POLICY NO. 28

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

This policy was adopted for the first time by Resolution Number 424-09 on October 10, 2023.

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1. PREAMBLE

With the implementation of this policy, and through its prioritization of mental health within its strategic orientations, John Abbott College (the "**College**"), affirms its commitment to the mental health and well-being of all students, and its efforts to align with the Plan d'action sur la santé mentale étudiante en enseignement supérieur 2021-2026 (the "**PASME**") and concurrently the National Standard for Mental Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students (the "**Standard**"). It furthermore does so by acknowledging the diverse, and often intersecting identities (eg. racial, national and/or ethnic origin, sex assigned at birth & gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) and factors (eg. language, neurodiversity and ability, socio-economic status, immigrant status, parent/student status, academic program, etc.) and resulting needs and barriers experienced by students, and the importance of moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to mental health. The College commits to broadening its definitions, methods, and learning practices in support of mental health, while honouring the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

At the time of this policy's implementation, the College is still adjusting to having lived through the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Results from the College's Winter 2022 Canadian Campus Well-Being Survey[1] (the "**CCWS**") indicate that 58% of its students are in moderate to severe mental health distress, which is further amplified when the intersection of racial and gender minority identities are factored in. Anxiety remains a "top concern over time" for post-secondary students[2].

Recent gap analyses within the College have therefore highlighted key areas of focus for a college-wide mental health action plan, of which this policy is an essential first step in setting the tone and establishing expectations. These include the need for: 1. diversification and de-colonization[3] of mental health practices; 2. education around the mental health needs of equity-deserving[4] student groups; 3. equipping students with key emotion-regulation skills to foster their resilience and capacity to manage academic workloads and various life stressors; 4. formalizing a mental health crisis management plan, including a suicide postvention[5] protocol; and 5. inviting positive psychology[6] and healthy living concepts into the classroom curricula as a critical knowledge skill.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The College recognizes that mental health is an essential ingredient for students' academic retention and student success. Mental health can be broadly defined as the "capacities of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity"[7]. The PASME and the Standard each view mental health and mental illness through the lens of a dual continuum model whereby optimal mental health or the experience of 'flourishing' is not dependent on the absence of mental illness[8]. Rather individuals can learn to achieve a positive mental health,

regardless of whether they have a mental health diagnosis. What this means is that collectively we have a responsibility to de-stigmatize and to provide the spaces and supports necessary to help cultivate a positive mental health for all students, through promotion and prevention efforts, through early detection of students at risk, and through timely interventions for students with identified mental health concerns[9].

The College therefore recognizes the importance of a whole-campus approach to student mental health through the participation and commitment of all interested parties: Directors, Deans, Managers, Faculty, Non-Teaching and Support Staff, and Students. Mental health is to be viewed through a systemic lens, whereby we each participate in creating an environment conducive to the psychological health and well-being of our College community[10].

3. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

This policy will outline the broad directions the College commits to taking in support of student mental health and is addressed to the entire College community. Though primarily focused on student mental health, the College recognizes the importance of promoting well-being amongst its employees, as integral components of a healthy community. Employees are therefore encouraged to make use of the College's Employee and Family Assistance Program in support of their own mental health and well-being, and all community members are invited to take part in the College's scheduled wellness activities.

4. DEFINITIONS

In this policy, the following expressions mean:

College community: Anyone working, volunteering, or studying at the College.

Employee: Any salaried person who works at the College.

Equity-Deserving[4]: "Communities and groups that experience significant collective barriers in participating in society. This could include attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, Indigeneity, gender identity and gender expression, nationality, race, sexual orientation, etc."

Positive mental health[11]: "A state of well-being that allows us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face."

Positive psychology[6]: "Positive psychology is the parts of psychology that deal with (positive) experiences, dispositions, and processes, in individuals and groups, that facilitate well-being, achievement, and harmony."

Postvention[5]: the "set of interventions deployed in an environment when a person who frequented that environment dies by suicide."

Special need: Any disability (physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental health-related).

Student community: All persons enrolled in a course of study at the College on a full-time or part-time basis, both in Day Division and in Continuing Education.

Vulnerable (or 'at-risk'): Students that are most likely to experience disparities in access, service use, and/or outcomes.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Members of the College's community (applicable to 5.1 through 5.6)

- Be aware of this policy and the roles and responsibilities that go with it.
- Create a supportive and non-judgmental environment where the topic of mental health can be discussed safely, without fear of prejudice.
- Cultivate safe, supportive, inclusive, and respectful spaces that recognize and respond to diverse student realities, promote social interactions, develop students' emotion-regulation and soft skills, and that enhance mental and physical well-being. When possible, attend relevant trainings on this topic.
- Reflect on inclusive, non-prejudicial, and non-oppressive language and teaching practices, that support positive mental health. When possible, attend relevant trainings on this topic.
- Commit to breaking down silos and to engage in collaborations amongst and between departments in support of a positive student mental health.
- Act as a role model for mental health awareness by welcoming discussions around mental health and promoting the value of a positive mental health.

5.2 Directors, Deans and Managers

- Ensure the implementation, application, compliance with and promotion of this policy.
- Allocate the human, financial and material resources required to implement a college-wide mental health action plan to facilitate alignment with the PASME and the Standard.
- Ensure that this policy is consistent with and complementary to other College policies, including **Policy 4** "Concerning Psychological Harassment, Abuse of Power and Violence", **Policy 7** "Institutional Policy on the Evaluation of Student Achievement" and **Policy 24** "Concerning the Prevention of Sexual Violence and the Promotion of a Culture of Consent at John Abbott College", as well as ministerial priorities and institutional initiatives in line with the Plan d'action pour la réussite en enseignement supérieur (PARES) 2021-2026.
- Ensure that mental health support, accompaniment, education, promotion and prevention services are in place and that information about these services is accessible.
- Encourage collaboration internally between College departments (both within Student Services and cooperatively with the Academic sector), and

nurture inter-network agreements between the College and our community partners (eg. Health and Social Services Network, community organizations) in support of student mental health.

- Consider the needs of students with special needs and encourage the representation of diverse identities in all institutional decision-making.
- Establish and support the development of a clear crisis management plan and postvention procedure to aid in suicide prevention and coordinated support mechanisms (eg. between Security, Student Services, community partners, etc.).

5.3 Faculty

- Consider integrating basic wellness strategies into classroom pedagogy and attending relevant trainings on this topic. More information is available through Counselling Services.
- Recognize their role as a first point of contact with students. Equip themselves with knowledge to detect and support at-risk students by participating in mental health first aid and suicide prevention training offered by the College and become acquainted with College protocols (eg. Crisis Flow Chart - Annex A; Remote Crisis Intervention Protocol – Annex B). Refer students to available on/off campus resources.
- Consider the adaptive service needs of vulnerable, and at-risk populations.
- Ensure personal wellness by maintaining healthy boundaries when students disclose challenges to their mental health.

5.4 Student Union of John Abbott College (SUJAC)

- Act as ambassadors for student mental health by participating in awareness/anti-stigma campaigns, by disseminating information about mental health resources on- and off-campus, and by encouraging students to make use of mental health supports.
- Promote a positive school climate (inclusive, safe, caring, open, respectful, and free of violence and bullying).
- Seek out diverse representation of student voices, including those of minoritized groups, different socio-educational backgrounds, and students with special needs, in student government activities and in decision-making.

5.5 Student Population

- Inform oneself of the available mental health resources on- and off-campus; seek out services as needed; communicate all relevant information to professional resources in order to receive an appropriate support tailored to one's needs.
- Understand and sign all relevant documents pertaining to confidentiality and the limits thereof.

5.6 Board of Governors

- To adopt this policy.

6. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE

As outlined in the PASME (Article 2.1), a critical element of this policy is to establish an institutional committee who will be responsible for reviewing its content and assessing the progress of its corresponding action plan. The committee should include representatives of senior administration, faculty, professional staff, support resources of the institution, and members of the student community.

The College currently has in place an official Student Success Committee (SSC) with a similar composition. Its mandate is to support student progress and retention. Given the role that mental health plays in support of student success, the SSC will therefore serve as a representative body to assist in this policy's implementation and support its progress (see 8.1: Impact Assessment). An ad-hoc sub-committee may be formed to help advance the objectives of this policy when the need arises.

7. AWARENESS, PROMOTION, AND PREVENTION MEASURES

The College will participate in and/or organize and support nation-wide campaigns, institutional level initiatives, and/or student driven outreach, aimed at promoting a positive mental health, developing students' emotion-regulation skills, and in accordance with the needs of the diverse student community.

7.1 Education & Training

Training in mental health literacy (including suicide prevention), active listening, and supporting students in distress will be made available to the College community, notably a network of interested employees (eg. faculty members, Student Services staff, Security), and student leaders (eg. residence assistants, peer supporters), in order to create a support network of responders. This training should include information on available resources and referral procedures and be widely advertised via the College communication channels.

8. MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

8.1 Continuum of Services (Access)

The College shall endeavour to provide a robust range of services, driven by the principles of stepped care[12] so that students can ultimately obtain the support that they need, when they need it. This considers the importance of breaking down barriers to mental health services by increasing access/decreasing wait times, matching need with an appropriate level of intervention (including options that are self-directed), and recognizing the need for diverse, equitable and inclusive wellness practices and where possible, striving to provide access to diverse representation among mental health providers. Services should include (but are not limited to):

- Clear intake process, available on a daily basis during regular office hours, whereby students' mental health and wellness needs are evaluated and matched with an appropriate level of service. Risk is also assessed and crisis protocols are enacted when necessary to ensure safety.
- Self-care resources accessible autonomously by students throughout the day at their convenience (eg. Energy Pods).
- Peer support: active listening services offered by and for students.
- Mental health support programming available 24/7 to all students by phone and chat; provides multilingual, culturally sensitive, and gender inclusive support.
- Individual counselling and psychotherapy (on campus): single session and short-to-medium term follow-up (when required).
- Coordinated referral to second line services (eg. psychiatry).

This service continuum will be evaluated each semester based on usage statistics, qualitative feedback from students, and wait times, and that data will then subsequently inform work plan objectives & deliverables on a yearly basis.

8.2 Impact Assessment

The College is responsible for assessing the overall impact of this policy on student mental health, and ultimately its alignment with the PASME/the Standard. A College-wide baseline assessment was conducted in Winter 2022 of nine (9) core sections[1] related to student mental health (using the CCWS). These results also informed the College's key action items. Drawing from research into key performance indicators for the advancement of mental health initiatives[9] and the gaps identified specific to the College, the following have been proposed as core measures to help monitor progress and ensure continuous improvement:

- Data collection at regular intervals; specifically, the implementation of a college-wide mental health survey every 2 years (eg. CCWS) and the analysis of participation rates over time; institutional comparisons across Canada and in relation to post-secondary mental health research; any other pertinent sources of information.
- Student success data (retention and graduation rates)
- Access (based on wait times and a clearly defined stepped level approach) to College mental health services.
- Percentage of students receiving basic emotion-regulation/stress management strategies through outreach events, embedded into curriculum, etc.
- Implementation of mental health initiatives specific to minoritized communities and resulting participation rates.
- Number of training sessions and number of community members trained in supporting students in distress, suicide prevention, and self-care.
- Implementation and communication of a college-wide crisis management and suicide postvention plan.

9. POLICY RESPONSIBILITY AND DISSEMINATION

The Director of Student Services is responsible for the application of this policy, including for its dissemination to the entire community and publication on the College website.

10. DATE OF EFFECT

This policy shall become effective when enacted.

11. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Governors every five (5) years or earlier, as circumstances require.

[1]*What is the CCWS? – Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey*. (n.d.). Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey. https://www.ccws-becc.ca/what-is-the-ccws

[2]Rashid, T. & Di Genova, L. (2022). Campus mental health across Canada in 2020-21: The ongoing impact of COVID-19. Perspectives from student affairs leaders. Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC). *The Canadian Association of Colleges and University Student Services (CACUSS): Toronto, Ontario & Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC).* http://cacuss-campusmentalheatlh.ca.

[3]Queens University. (2023). *Decolonizing and indigenizing.* Queens University: Office of Indigenous Initiatives. https://www.queensu.ca/indigenous/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/defintions.

[4]University of British Columbia. (n.d.). *Equity and inclusion glossary of terms.* UBC: Equity and Inclusion Office. https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/equity-inclusion-glossary-of-terms/

[5]AQPS. (2023). *Qu'est-ce que la postvention?* AQPS : Organisations (postvention). https://aqps.info/organisations-postvention/.

[6]Zelenski, J. (2020). *Positive psychology-The Science of wellbeing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
[7]Public Health Agency of Canada. (2006). *The human face of mental health and mental illness in Canada, 2006*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

[8]Keyes, C. (2002). *The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life*. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 43 (2): 207-222.

[9]Center for Innovation in Campus Mental Health. (2015). Environmental scan of promising practices and indicators relevant to campus mental health. Final-Environmental-Scan-Report-May-26-2015-PDF.pdf (campusmentalhealth.ca)

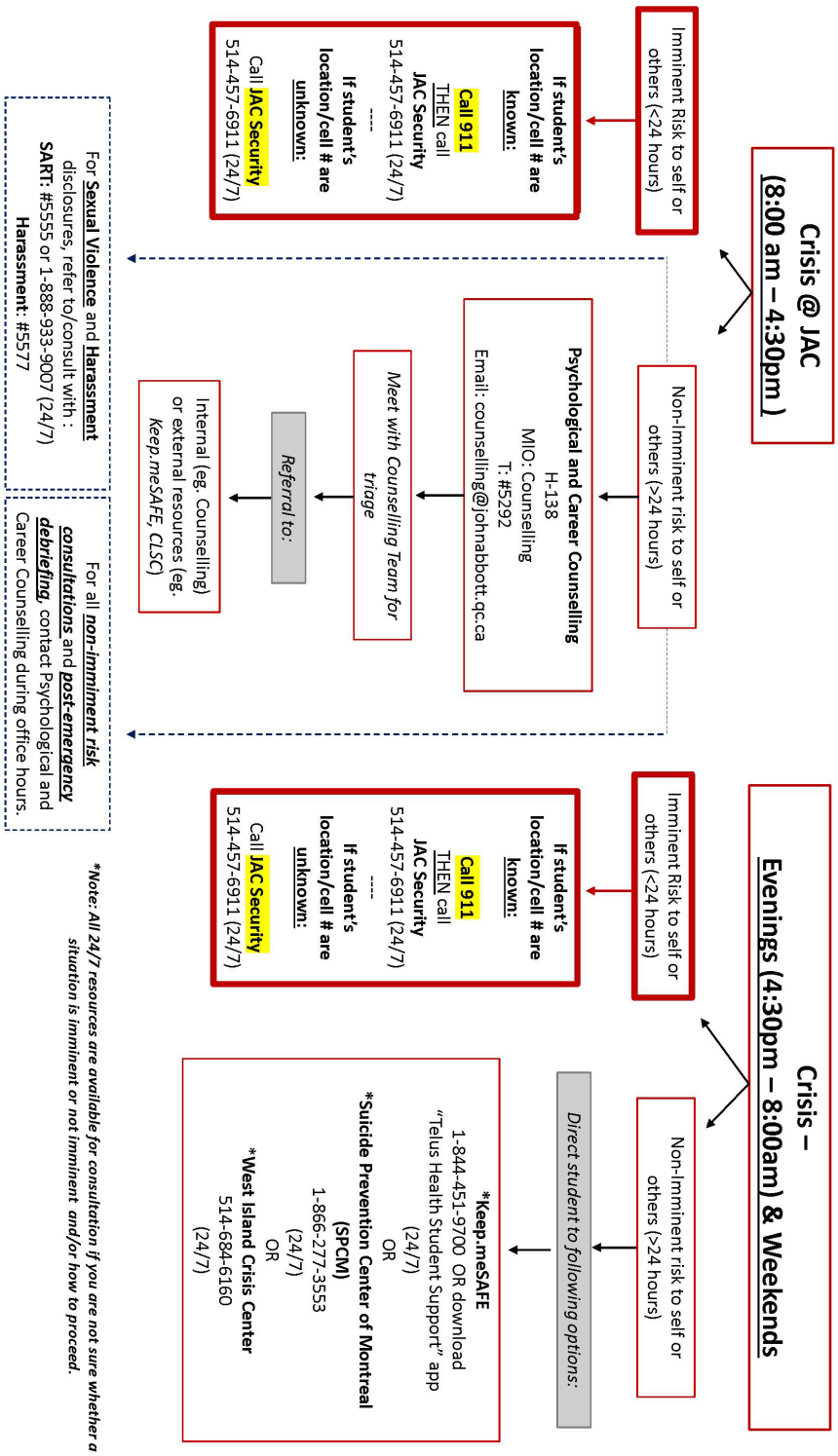
[10]CSA Group. (2020). *Mental health and well-being for post-secondary students.* (CSA Z2003:20). Retrieved from: https://www.csagroup.org/store/product/CSA%20Z2003%3A20/

[11]Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020, June 22). *Measuring positive mental health in Canada*. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/mental-health/mental-health-promotion/measuring-positive-mental-health-canada.html

[12]Cornish, P. (2020). *Stepped Care 2.0: A paradigm shift in mental health.* Springer Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48055-4.

Annexes to this policy are for information purposes only and can be updated without the requirement of a policy amendment by the Board of Governors.

ANNEX A
CRISIS FLOW CHART



Annex B

Remote Crisis Intervention Protocol (from the College website)
Emergency Procedures - John Abbott College

Bodily Harm

Emergency guidelines in the case of a suicidal or homicidal student – remote intervention

The following guidelines outline how to proceed in an emergency situation where the contact between an employee (teaching or non-teaching faculty, professional, and/or support staff) and a student is by remote means (eg. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc). Please follow these guidelines to ensure the safety of the student in the case of an emergency. Note that this protocol is valid in the majority of situations. If in doubt, please reach out to emergency/crisis resources to clarify next steps. In the event that a JAC employee contacts 911 on their own, it remains essential that Security be notified immediately thereafter.

Imminent homicidal or suicidal risk

Situations considered imminent and which require immediate intervention include one or more of the following:

- Intention to attempt suicide has been clearly communicated;
- A plan is in place with access to means and will be carried out within the next 24 hours;
- An attempt is already in progress;
- Student may or may not have prepared a note or declaration outlining their intentions.

Role of Security

- An emergency call is to be placed to the security service via the 6911 or (514) 457-6911 emergency line;
- The security officer will record all the required information and will make a conference call to 911 with the employee online;
- The security officer will use Clara to access all the relevant student contact information to be shared with emergency services (phone number, address);
- The security officer will ask the employee for any document, written conversation, emails related to the current emergency;
- The security officer will write an incident report and attach all the relevant information.

Non imminent homicidal or suicidal risk

Situations considered to be non-imminent and therefore appropriate for referral to internal college resources include:

- The presence of occasional to frequent suicidal or homicidal ideation WITHOUT a plan in place;
- If student does report a plan, there is either no timeline, or the timeline is beyond the next 24 to 48 hours.

For consultation related to any non-imminent homicidal or suicidal risk, and/or to request post- emergency debriefing:

- **Psychological and Career Counselling** (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.):
  514-457-6610, x 5292
  MIO: General Counselling
  counselling@johnabbott.qc.ca

Emergency contact and resources:

- John Abbott College Security service: x 6911, or (514) 457-6911

External Crisis Resources:

- Suicide Action Montreal (24/7): 1-866-APPELLE (277-3553)
- West Island Crisis Center (24/7): 514-684-6160
- UPS Justice – in the case of homicide risk (24/7): 514 861-9331, x 8163 or 8171

Crisis Support for Indigenous Students:

- Hope for Wellness Crisis Line (24/7): 1-855-242-3310 or online chat: https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/ Provides culturally competent assessment, referrals, and support in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. Counselling available in English, French, as well as Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut (upon request).
- Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Support line (24/7): 1-844-413-6649
- Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay Mental Health Services Helpline (24/7): 1-833-632-4357 (HELP)
  Cree Youth in Crisis Hotline (24/7): 1-800-409-6884
  https://www.creehealth.org/emergency
- Khanawake Shakotiia'takehnhas Community Services: 450-632-6880 (M-F; 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) *Ask for an Intake Worker 450-632-6505 (after hours on weekends and holidays)
  **Ask for an After Hours Response Worker http://kscs.ca/service-track/youth
- Wellness Together Canada (24/7)
  Youth: Text WELLNESS to 686868.
  Adults: Text WELLNESS to 741741
  https://ca.portal.gs/

If situations arise where a student expresses any hostile or aggressive behavior that is not acceptable to a staff or faculty member which goes against the Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline procedures, please contact Ronnie Dorsnie 514-457-6610 x 5747

ANNEX C
Action Plan to come