

## 10. Policy Review and Evaluation Mechanism

The institutional committee will be responsible for reviewing the policy in light of changing practices. The policy will be reviewed when necessary or at a minimum of every 5 years.

This policy is based on a draft document developed by the *Fédération des cégeps* and influenced by the mental health policies from Cégep de l'Outaouais, Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Cégep de Thetford. These materials were instrumental in assisting Dawson College to formulate its policy.