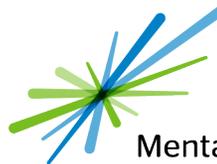


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la santé mentale  
du Canada

# Dialogue in a Box

How to Host a Dialogue and  
Shape Canada's Post-  
Secondary Mental Health  
Standard

Mental Health Commission of Canada

[mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://mentalhealthcommission.ca)

# Your Voice Matters:

## A Dialogue about Student Mental Health



Join the Mental Health Commission of Canada in shaping a voluntary Standard that will help post-secondary institutions promote and support student mental health, on and off campus. This guide has everything you need to host a successful dialogue and contribute your thoughts and ideas to that process.

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*Ce document est disponible en français.*

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# Your Perspective Matters

Thank you for taking an important step in shaping the future of post-secondary students in Canada.

## What's inside

This guide gives you a complete overview of how to host a dialogue on post-secondary student mental health to inform the development of a Standard for psychological health and safety of post-secondary students. This toolkit provides advice on what to do before, during, and after your meeting. You'll find resources to help you spread the word about your meeting, tips on how to talk about student mental health, forms to submit your group's thoughts and ideas to the CSA Group's technical committee, and more.



The Mental Health Commission of Canada, in collaboration with the CSA Group, gratefully acknowledges the funding support of Bell Let's Talk, The Rossy Foundation, the RBC Foundation, and Health Canada in developing the Standard for the Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students.

# Why a Standard?

Two out of three post-secondary students in Canada say stress negatively affects their studies. Half have used campus mental health services – 10 per cent in crisis situations – and more than a quarter have seriously considered suicide.

These are just a few reasons why taking an evidence-informed approach to promoting and supporting students’ psychological health and safety is essential. Having a shared cross-country framework will help students, institutions, service providers, staff, faculty, and other key partners work more easily to

- raise awareness and decrease stigma around mental health problems and illnesses
- increase access to student supports, on and off campus
- promote life skills students can use at school, work, and in daily life
- provide healthier and safer institutional environments
- improve opportunities for student success.

## Why this “dialogue in a box”?

Public input is a big part of developing any Standard. Hosting a dialogue in your community is also your opportunity to get your views and ideas heard. By doing so, you can help

- identify what’s important to students, staff, faculty, service providers, caregivers, and others to improve students’ educational experiences
- share current resources and examine supports and practices that are working well to promote and support student mental health
- contribute solutions that make difference in students’ lives.

### Built-In Flexibility

The Standard will be a voluntary framework to help institutions establish policies, programs, and processes to support and promote student mental health. Institutions will have the flexibility to tailor it to their own needs and circumstances.

See our [FAQ](#) on our web page for more information on the project.

### Think outside the box!

While this is a “dialogue in a box” toolkit, we encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Innovative, blue-sky ideas from as many perspectives as possible will help us build a truly inclusive Standard that supports and promotes student mental health across the country.

### Privacy Statement

We’re interested in your ideas – not your identity. Your input and feedback in this dialogue process will not be associated with any identifiable information about you or anyone involved.

## The more diversity, the better

We want to hear from all communities and groups, including

- post-secondary students and associations, groups, societies, and unions
- post-secondary institutions, faculty, and staff groups (including unions)
- on and off-campus student service and mental health service providers
- government ministries and government-funded agencies
- campus communities
- 2SLGBTQ+ communities
- ethnocultural and racialized communities
- First Nations communities
- Métis communities
- Inuit communities
- people living with invisible and visible disabilities
- francophone communities
- immigrant and refugee communities
- international students
- communities experiencing multiple intersecting forms of marginalization.

## Who is writing the Standard and how?

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is working with standards development experts at CSA Group to develop the Standard. CSA Group's mission is to enhance the lives of Canadians by advancing standards that improve safety, health, the environment, and economic efficiency. CSA Group is accredited in Canada by the Standards Council of Canada and in the U.S. by the American National Standards Institute. Learn more about the organization at [csagroup.org](https://www.csagroup.org).

CSA Group has brought together a Technical Committee of experts representing a diverse set of affected stakeholders. This committee is responsible for drafting the technical content of the new Standard. To learn more about the ongoing development of the Standard and the technical committee, visit the CSA Group website and join [CSA Communities](#).

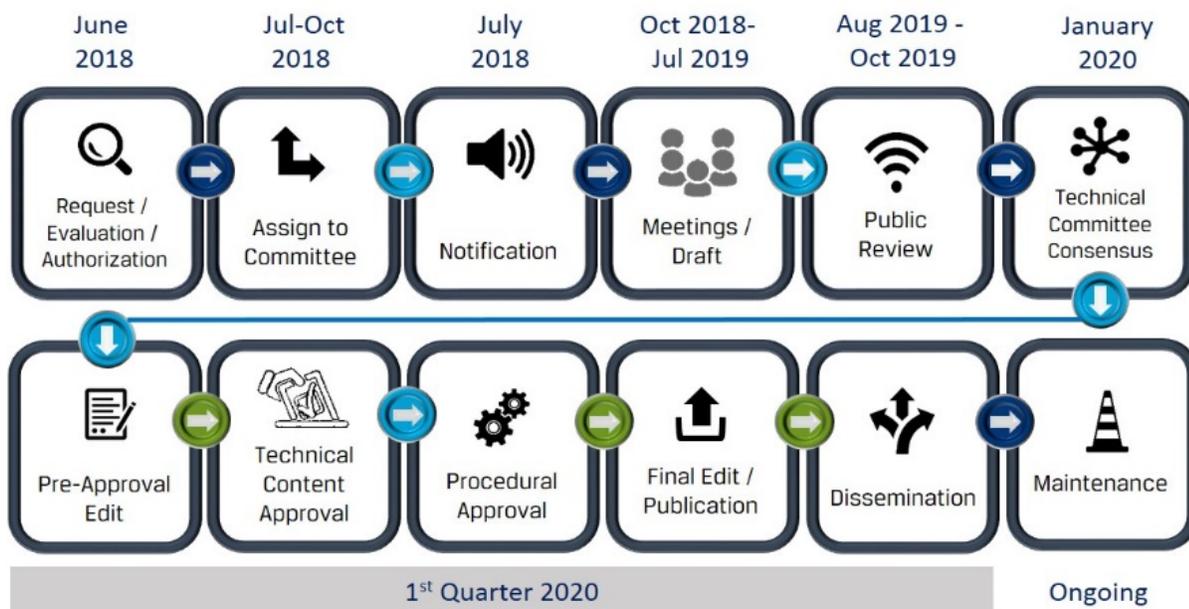
## What's the process?

The Standard project started in mid-2018, and the Technical Committee began development in the fall that same year. The committee will continue its work throughout 2019. Together with the MHCC, it will then gather feedback from dialogues like yours until May 31<sup>st</sup> 2019 – and will carefully review all the input it receives.

Learn more about the project

See our [Executive Summary](#) on our web page.

Toward the end of summer 2019, a draft version of the Standard in both official languages will be made available for public input through [CSA Communities](#). The draft will be available for at least two months, so all Canadians and other interested parties can review and comment. The final Standard will be published in early 2020.



## Who else is involved?

As the project lead, the MHCC has engaged many organizations to help with this project. These include Colleges and Institutes Canada, Universities Canada, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, and the Canadian Mental Health Association as advisors. For a complete list of partners, visit the project [website](#) or email us at [studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca).

## About the Mental Health Commission of Canada

The MHCC brings together key partners from across the country to develop and implement programs and policies that support mental health and wellness. While our initiatives are led by experts with wide-ranging perspectives and experience, we prioritize input from persons with lived experience of mental illness and their families. Learn more about the MHCC at [mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://mentalhealthcommission.ca).

# Before the Dialogue

Before hosting your dialogue, you'll need to make some decisions and do some prep work. Here are some things to think about as you plan your meeting.



## Step 1. Decide what kind of meeting to have

### *Setting the size*

The number of people you invite can make a big difference to how much planning you need to do and what the flow of your discussion will be. While you'll find a small group of five to 10 people easier to work with, a larger group can offer more perspectives.

### *Setting the length*

The longer the dialogue, the greater opportunity for people to share. Aim for three hours, but really a successful dialogue can occur during a one hour meeting.

### DISCUSSION TIP!

To make sure everyone gets a chance to contribute, cap each event at 50 participants.

### *Choosing who to invite*

If you're holding a larger, more formal meeting, you'll probably want to open it to everyone. If you're a student, you could either invite a select group of friends or organize a bigger meeting with your classmates. You decide: anyone with something to say about student mental health can be part of your dialogue.

It's also a good idea to have a support person on hand who can help deal with emergency situations or problematic behaviour. The campus mental health centre or peer-counselling service can be great resources.

Recommended list of campus professionals:

- Counsellors
- Indigenous Elders
- Director of Student Services
- Residence advisors, etc.

### *Picking a date*

For large meetings, pick a date far enough ahead that you have time to plan. Also, the more notice you give potential attendees, the better turnout you'll get. For small groups, coordinate with your invited participants to find a date that works for everyone.

### *Finding a venue*

Campus common rooms and classrooms are great options. They're often available at no cost to students and faculty or, for a small fee, to unaffiliated groups. Libraries and community centres also frequently have spaces available.

## **Step 2. Promote your meeting**

There are lots of ways to spread the word about your meeting:

- Email – A good option for targeting specific groups and presenting your dialogue with a personal touch.

#### Also in the box

##### **SAMPLE EMAILS**

Not sure what to write? Use our [sample invitation](#) and reminder emails to get started. Customize as needed.



#### Also in the box

##### **DIALOGUE CHECKLIST**

Use our [Hosting a Successful Dialogue checklist](#) to make sure your plan has covered all the bases.



- Online event planning – An online event-planning service like Eventbrite is an easy way to manage registration.
- Posters – A time-tested way to get the word out about your event.
- Social media – Create a Facebook event and cross-promote on Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. Tag us, and we'll promote your event on our channels, too!



[@MHCC\\_](https://twitter.com/MHCC_)
[f/theMHCC](https://www.facebook.com/theMHCC)
[in/Mental Health Commission of Canada](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Mental-Health-Commission-of-Canada)  
[@theMHCC](https://www.instagram.com/theMHCC)
[▶/1MHCC](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1MHCC)

### *Traditional media channels*

If you're holding a larger event, consider contacting a campus or community newspaper, radio station, and student community websites to raise awareness about the project and encourage people to attend.

**Note:** it's better not to invite media to the event itself to protect the confidentiality and sense of safety of participants. As well, some people may not feel comfortable speaking freely if members of the media are present.

### **Step 3. Set the agenda**

For a small-group gathering, you won't likely need a formal agenda – although the framework (below) might help you keep your dialogue on track. For larger groups, feel free to customize our proposed agenda to suit your needs.

#### *Proposed agenda*

1. Welcome and presentation of safer space guidelines  
Thank participants for coming and set the ground rules for making sure everyone feels safe to share their thoughts and experiences.
2. Warm-up activity  
Do a warm-up activity to help participants get comfortable.

### 3. Introduction and purpose of the dialogue

Use and/or modify the [PowerPoint presentation](#) on our web page to provide some background.

### 4. Discussion/roundtable check-ins

Hold your dialogue. How you structure the discussion will depend on how much time you have and the size of your group. If you are hosting a large group and decide to break into smaller groups to discuss some or all of the main questions, bring them back together after each session to share their key points.

### 5. Wrap-up and final remarks

Summarize the results of the discussion and thank everyone for participating. Remind them of the importance of self-care after what may have been a difficult discussion – and reach out if they need support.

#### TIMING TIP!

Allow enough time at each stage for a full discussion without losing focus. We recommend at least three hours for your meeting, but these can go as long as a full day.

## Running the Dialogue



On the day of your meeting, you'll have lots to think about. We've put together some suggestions and tips to help your day go smoothly and make sure your dialogue is a success.

## Step 1. Prepare your venue

1. Arrive early enough to get the room set up before participants arrive.
2. Arrange seating and tables according to your plans for the day:
  - If your group is small, put chairs in a circle.
  - If you plan to break into smaller discussion groups, set up chairs around tables for each group. Make sure you have the right audio-visual equipment to facilitate dialogue and encourage participation.
  - If you'll be staying in a large group, arrange chairs in a circle or horseshoe.
3. If you are using the [PowerPoint presentation](#), set up your computer, screen, projector, etc., and test that everything works.
4. Make sure any materials, handouts, refreshments, etc., can be easily accessed when you need them.

### Acknowledging traditional territory

If your school has an Indigenous student centre, you can learn their recommended acknowledgement.

If not, the Canadian Association of University Teachers has [suggestions](#) on suitable language.

## Step 2. Introduce the dialogue

1. Welcome participants and introduce yourself if they don't know you.
2. Open your meeting with a land acknowledgement recognizing the Indigenous peoples on whose traditional territory you are meeting.
  - Following the acknowledgement, we suggest sharing what it means to you. Think about how acknowledging these relationships and this land will impact the work you're doing.
3. Present the agenda so participants know what to expect.
4. Establish safer space guidelines to make sure everyone feels as comfortable as possible.

### Also in the box

#### SAFER SPACE GUIDELINES

We've provided some [guidelines](#) to help you set boundaries, but feel free to add any others you or your participants think are important.



5. Encourage people to reach out whenever they feel distress or need help. If you have trained service providers or peer supporters on hand, let the participants know who they are.

## Crisis Responders

If someone is in distress, contact your nearest [distress centre](#).

If it's an emergency, call 911.

Text HOME to 686868 in Canada to connect with a trained crisis responder.

### Step 3. Break the ice

Warm-up activities help groups prepare for discussion. They're especially important when you have people who don't know one another. A fun-spirited opening can help people get comfortable enough to share their personal stories.

Try one of these activities or come up with your own:

- ❑ The basics – Ask participants to share their name and one reason why they wanted to participate in this dialogue.
- ❑ Secret talent – Ask participants to share their name and one skill or talent – the more unusual, the better. (If you have time, you could even ask them to demonstrate it.)
- ❑ Line up – Ask participants to arrange themselves in a line according to a criterion that's not immediately obvious. Examples:
  - by birthday (earliest to latest)
  - by number of siblings (or cousins, aunts/uncles, etc.)
  - alphabetically by name
- ❑ Extremes – Present “would-you-rather-have” alternatives and ask participants to stand along the imaginary continuum from one side to the other. Examples:
  - winter or summer?
  - tea or coffee?
  - sweet or salty?
  - morning or night?

## Step 4. Provide context

Present some background to set the stage for the Standard. The [PowerPoint presentation](#) offers information on

- student mental health and its effects on academic performance
- key themes and areas of focus for the Standard
- details on the project
- the goals of the Standard
- the benefits of the Standard for students and institutions.

### Powerpoint Presentation

Use our [PPT](#) to introduce the topic of student mental health and keep your dialogue on track. Add any other information you want to include.



## Step 5. Facilitate the discussion

Keeping a group dialogue on track and giving everyone a chance to speak can be challenging. The following tips can help things run more smoothly during your roundtable discussions:

- Ask open-ended questions. Start with the ones included below and ask followups to encourage people to share more.
- Keep an eye on body language. While some people find it easy to make themselves heard, others may be more hesitant. Eye contact, facial expressions, and other subtle movements can indicate that someone has something to say. Watch for those signs and give those participants a chance to speak. Don't be afraid of silence. If you ask a question and no one immediately answers, count off eight seconds, then rephrase it or ask a different question. You'll almost never finish counting before someone jumps in.
- Allow for disagreement. The whole group doesn't have to come to a consensus on every issue. As long as everyone remains respectful, disagreements can produce more authentic conversation – or even inspire innovative “third-option” solutions.
- Maintain order. Despite their best intentions, sometimes people can interrupt, talk over others, or monopolize the conversation. If that happens, remind the group of the Safer Space Guidelines and the importance of giving everyone a chance to speak.

### Also in the box

#### WORKSHEETS

Our participant [worksheets](#) help keep everyone focused on a given topic. People at your event can use them to make notes and clarify their thoughts. The worksheets can also be helpful when it's time to submit your final report.

Print enough for everyone – and don't forget to collect them at the end!



#### PRACTICES PROFILE FORM

A good way to get more details on specific practices for Question 2.



- Consider having a delegated individual responsible for tracking and documenting the conversation to capture contributions that might not be reflected through the written or verbal components.

### *Dialogue structure*

To get consistent feedback for the Standard, CSA Group's Technical Committee asked that participants answer the following four questions:

1. What works well to promote student mental health?
2. Which promising or best practices are you aware of that are helping to promote and support student mental health?
3. What barriers do students face in seeking to attain optimum mental health?
4. What would you like post-secondary institutions to address to better support students and their mental health needs?

You can take many approaches to answering these questions; for example, a casual dialogue (works well for small groups) or more-focused exercises (helps keep larger groups on track).

## **IMPORTANT**

### **What to do if someone discloses something that needs action?**

Although confidentiality should be a key element of your dialogue, there are exceptions. If someone expresses an intention or desire to harm themselves or someone else, you must take action.

Encourage the participant to contact the nearest [distress centre](#) or do so on their behalf (with their consent). If you're on campus and student mental health resources are available, be sure to have those on hand for your meeting.

**If the situation is urgent, call 911.**

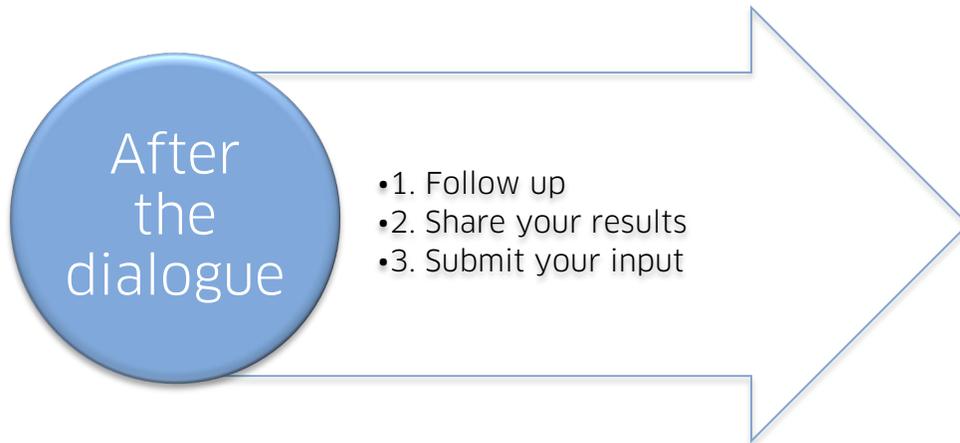
## Suggested exercises

Question	Small group	Large group
What works well to promote student mental health?	Ask each participant to share with the full group an example of something they've seen or experienced that has helped support mental health in the post-secondary setting.	Break participants into small groups to discuss and write down what they've seen or what works well. Have someone in each group report back to the larger group. Record those reports on a flipchart.
Which promising or best practices are you aware of that are helping to promote and support student mental health?	As a group, have an open conversation about best practices and resources. Note them on flipcharts.	Set up flipcharts around the room and ask each participant to add one promising or best practice to the chart nearest them. Review the sheets with the full group and note the most common examples mentioned.
What barriers do students face in seeking to attain optimum mental health?	Ask participants to think of systemic, organizational, or individual barriers that make it difficult for themselves or someone they know to get mental health support.	This is another question that works well for smaller breakout groups (can help participants feel more comfortable with sharing difficult personal experiences). Have each group report their list of barriers back to the full group.
What would you like post-secondary institutions to address to support students and their mental health needs?	Ask each participant for their number one priority for inclusion in the Standard. Rank any priorities commonly mentioned.	Use this question as a prioritization exercise. Post the flipchart sheets from previous questions along with a blank one and some markers. Give each participant 3-5 coloured stickers to place next to the highest priority topics or add a new one to the blank sheet.

## Step 6. Wrap up the dialogue

- End your dialogue by summarizing the main points you heard from the group: the ideas and suggestions you'll be submitting to the CSA Group Technical Committee.
- Assure participants that their privacy will be protected, and no identifying information will accompany the submission.
- Remind participants of the importance of self-care (some may have had a difficult day). Ask for suggestions about how they can recharge and take care of themselves afterward. Encourage participants to seek support if they need it.
- Thank participants for their time and input and let them know where they can find more information about the Standard development project.

# After the Dialogue



## Step 1. Follow up

Send a note to thank participants for their contributions and provide more information about the Standard's development.

## Step 2. Share your results

If you think your campus or community would like to hear about the results of your dialogue, consider contributing an article for a campus newspaper or appearing on a campus radio program.

You can explain some of the broad themes your session uncovered, outline next steps, and invite people to submit their own feedback through MHCC social media, #studentsuccess and @\_MHCC and/or email [studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca), if they have anything to contribute.

### Also in the box

#### SAMPLE EMAILS

Use the [followup\\_email\\_sample](#) as a starting point for thanking participants.



#### FACILITATOR'S REPORT FORM

Fill out the [template](#) and remember to email it to the CSA group Project Manager.



**CAUTION:** It is important not to share identifying information about anyone or any specific details without their express consent.

### Step 3. Submit your input

Collect all participant notes or worksheets and use them to complete the [Facilitator's Report Form](#)—by using the fillable PDF included in this kit. Your confidential feedback will be sent directly to CSA Group's technical committee project manager and will be used only to inform the development of the Standard.

# Thanks for Helping to Set the Standard!

### Find out more

Learn more about the MHCC and the Standard for Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students: visit [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca) or email [studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca).

### Join the dialogue

#studentsuccess and [@MHCC](#)

# Tools and Resources

## Tools in this kit

- Hosting a Successful Dialogue checklist
- Sample emails
- Safer Space Guidelines (also online)
- Participant Worksheets (also online)
- Facilitator's Report Form (also online)
- Practices Profile Form (also online)

Use these tools to plan and host your dialogue and to submit your input to the CSA Group technical committee.

## Online resources

- FAQ
- Overview (PowerPoint)
- Executive summary
- CSA Group Technical Committee members
- Post-secondary student mental health one-pager

Available at <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/studentstandard>

# Hosting a Successful Dialogue Checklist

## Key roles

Key tasks to make sure your dialogue goes smoothly:

- ❑ Assign a facilitator. Take on this role yourself or have someone else step in.
- ❑ Assign a note taker. Choose someone other than your facilitator, who will be busy leading the discussion. You'll also need a note taker for each small group (can be assigned on the day of your event).

## Venue choice

The right venue can make a real difference. Here's what to focus on:

- ❑ Accessibility. A venue should be accessible to as many different people as possible. Look for facilities with wide doorways, accessible bathrooms, and ramps or elevators. A sound system can also be useful.
- ❑ Easy access. Find a venue that's well served by public transportation and parking.
- ❑ Sufficient size. Choose a venue with enough space to comfortably hold all participants. Err on the side of being roomy. A space that's too small will make people feel squished or uncomfortable.
- ❑ Gender-neutral bathrooms. While not always available, some participants will be more comfortable if your venue has them.
- ❑ Public space. Not everyone is comfortable in a stranger's home. So reserve private settings for small groups where participants know each other well.
- ❑ Privacy. Because participants may be sharing very personal details, avoid open venues where passers-by might overhear.
- ❑ Flexible seating. Conversations are easier if you're facing people, so fixed, forward-facing seating is not ideal. A venue with tables and moveable chairs works better.

## Venue setup

Recommended seating configurations:

- ❑ Very small group – a basic circle works best.
- ❑ Small breakout group – tables (round, if possible), with no more than 10 participants around each.
- ❑ Large discussion group – chairs in a circle or horseshoe, with the facilitator and note taker at the front. A circle puts everyone on equal footing. The horseshoe formation helps everyone see PowerPoints or flipcharts as well as the other participants.

For each setup, make sure your note taker can hear what they need to hear and has a place to write it down, either at a table or on a flipchart.

## Materials

Have these items on hand for your dialogue:

- ❑ A computer, projector, screen, and any cables needed for your PowerPoint. If the technology is unavailable, print your presentation as a handout.
- ❑ Enough handouts for all participants. Examples:
  - PowerPoint presentation
  - [Safer Spaces Guidelines](#)
  - [Participant worksheets](#)
  - [Practices Profile forms](#)
- ❑ Flipcharts, markers, and notepads and pens (or a computer) for your note taker
- ❑ Coloured stickers or sticky notes for the prioritization exercise
- ❑ Pens for participants to make notes

## Final considerations

- ❑ Take breaks. Arrange one break in the middle a three-hour meeting so people can refresh and move around a bit. A full-day dialogue will need one lunch break and shorter breaks in the morning and afternoon. Also, keep an eye on the group; if they start getting restless, take a short pause.
- ❑ Offer refreshments. Participants almost always appreciate coffee or tea and a light snack. Offering lunch is also a nice touch for a full-day meeting. Otherwise, make sure participants have a nearby spot for lunch and the break is long enough that they can find it and finish eating.
- ❑ Check in. Some participants may find the day's discussion difficult. Before you end your meeting, do a quick check-in to make sure everyone's okay and remind them to take care of themselves after they leave. If it's a long meeting, consider checking in more frequently, and encourage participants to check in with one another if anyone seems to be having trouble.

# Sample Emails

Use these emails as your starting point when reaching out to participants. Feel free to customize them any way you like. What we've included:

1. An invitation email to interest people in attending your dialogue.
2. A reminder email, to be sent about a week before your dialogue, confirming attendance.
3. A followup email to thank participants and suggest next steps.

## 1. Invitation email

### **SUBJECT LINE:**

Your voice matters! Be part of the post-secondary student mental health dialogue

### **TEXT:**

Hello,

I'm hosting a dialogue about post-secondary student mental health on [DATE], and I'm hoping you'll join me and share your perspective.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is working with CSA Group on developing a post-secondary mental health standard to provide a practical framework for student success across Canada. The final Standard will be published in 2020.

To make sure it addresses today's needs, concerns, and aspirations on promoting and supporting student mental health, the MHCC is inviting input from people and groups countrywide.

I'd love for you to be part of the session I'm hosting on [Date], from [Start time] to [End time], at [Location]. Please let me know if you can make it.

[You can ask people to respond by email or provide a formal RSVP link.]

For more information on the MHCC's post-secondary student standard initiative, visit their [website](#).

## 2. Reminder email

### **SUBJECT LINE:**

How to prepare for our student mental health dialogue on [DATE]

### **TEXT:**

Hello,

Just a friendly reminder . . .

Our [Date] dialogue on post-secondary student mental health is fast approaching. So, I thought I'd suggest a few ways to help you prepare. First, a few questions to think about before we meet:

1. What does mental health or wellness mean to you?
2. If you've had any involvement with mental health services in a post-secondary context (on or off campus), what stood out to you about those experiences?
3. How do you feel about discussing mental health – either yours or someone else's?

There's no need to prepare formal answers! These questions are just a starting point for what we'll be talking about.

Also, please have a look at the attached Safer Space Guidelines. We'll be using them to foster a supportive, non-threatening environment during our dialogue. If there are any issues you think we should add to the guidelines, please let me know.

Our dialogue will be held from [Start time] to [End time] at [Location]. Be sure to RSVP as soon as possible (if you haven't already done so).

[Include RSVP link if using.]

Looking forward to seeing you!

[Attach a copy of the Safer Space Guidelines.]

### 3. Followup email

**SUBJECT LINE:**

Thanks for having your say on student mental health

**TEXT:**

Hello,

Thank you for participating in the dialogue on post-secondary student mental health. Your time and input were greatly valued.

As mentioned during the meeting, we'll be submitting the group's collective input to the CSA Group Technical Committee developing the draft Standard. When it's ready, the draft will go through a process of public review and feedback. We expect the final, revised version of the Standard to be published by early 2020, when it will be available in French and English as a free download from CSA Group.

If you'd like to stay involved with the Standard's development and contribute to the public review, visit the CSA's [Get Involved](#) page.

For more information about the development process, visit the MHCC [website](#).  
Once again, thanks for getting involved and sharing your perspective!

# Safer Space Guidelines

## What *is* a safer space?

A safer space is a supportive, non-threatening environment where all participants can feel comfortable to express themselves and share experiences without fear of discrimination or reprisal. We use the word *safer* to acknowledge that safety is relative: not everyone feels safe under the same conditions. By acknowledging the experiences of each person in the room, we hope to create as safe an environment as possible.

Creating a safer space is especially important when dealing with mental health issues, which can be a sensitive area for people and involve deeply personal or traumatic experiences.

## Why do we need guidelines?

In an ideal world all spaces would be safer spaces, and all people would consider others and protect each other's sense of safety. But, despite our best intentions, sometimes we are either unaware of certain issues or have inconsiderate moments. Having clear guidelines encourages mindfulness about these possibilities. While slip-ups may occur, they keep us on the same page.

## The guidelines

Adopt these guidelines as they are or adapt them to the needs of your group. Feel free to ask participants whether they want to add anything to this list:

1. Respect others' physical and emotional boundaries.
2. Respect others' identities and backgrounds, including pronouns and names.
3. Do not assume or make judgments on anyone's gender identity, sexual preference, survivor status, health status, economic status, religion, background, beliefs, opinions, etc.
4. Respect others' right to privacy both during this dialogue and beyond. Do not push anyone to answer questions they don't want to answer, and do not share anyone's personal stories outside of this dialogue.
5. Be aware that your actions and words may have unintended effects on other people and that their feelings are valid, regardless of your intentions.

6. Avoid raising your voice, interrupting or talking over anyone else. And be aware of how much you're participating – make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
7. Assume positive intent. If someone does or says something that crosses a boundary, gently let them know, but do not assume they intended harm.
8. Remember, we are all learning.
9. Take care of your own safety. If you need to step out, feel free to do so. If you feel unsafe, let the facilitator know.
10. If you witness any abusive or inappropriate behaviour, let the facilitator know.

## IMPORTANT

### What to do if someone discloses something that needs action?

Although confidentiality is a key element of our dialogue, there are exceptions. If someone expresses an intention or desire to harm themselves or someone else, you must take action.

Encourage the person to contact the nearest [distress centre](#) or do so on their behalf (with their consent). If you're on campus and student mental health resources are available, you can call on those as well.

If the situation is urgent, call 911.

You can also text HOME to 686868 in Canada to text with a trained Crisis Responder.

### Public review and ongoing outreach

Another opportunity to contribute to the development of the Psychological Health and Safety for Post-Secondary Students Standard will occur during the public review process, planned for the period between August and October 2019.

**Note:** This information is being gathered for the express purpose of supporting development of the CSA Z2003 Psychological Health and Safety for Post-Secondary Students Standard. After the MHCC receives your report, it will deliver it as written to CSA's technical committee (more specifically, the CSA resource development team) for review and analysis in support of the Standard's development.

*Thank you for all your time and effort!*

Please [forward](#) your completed forms to Karyn Ferguson, CSA Technical Committee Project Manager at [karyn.ferguson@csagroup.org](mailto:karyn.ferguson@csagroup.org) and cc Polly Leonard, MHCC Program Manager at [pleonard@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:pleonard@mentalhealthcommission.ca).

# Participant Worksheets

Indicate which group you or members at your table belong to:

- User interest – students and their families
- Organization interest – a post-secondary institution
- Government interest – federal, provincial, or territorial agencies supporting mental health and/or post-secondary institutions
- Service provider interest – services to post-secondary institutions (organizational) and students (response, treatment, etc.)
- General interest – academics/researchers in the post-secondary health field

Question 1. What works well to promote student mental health?

Question 2. Which promising or best practices are you aware of that are helping to promote and support student mental health?

Question 3. What barriers do students face in seeking to attain optimum mental health?

Question 4. What would you like post-secondary institutions to address to better support students and their mental health needs?

## Personal Reflection

1. What could you not express to the group that you would like us to know?
2. Have we missed anything? Explain.
3. Any other comments?

Thank you for your insights. If you have any other comments or want more information, email us at [studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:studentstandard@mentalhealthcommission.ca). Follow, share, like #studentsuccess and @MHCC\_.

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# Facilitator's Report Form

Key Learnings or outcomes from the dialogue		
Sponsor/host		
Event date		
Event location		
Number of participants		
Participants Please provide a detailed description of participants ( <i>e.g. students, faculty, staff, parents, professional practitioners, leadership, community or government representatives</i> )		
Contact name/organization and email		
CSA Use Only: Date/review status	yyyy-mm-dd	<input type="checkbox"/> Assigned RDTM: <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed RDTM: <input type="checkbox"/> Report (Issue):

## Tips for completing the report

Note all major points of your dialogue and outcomes. Point form is fine! Don't let our suggested areas or topics limit your discussion. We're looking for insights into how a post-secondary institution can effectively support a relationship with any student – respecting a broad spectrum of circumstances and educational or learning environments – in the interest of that student's psychological health and safety. This support includes collaborating and engaging with the student community and larger community.

## What's working well?

Question 1:  
What works well to promote student mental health?

Possible areas/topics

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mental health literacy</li> <li>• self-management (support pathways independent of institution)</li> <li>• self-management (supported by institution resources)</li> <li>• psychological support</li> <li>• mental health services</li> <li>• institution policies and programs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• institution environment</li> <li>• access</li> <li>• intervention approaches</li> <li>• crisis management and response</li> <li>• community engagement/access to community health services</li> <li>• accommodation (postvention)</li> <li>• program objectives and evaluation</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

CSA Use Only:

Reporting reference(s) (clause/item)

Promising or best practices *(see Practice Profile form)*

<p>Question 2: Which promising or best practices are you aware of that are helping to promote and support student mental health?</p>		
<p>Possible areas/topics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• references to specific resources, programs, agencies, policies, approaches, and services.</li> <li>• mental health literacy</li> <li>• stigma reduction</li> <li>• self-management</li> <li>• institution policy or governance</li> <li>• leadership support (senior executives)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mental health services – access and/or availability</li> <li>• confidentiality</li> <li>• emergency response / crisis management</li> <li>• respecting diversity, inclusive approaches; equitable support (fair and unbiased)</li> </ul>
<p>CSA Use Only:  Reporting reference(s) (clause/item)</p>		

## Barriers (or what *isn't* working well?)

Question 3:  
What barriers do students face in seeking to attain optimum mental health?

Possible areas/topics

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mental health literacy</li> <li>stigma</li> <li>accommodation (postvention)</li> <li>confidentiality</li> <li>institution culture or environment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mental health services – access and/or availability</li> <li>lacking respect for diversity, lack of equitable support (fair and unbiased)</li> <li>financial aspects/insurance</li> </ul> |  |
|--|--|--|

CSA Use Only:

Reporting reference(s)  
(clause/item)

## Participants' guidance

Question 4:  
What would you like post-secondary institutions to address to better support students and their mental health needs?

For the facilitator:

Another way to frame the question: Once the Standard is published, if the guidance provided does not address this need, issue, topic, challenge, or opportunity, the Standard would fall short of its intended objectives - possibly delaying its implementation and restricting its use.

CSA Use Only:

Reporting reference(s)  
(clause/item)

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# Practices Profile Form

Best practices, promising practices, and supporting resources for the psychological health and safety of post-secondary students

Title:		
Date:		
Developed by:		
Copyright/access:		
Contact: (Name/org./email):		
CSA Use Only:		
Clause(s) & key words		

Click on boxes to check or uncheck:

## Nature and intent

Characterize the practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Best or proven practice (evidence based) <input type="checkbox"/> Promising or emerging practice <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  Details:	
What need does the practice/resource intend to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Institutional or environmental factors - well-being and/or safety (whole system) <input type="checkbox"/> Help seeking - response/intervention, coping and treatment, postvention <input type="checkbox"/> Other:  Details:	
Type of practice/resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Charter <input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Program <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Partnering	<input type="checkbox"/> Outsourcing <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input type="checkbox"/> Training (students/faculty/staff) <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Intended outcome or benefit (including any metrics and indicators)	Description:	
Student phase  (all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> High school to post-secondary transition <input type="checkbox"/> Post-secondary - first year <input type="checkbox"/> Post-secondary - progressive years <input type="checkbox"/> Post-secondary to labour force (graduation) <input type="checkbox"/> Post-graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Return to school - adult/mature student <input type="checkbox"/> Return to school - absence/leave <input type="checkbox"/> Other (campus oriented/off campus) <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Application	
AREA	INTEREST
Institutional context	<input type="checkbox"/> All post-secondary institutions <input type="checkbox"/> College <input type="checkbox"/> CEGEP <input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> Technical institute <input type="checkbox"/> High school (preparation for post-secondary) <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Polytechnic <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Identity focus (i.e. persons who are ...) <i>Check any that apply.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2SLGBTQ+ <input type="checkbox"/> All post-secondary students <input type="checkbox"/> First Nations <input type="checkbox"/> International students <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit <input type="checkbox"/> Medical <input type="checkbox"/> Métis <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> New Canadian <input type="checkbox"/> Racialized persons <input type="checkbox"/> Religious/spiritual <input type="checkbox"/> Students with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Mental health issue	<input type="checkbox"/> Abuse or assault - emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Abuse or assault - physical <input type="checkbox"/> Abuse or assault - sexual <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Bipolar Disorder <input type="checkbox"/> Depression <input type="checkbox"/> Eating disorder <input type="checkbox"/> PTSD <input type="checkbox"/> Problematic substance use <input type="checkbox"/> Test/exam anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Other mood disorders: <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

## Implementation support and success factors

Internal support	
External support	
Challenges, strategies, and success factors	

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Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada



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