Transitions between Secondary and Postsecondary

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• How are emerging adults faring in the transition between secondary and post secondary?

• What are the major issues at a population level?

• What about distinct populations?

• How can we do a better job of preparing youth for the transition?

• How can campus culture better support mental health and wellbeing?
Objectives

- Examine the context and identify key issues in the transition between secondary and post secondary for general EA population and special populations

- Highlight universal and targeted promising practices in supporting youth through transitions to post secondary

- Share information about important tools and resources that are currently available
“Emerging adulthood” has particular relevance within the educational context - it’s a new life stage that is not going away

The transition from high school to college is a critical milestone for many young people

9 out of 10 high school students expect to continue their education

78% believe that one of the most important keys to success in life is a college or university education

From 1990 -2007, tuition costs have tripled

84% of college graduates believe their education was a good investment

Postsecondary enrollment continues to grow
What we know

Where youth are at:

• Canada has one of the highest postsecondary participation rates in the world: 74.7%

• Increasing numbers of international students

• Widening gap in participation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students 24.3% lower rate of enrollment

• Today’s students: higher levels of debt, fewer job prospects upon graduation, higher expectations for student success, less preparation for independent living
Is there a crisis on campus?

• 1992-2007 – 32% increase in student enrollment but 320% increase in students using Access/Disability services: especially Mental Health Accommodation
• 50% of students use campus mental health services
• 10% percent are seen in urgent / crisis situations
• Greater numbers of students coming to campus with a diagnosed mental disorder
• Greater awareness of student mental health - more students seeking help, greater complexity of issues – mostly anecdotal
• Very little data about campus populations and mental health
• NCHA 2013 survey of students on Canadian campuses: about 60% “so depressed that it was difficult to function.” Almost three quarters felt “overwhelming anxiety.”

Prevalence of major mental disorders in the population has not increased
What we know

- Mental health challenges may be intensified during transition into post-secondary schools
- First-year of postsecondary is full of emotional challenges that span far beyond academics – for all students
- Beyond lack of academic preparation, lack of emotional and mental health literacy
- New study: majority of students (60%) wish they had gotten more help with emotional preparation for college
- Isolation and anxiety, especially for students who are leaving home for the first time for a prolonged period of time
• Certain populations are particularly vulnerable, including LGBTQ, Aboriginal and Int’l students and require additional supports

• Three most common factors affecting academic performance:
  • Stress (38%)
  • Sleep difficulties (26%)
  • Anxiety (26%)

• Depression predictive of lower GPA and higher probability of dropping out of school (Eisenberg, 2005)

• Treated Depression does not show this same pattern of drop-outs (Hysenbegasi, 2005)
Bridge the gaps between educational systems and generations:

- Students are less prepared than previous generations for independent living
- Educational system needs to fill role of providing mental health and emotional literacy support, not just academic preparedness
- Address the disconnect between secondary and post secondary in terms of documentation requirements and access to academic accommodations

Shift campus culture:

- Create proactive, universal design approach to campus mental health policy – review, revise and develop policies to support student mental health and well-being
- Set strategic goals and allocate resources
Enhance services and supports:

- Increased demand for service has strained the existing capacity on campuses
- Focus on early identification of students who are struggling
- Help young people who have a mental disorder or substantial mental health problem in obtaining rapid access to effective evidence based care-
- Improve collaboration between campus and community supports
- Effective models exist
Recommendations

Secondary

• More emphasis on developmentally-appropriate mental health literacy and self-care as part of broader life skills development

• Integrate social / emotional learning and mental health literacy into required high school courses

• Promote whole school approaches in addition to classroom-based curricular approaches

• Embed competencies in existing staff- build on strengths and infrastructure

• Provide targeted supports to populations with unique needs

• Support greater collaboration between secondary and post-secondary - standardize documentation requirements for academic accommodations
Recommendations

Postsecondary

• Every post secondary institution across Canada to develop a comprehensive mental health strategy

• Increase collaboration between institutions- sharing best practices and processes for effective strategy development, and implementation, development of meaningful mental health indicators

• Share best practices and strategies for promoting MH: peer support, mentoring, supportive learning environments, etc.

• Enhance awareness, early identification and help seeking and rapid access to effective care

• Academic accommodations- focus on functional impairment for those with identified MH disorders, not diagnosis and disclosure

• Provide focused supports for special populations such as students with identified mental health and addictions concerns, LGBTQ, aboriginal, international students
Figure 2: Framework for Post-Secondary Student Mental Health

- Institutional structure: organization, planning and policy
- Supportive, inclusive campus climate and environment
- Mental health awareness
- Community capacity to respond to early indicators of student concern
- Self-management competencies and coping skills
- Accessible mental health services
- Crisis management

- All students
- Students with concerns about coping
- Students with mental health concerns
- Supported student
## Summary

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<th>Postsecondary special populations</th>
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