SSMU Mental Health Five Year Plan

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I. Five Year Plan

The following is the SSMU plan for Mental Health for the next five years:

A. Mental Health Fee Levy:
Timeline: To be created through a question present on Winter 2015 referendum ballot

This fee, which will exist as an opt-outable fee paid by semester by all members of the SSMU, shall be used to fund the position of the Mental Health Coordinator and the Mental Health Website Administrator (if applicable). Remaining funds shall be allocated by the Council in order to support student-led mental health initiatives. All fund allocations must be reported to the Legislative Council and are subject to approval by that body.

B. SSMU Mental Health Website
Timeline: to be operational by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year

The website will serve as a centralized platform where McGill students can easily find mental health-related information and both on and off-campus resources.

Goals:
- To enable students to easily find mental health-related services on and off campus as well as educational materials online
- To enable students to offer feedback on mental health services in an anonymous and secure fashion
- To enable students to complete a standardized survey of Health Services, Mental Health Services, Counselling Services, the Office for Students with Disabilities (ODS), and Eating Disorder Program
- To enable students greater accessibility to other students' opinions of mental health-related services on campus
- To enable students to stay informed of upcoming events with the implementation of an e-Calendar
- To provide easy-to-use information regarding mental health and prevention
- To adopt a network format, in which clicking on a link to one service will lead to a display of that services and related/supporting services
- To be developed in collaboration with Student Services

The website is to be administered and maintained by a website administrator, who will report to the Council.

C. Hiring a Mental Health Coordinator
Timeline: By the end of 2013-2014 Academic Year

The Mental Health Coordinator will be the person responsible for the administration of the SSMU Mental Health Committee, the maintenance of institutional memory via the creation of exit reports, and for ensuring that the provisions of this policy are pursued and implemented in a timely manner.

D. Formation of the SSMU Mental Health Committee
Timeline: To commence operations in the 2014-2015 academic year as an official committee of the Legislative Council

About the Committee:
- The Committee will exist under the portfolio of the SSMU VP University Affairs (UA)
- The SSMU Mental Health Coordinator will be responsible for the administration of the Committee and shall chair its meetings
- The Committee shall meet at least once a month, and shall report to the Legislative Council at least once a year
- The Committee will be formed of representatives from all relevant and willing student Mental Health initiatives. Initial and future membership will be determined by the VP UA and approved by the Legislative Council
- The Committee's membership will include:
  - The SSMU Mental Health Coordinator (Chair)
  - The SSMU VP UA
  - Three (3) Councilors
  - One (1) representative from each relevant student-run mental health initiative, as determined by the VP UA and approved by Council
  - Two (2) members-at-large recruited from the student body
  - One (1) representative from PGSS (non-voting)
  - Observers from university or community mental health services, as invited by the Council (non-voting)

Objectives of the Committee:
- Cohesion: connect and facilitate cooperation between groups
  - Prevent resource splitting
  - Encourage collaboration
  - Increase inter-group awareness of activities and projects
  - Increase referral of students between groups
- Planning & Assessment:
  - Update and maintain website
  - Event planning
  - Evaluate successes and setbacks on projects and policy goals
    - Prepare summaries of data collected on student mental health
    - Increase, amongst services and within the general student population, awareness of social, cultural, political and economic factors affecting student mental health
  - Allocate funds (from the planned SSMU Mental Health fee levy) and further resources, and determine their use
  - Revise the SSMU Mental Health Policy
  - Prepare a complete exit report by the end of each academic year
- Carry out the provisions of this policy, and seek to attain the goals described within it
- Coherently address broader issues affecting student mental health
- Ensure institutional memory

E. Mental Health Listserv
Timeline: by the start of the 2014-2015 academic year

The purpose of the listserv is to communicate to students information about mental health, mental health services, and healthy living. It is to be sent out by the Coordinator as needed, but at least once a month. This listserv is to be managed and written by the Committee and shall be sent out by the Mental Health Coordinator.

F. Events

Timeline: Ongoing; The first annual Mental Health Awareness Week should be held in October 2014.

Mental Health Awareness Week: The SSMU aims to establish a university-wide mental health awareness week to build awareness and engage students in activities that will encourage them to take ownership of their individual mental health, while shifting the general student population's perception of mental health from one of awareness to one of understanding. Furthermore, we aim to maintain a high frequency of events throughout the semester. This will be achieved by creating and maintaining a Mental Health e-Calendar that will be sustained but the Committee and the Coordinator and will be accessible to all students via the SSMU Mental Health website.

Goals:
- To establish a university-wide mental health awareness week on campus in October, building up to the annual Students in Mind conference
- To hold events reinforcing positive mental health before exam seasons
- To enable students to view the title, description, location, length and purpose of various events via the e-Calendar (see Website)
- To enable student clubs and/or student leaders to advertise upcoming events they are organizing on the e-Calendar if judged as relevant or appropriate by the appointed website administrator (see Website)

G. Space and Support for Mental Health Groups
Timeline: by the end of 2015-2016 academic year

Groups represented on the Mental Health Committee will be able to access room bookings through the VP University Affairs. Additionally, permanent space in the SSMU building dedicated to mental health on campus will be created and managed by the Mental Health Committee. The space will serve as a central location for students with mental health inquiries.

Goals:
- To improve accessibility to booking rooms in the SSMU building for mental-health related events and groups by having a dedicated space for these purposes
- To acquire space dedicated to mental health in the SSMU building, to be managed by the Mental Health Coordinator and the Mental Health Committee
- To offer a student-run mental health space to offer resources and information to students, and providing referrals to appropriate services on campus
- To help bring students in crisis to Mental Health Services; for this goal, it will be necessary to ensure that the space is staffed with students with mental health first aid training
- To offer a safer space on campus for the discussion of mental health issues
- To serve as a space for group therapy or peer support sessions

H. Research and Transparency
Timeline: Ongoing; first survey results to be published by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year

To ensure that SSMU effectively addresses the mental health needs of students, SSMU intends to collect information on student mental health. These methods of collection fall under three main categories:
    1) online feedback forms
    2) access to pre-existing data, and
    3) surveys.

The creation of the website outlined in this policy will include a mechanism for students to offer feedback to SSMU on a variety of topics pertaining to student mental health. Once implemented, we

expect this system to be a cost- and time- effective way to monitor McGill student mental health by enabling students to give immediate feedback in an anonymous manner.

The ability to give feedback anonymously will allow the examination of coercion and marginalization within mental health and criticism of services related to mental health. This type of information may be inaccessible or unappealing to other groups who collect data on student mental health.

This feedback mechanism should provide students with the option to fill out a general survey-style form or provide specific feedback in their own text. The data collected from the survey should be made available on the website and updated annually so that students are objectively aware of challenges facing student mental health at McGill.

SSMU will actively request data from groups and services that it collaborates with when addressing student mental health (for example, the McGill Mental Health Service). Access to pre-existing information may provide key insights into the state of student mental health without overburdening the SSMU research budget. Data will be posted to the website if given permission, or kept confidential, as dictated by the services and groups that are willing to share this information with SSMU. It will be necessary to reach agreements with Mental Health Services, Counselling Services, and the OSD regarding the creation of a standardized feedback form by the end of academic year 2013-2014.

Data collected through the website and through other services may be supplemented in the form of surveys or other SSMU-funded research initiatives as needed. For example, surveys may be used to both educate the student population and gather feedback in response to specific events or topics that may heavily affect student mental health and wellbeing. This type of information may inform how SSMU chooses to respond to controversial topics that relate to student mental health.

I. Collaboration with Student Services
Timeline: Ongoing

To efficiently achieve the goals of this policy, SSMU will attempt to collaborate with the many student services available at McGill. It is proposed that a collaborative effort will allow for a streamlined promotion of services most suited to individual student needs and interests, a prevention of resource splitting, and a developed rapport between SSMU and pre-existing services that facilitate wellness. In addition, SSMU intends to collect information from students about their experiences of accessing McGill Student Services to identify key areas in which SSMU may be ideally suited to provide advocacy or complementary services.

II. Benchmarks:
Benchmarks are necessary to evaluate the impact of this policy on mental health and include:
- The development, implementation, and maintenance of a centralized website and listserv
- The hiring of a Mental Health Coordinator
- The formation of the SSMU Mental Health Committee
- The introduction of the SSMU Mental Health fee levy
- The establishment of a university-wide Mental Health Awareness Week
- The submission of a report on the progress of this Policy's implementation to the Legislative Council