

Health Minds | Healthy Campuses 2020-2023

Strategic Plan

(This strategic plan is being pursued into 2025.)



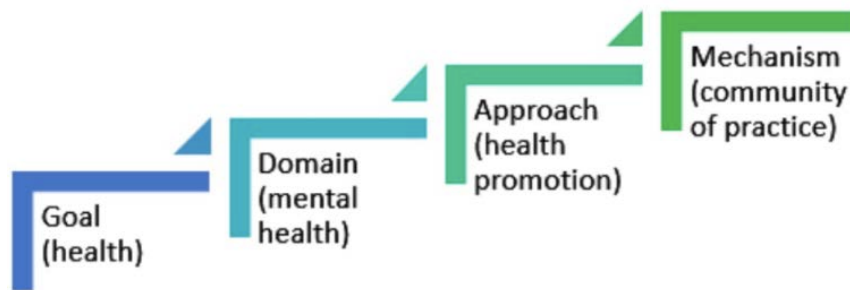
When the BC Partners for Mental Health and Substance Use Information¹ gathered members from four post secondary institutions in 2004-2005, those representatives were concerned about the growing number of mental health problems on their campuses, with a specific focus on crisis intervention and suicide response. They wanted to draw on their collective knowledge and resources to better understand what could be done to address these issues and improve support for their student bodies.

From these early conversations grew what is now known as Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses (HM|HC). HM|HC engages members from all 26 publicly funded post-secondary institutions in BC (as well as several private institutions) in a mandate of promoting mental health and healthier relationships with psychoactive substances (alcohol and other drugs) on campus.

In 2008, a community of practice (CoP) orientation was conceived for the initiative to help member campuses engage in social learning (see fig 1). A CoP is a voluntary community of people who connect regularly about a shared passion to share information and ideas, solve problems, and improve practice. In health contexts, CoPs can play a role in achieving a range of diverse learning and knowledge outcomes including developing skills and competencies, breaking down silos, reducing professional isolation, and facilitating new processes.

¹ The BC Partners for Mental Health and Substance Use Information is a group of nonprofit agencies jointly funded by the Provincial Health Services Authority. The BC Partners gave impetus to and have been the major funder for what has become Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses.

Fig 1. A way to conceive of the relationship between our goals and mechanisms



Promoting well-being involves far more than running social marketing campaigns and providing health services. It involves nurturing healthy communities that support individuals and groups in multiple and dynamic ways. Therefore, HM|HC encourages the development of multi-sector, multi-disciplinary CoPs on individual campuses and links these CoPs within the provincial CoP for inter-campus learning and support. HM|HC was the first campus mental health CoP in Canada and has been the catalyst for a growth of several flourishing ones in other provinces.

HM|HC is also recognized in other parts of the country as having led an important movement in Canada around promoting a “whole campus” approach, building thriving campus environments and healthier campus cultures, looking at health broadly as well as specifically on mental well-being and substance use. It has supported campus personnel to move beyond a clinical and deficit focus to a salutogenic one, advancing mental wellness within the post-secondary population. It has also supported an approach to substance use that is appreciative of the social and individual benefits of use as well as potential harms, while simultaneously encouraging greater intentionality and community dialogue around use.

HM|HC has been at the forefront in inspiring efforts to build capacity, shape healthy campus environments and foster cultures of connectedness--cultures that are equipping members to contribute collaboratively to the well-being of other communities to which they will belong.

Significant HM|HC contributions thus far to the cause of healthier campuses include:

- Positioning of campus mental health in a broader health promotion frame that fosters accountability beyond counselling departments; it requires a whole campus
- Building infrastructure for social learning through a non-hierarchical, multidisciplinary community of practice that includes people who work on and with campuses as well as student champions
- A lead role in producing the seminal resource, *Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach (2014)*
- Co-hosting of the 2015 International Conference on Health Promoting Universities and Colleges that gave birth to the *Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges*
- Reflective work around campus policy processes and positions related to mental health and substance use
- The Changing the Culture of Substance Use project that offers continued insight on understanding and shaping the culture(s) of substance use on campuses
- Democratic and dialogic approaches to community engagement supported by a theoretical foundation
- Catalyzing role in the emergence of “health promotion teams” on campus

Recognized Need

A recent scoping review² sponsored by the Mental Health Commission of Canada recognizes within its findings that

- a) based on recent survey data, significant challenges remain on our campuses to more optimal student experience of strong mental health,
- b) the way forward to meeting these challenges is to cultivate healthy, caring campus environments as integral to the institutional mandate, and to do so by taking a holistic approach (involving the campus community as a whole in efforts that will address relationships, structures and policy as well as refine literacy programs and enhance services), and
- c) a harm reduction approach is required when discussing substance use on campus

Judging from the MHCC recommendations, HM|HC is already a pace-setter. HM|HC works to provide strong network support through collaborations with government, post-secondary institutions, students and other valuable stakeholders invested in campus well-being. These observations fit with HM|HC's sense of need to continue to foster the development of greater connectedness within and between post-secondary institutions, increasing local and provincial capacity to collaborate around complementary strategies and efforts.

Guiding Principles and Practices

Several guiding principles and practices have underpinned and informed the development of a 2020-2023 HM|HC Strategic Plan. These guiding principles are deemed essential to ensure the strategic plan aligns with health promotion and community of practice theory (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2014) and meets the expressed needs and goals of the community, while providing broader vision to support ongoing CoP maturation and development. The guiding principles include:

- Support for stakeholder engagement and democratic process
- Multiple levels (both vertically and horizontally) of collaborative process
- Responsiveness embedded in both process and outcome evaluation
- A focus on value creation
- Theoretical soundness
- Alignment with best and promising practices
- Room for ongoing refinement
- The creation of an attuned “community rhythm”³

² https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2018-10/Scoping_Review_Post_Secondary_Student_Mental_Health_eng.pdf

³ ‘Community rhythm’ describes the ebb and flow of activity in a community of practice. Maintaining a balanced rhythm is at the heart of a successful CoP. Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W. (2002).

Overarching Goal of the 3-Year Strategic Plan

To promote community cohesion, maturation, and collaborative learning, with increased capacity to move towards a brighter future of mental well-being on our BC post-secondary campuses.

Identified Community Goals

The priorities and goals defined in this strategic plan have emerged from input from community members this year and observations from the community Support Team (within CMHA BC and CISUR). In collaboration with the HM|HC Planning Group, a cross-section of 18 stakeholders from BC campuses, the HM|HC Support Team has identified five (5) prioritized goals to guide the community's efforts from 2020 to 2023. In no particular order, they are summarized below:

- 1) To support HM|HC community of practice members to better understand, communicate and implement the principles and calls to action of the Okanagan Charter, and in particular, a socio-ecological health promotion approach to mental health and substance use literacy.
- 2) To create meaningful ongoing opportunities for integrated student engagement and leadership at all levels of the HM|HC community of practice, including campus-based initiatives and broader CoP governance.
- 3) To engage the community through more face-to-face learning events, including regionally-based and stakeholder-tailored learning opportunities aimed at building relationships, collaborative learning and capacity, including at the level of health literacy.
- 4) To support the HM|HC community of practice to increase its capacity for greater self-sufficiency, self-governance and sustainability, and develop and refine the structure necessary for it to do so.
- 5) To update and refine CoP processes related to infrastructure, communication and stewardship for the CoP Support Team to facilitate community knowledge transfer and support partner relationships

Process Objectives

In this portion of the strategic plan, each priority goal previously articulated is animated through process objectives intended to support achievement of these community-identified priorities over the upcoming three year period.

Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press

Goal 1: To support HM|HC community of practice members to better understand, communicate and implement the principles and calls to action of the Okanagan Charter, and in particular, a socio-ecological health promotion approach to mental health and substance use literacy.

Process Objectives

- Engage with the Canadian Health Promoting Campuses Network (CHPCN) leadership in conversations around how HM|HC might support the promotion and mobilization of the Okanagan Charter on BC campuses
- Create a Working Group with members of the CHPCN and members of the HM|HC Planning Group focused on Charter mobilization efforts for the next three years
- Engage with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training and CHPCN to encourage adoption of the Okanagan Charter on BC campuses and support the development of tools for campuses around Charter mobilization
- Identify key areas of a socio-ecological approach that require greater attention within the capacity development priorities of the CoP and promote cross-sectoral engagement and dialogue with campuses, such as face-to-face and virtual meetings informed by dialogic approaches, inclusive of provincial and municipal governments, health authorities, NGOs and other relevant groups (such as CAI) in addressing these areas
- Identify stakeholders within the K-12 system who are or may be interested in engaging with the HM|HC CoP, such as BC School Centred Mental Health Coalition and BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, identify opportunities for cross collaboration (e.g., on the challenges of transition) and develop engagement opportunities between campus and K-12, such as integration of K-12 stakeholders and the Comprehensive School Health approach in the biennial Summit

Goal 2: To create meaningful ongoing opportunities for integrated student engagement and leadership at all levels of the HM|HC community of practice, including campus-based initiatives and broader CoP governance.

Process Objectives

- Engage with students, including student leaders and staff “champions” (such as student union staff), to develop a plan towards integrative involvement with their fellow stakeholders in the CoP, including a stronger role for peer support initiatives within campus collaborative health promotion endeavors.
- Identify aligned priorities between campus student leader groups and the HM|HC CoP, as well as potential areas for contribution or collaboration
- Ensure a meaningful level of participation by students in the HM|HC Planning Group, particularly in consultation around areas of CoP self-governance and leadership in the CoP
- Work with students and student leaders to consider meaningful roles for students in planning the biennial Summit
- Integrate 2-3 student intern/practicum placement roles (1 undergraduate or college, 1 graduate) into the HM|HC Support Team (depending on funding) to support event planning and CoP management

Goal 3: To engage the community through more face-to-face learning events, including regionally-based and stakeholder-tailored learning opportunities aimed at building relationships, collaborative learning and capacity, including at the level of health literacy.

Process Objectives

- Host “HM|HC Talks” online dialogue sessions over the course of each academic calendar year on different community-identified areas of concern/interest
- Hold Regional Forum(s) in collaboration with an interested campus or region around a focused area within their region.
- Host the biennial HM|HC Summit in the 2020/21 and 2022/23 fiscal years
- Provide e-news communications in alignment with HM|HC Talks sessions on identified health literacy priorities. E-news will include current articles and community resources, as well as information about local, national and international events, as well as opportunities for campus support
- Continue regular conversations with fellow campus CoPs in other provinces to continue to develop a repertoire of face-to-face engagement opportunities, promote learning opportunities to our campuses from other regions and stay up to date on campus mental health best practices across Canada

Goal 4: To support the HM|HC community of practice to increase its capacity for greater self-sufficiency, self-governance and sustainability, and develop and refine the structure necessary for it to do so.

Process Objectives

- Work in collaboration with the HM|HC Planning Group⁴ to mobilize priorities and goals identified within the Strategic Plan
- Co-create an agreed upon process of membership renewal with members of the Planning Group
- Develop a plan for the Planning Group to assume a greater formal role in community leadership with CoP approval for this by the time of the 2020/2021 HM|HC Summit
- Create a member-profile database of CoP members including their respective work on campus and connections to HM|HC
- Share the community database with CoP and collaboratively identify potential mechanisms to better facilitate fluid cross-communication within the CoP
- Host a learning event on communities of practice and invite experts on CoPs to attend and provide feedback on HM|HC
- Earmark a portion of funding (depending on availability) to be managed by the Planning Group, to be used towards objectives that support the community in reaching the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan

Goal 5: To update and refine the CoP processes related to infrastructure, communication and stewardship for the CoP Support Team to facilitate community knowledge transfer and support partner relationships

⁴ Since the formulation of the Strategic Plan, a decision has been made to rename the Planning Group as the Leadership Committee and it will henceforth be known as such in future HM|HC related work.

Process Objectives

- Applying and adapting a process and practices protocol to enhance HM|HC Summit preparation and hosting
- Refining HM|HC website content to better reflect the nature of the COP and enable readier access to resources
- Evaluate the status of current protocols and existing processes and identify needs for further development annually

Evaluation

Prior to the commencement of each new academic calendar year (i.e. over the summer session), the CoP Support Team will meet to discuss the status of each process objective within the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan and update the plan as necessary. Following this meeting, the team will identify any areas of the plan that require CoP input for refinement and will engage the necessary CoP members (e.g., the Planning Group) in the process of evaluation and plan updating. Beyond simply monitoring the usual quantitative measures (focusing on outputs), such as the attendance at and survey feedback from in-person learning events (e.g., the Summit, regional forums, HM|HC Talks), e-news access, website visits, resource production and downloads, the HM|HC Support Team and Planning Group will utilize a responsive evaluation approach. Besides the relevance of its adoption by the BC Partners, a responsive evaluation is more apropos than positivistic causal accounts of effect to assess the impact of a CoP initiative on several counts:

- It carries greater capacity to illuminate complex interactions of human beings in their involvement in such a health promotion endeavor
- In addition to shedding light on the nature of this experience, it also engages CoP members in a more participatory way to capture the meaning and value of their practice with its varying degrees of challenge and benefit
- Responsive evaluation can give voice to different perspectives and strengthen working relationships as it fosters further dialogue among stakeholders toward enhancing the learning capacity of the CoP

One instrument that could serve well among other tools to demonstrate outcomes in keeping with the overall goal of the Strategic Plan and aspects of achieving it might be the Most Significant Change tool which can highlight stories of the kind of transformation the HM|HC initiative aims to bring about in its pursuit of improved mental well-being and healthier relationships with substances on BC post-secondary campuses.