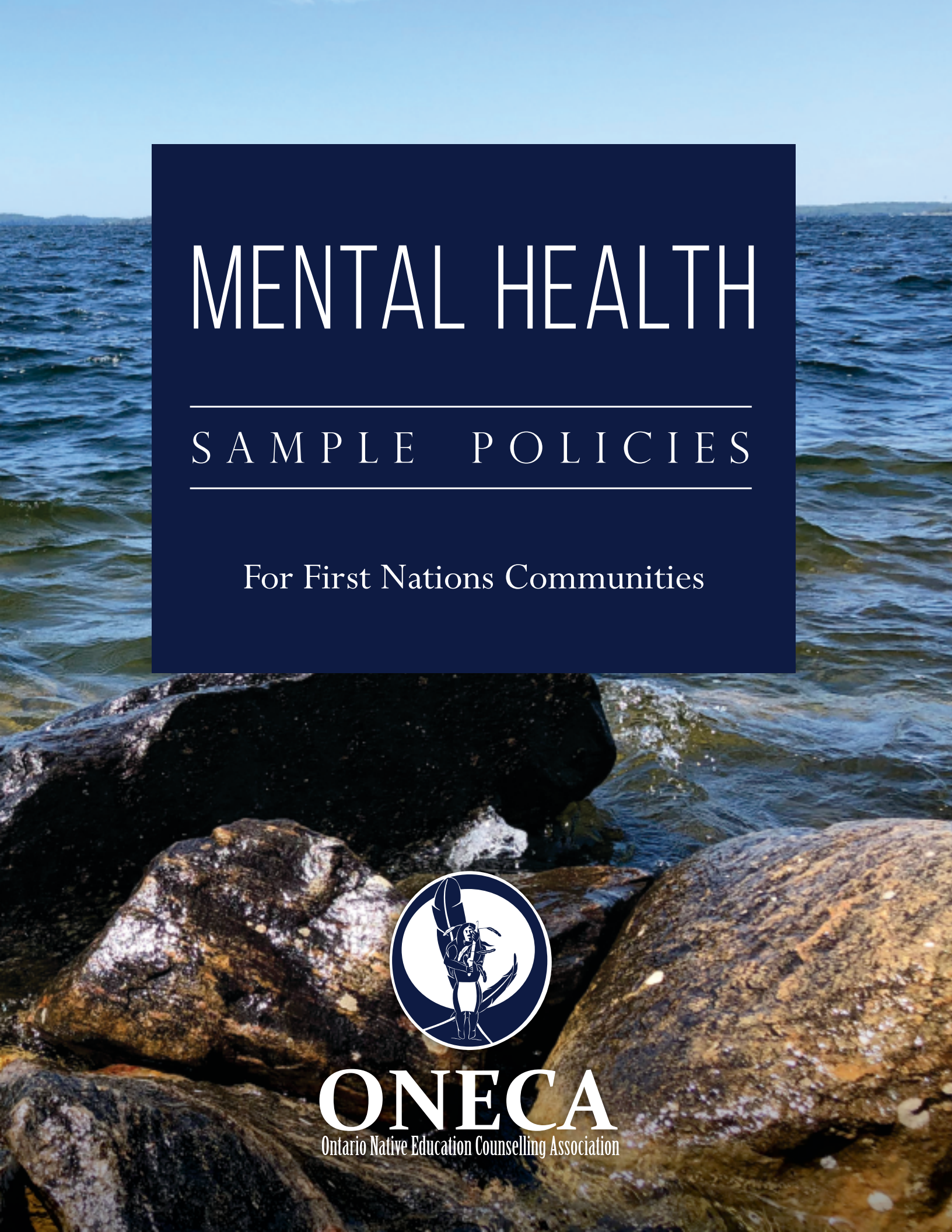

MENTAL HEALTH

SAMPLE POLICIES

For First Nations Communities

ONECA

Ontario Native Education Counselling Association

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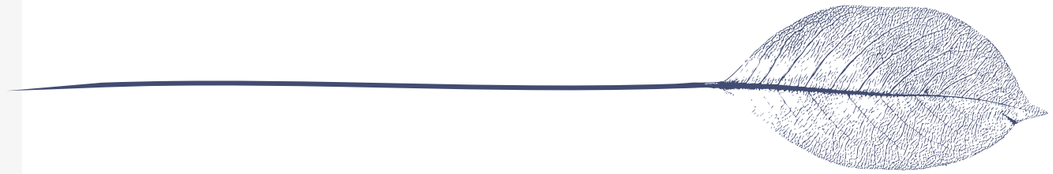
ONECA

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) is an organization comprised of First Nation Education Counsellors that was incorporated in 1985. ONECA is founded upon principles that recognize that, although a variety of counselling and educational tools and programs exist in Ontario, the development of Native communities requires tools and programs designed specifically for improving Native Counselling and Education services.



BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA), hosted a Post-Secondary Gathering in Sault Ste. Marie on November 19-20, 2019 in response to recommendations articulated at the 2019 Annual ONECA Conference.

The 2019 ONECA Post-Secondary Gathering included a presentation on mental health issues and policy development, interactive sessions for information sharing and working sessions for the discussion of post-secondary policies. Participant feedback from the Gathering indicated a need for information on mental health and for guidance in developing mental health policies due to an increasing prevalence of First Nations students with mental health challenges in post-secondary education.

To address the identified needs in the area of mental health, ONECA undertook the development of the following resources as a starting place to learn more about mental health and to provide sample content for the design of mental health policies: *Post-Secondary Students and Mental Health, Policy Guide, for First Nations Post-Secondary Student Support Personnel (2020) and, Mental Health, Sample Policies, For First Nations Communities (2020).*

ONECA remains committed to supporting First Nations communities to improve Native counselling and education services.

SAMPLE POLICY TEMPLATE #1

Policy Title: Students Experiencing Anxiety and/or Depression

Vision: All First Nations students get the guidance they require to achieve their educational goals.

Values: First Nations Student Support personnel:

- will be accessible, open-minded and respectful in their communications with students.
- respect the confidentially of the students' personal information.
- will treat all students fairly based on consistent policy approaches.
- will be transparent and accountable to students.
- understand that decisions and communication with students is important in meeting deadlines at the post-secondary institution.

Guiding Principles:

First Nations Student Support personnel:

- require fair and transparent guidelines for the administration of funding for First Nations students in pursuit of post-secondary education,
- support First Nations students to achieve their educational goals, and
- need to guide and advocate for First Nations students when required and as requested.

First Nations post-secondary students:

- require access to clearly stated policies and processes to access the financial support required for post-secondary education,
- deserve to be treated fairly and respectfully, and
- may require guidance to access information to obtain financial and support services to be successful in their educational studies.

Purpose:

Anxiety disorders and depression, with the right treatment, can be successfully treated. The purpose of this policy is: a) to acknowledge that anxiety and depression can have negative impacts on an individuals' coping skills and their ability to succeed in achieving their educational goals, and b) to offer students guidance to get the treatment needed to limit the impacts of anxiety and depression on their educational success.

Procedures to Guide Students:

Counsellors, Elders and Traditional Knowledge holders can offer suggestions and make referrals to help manage anxiety and depression, and to increase coping skills.

Step 1: A student experiencing anxiety and/or depression should seek help from a qualified medical professional or the local Indigenous health care professional.

Step 2: After the student seeks medical support from a qualified medical professional or local Indigenous health care professional, the student should discuss the results of the medical diagnosis and treatment with a Counsellor at the post-secondary institution. A learning plan may be developed for the student.

Step 3: The student should follow through with the treatment plan and keep in regular contact with the Counsellor at the post-secondary institution as changes occur in the health condition or learning plan.

Notes:

All students must refer to policies of the First Nation post-secondary funding organization with respect to appeals and conditions to receive and maintain post-secondary funding support, i.e. must attain a passing grade, not attending school, etc.

This policy only refers to students currently enrolled in post-secondary studies.

This information is being provided to assist First Nations Student Support personnel in making policy decisions to support First Nations students. Amendments to suit individual organizations is encouraged.

ONECA is NOT LEGALLY LIABLE for the content of this policy. Organizations using this policy template must abide by all laws respecting legal and human rights obligations.

SAMPLE POLICY TEMPLATE #2

Policy Title: Students Who Suspect They Have a Mental Health Challenge

Vision: All First Nations students get the guidance they require to achieve their educational goals.

Values: First Nations Student Support personnel:

- will be accessible, open-minded and respectful in communications with students.
- respect the confidentially of the students' personal information.
- will treat all students fairly based on consistent policy approaches.
- will be transparent and accountable to all students.
- understand that decisions and communication with student is important in meeting deadlines at the post-secondary institution.

Guiding Principles:

First Nations Student Support personnel:

- require fair and transparent guidelines for the administration of funding for First Nations students in pursuit of post-secondary education,
- support First Nations students to achieve their educational goals, and
- need to guide and advocate for First Nations students when required and as requested.

First Nations post-secondary students:

- require access to clearly stated policies and processes to access the financial support required for post-secondary education,
- deserve to be treated fairly and respectfully, and
- may require guidance to access information to obtain financial and support services to be successful in their educational studies.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is two-fold:

1) This policy provides guidance to First Nations Student Support personnel who administer post-secondary funding for First Nations students who suspect they may have a mental health challenge.
2) This policy provides First Nations students who suspect they may have a mental health challenge with a pathway to obtain a medical diagnosis and the specialized support they require.

Procedures to Guide Students:

The Counsellor at the post-secondary institution can assist the student and continues contact with the student once a diagnosis has been made from a qualified health professional or local Indigenous health care professional. A psycho-educational assessment and learning plan may be required.

Documentation from the post-secondary institution is helpful to the First Nations Student Support personnel when accommodations are required.

Step 1: Students who suspect they may have a mental health challenge are required to share the concern with the First Nations Student Support personnel.

Step 2: The First Nations Student Support personnel will make a referral to the Counsellor of the post-secondary institution for guidance and follow-up.

Step 3: The First Nations Student Support personnel will advocate to the First Nation funding organization for accommodation as required and communicates the decision-making process and decision to the student.

Step 4: The student is advised to keep the First Nations Student Support personnel apprised of any changes to the student's condition and learning plan. *Changes not communicated to the First Nations Student Support personnel, could jeopardize financial assistance.

Notes:

All students must refer to policies of the First Nation post-secondary funding organization with respect to appeals and conditions to receive and maintain post-secondary funding support, i.e. must attain a passing grade, not attending school, etc.

This policy only refers to students currently enrolled in post-secondary studies.

This information is being provided to assist First Nations Student Support personnel in making policy decisions to support First Nations students. Amendments to suit individual organizations is encouraged.

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SAMPLE POLICY TEMPLATE #3

Policy Title: Students Who Self-Identify as Diagnosed with a Mental Health Challenge

Vision: All First Nations students get the guidance they require to achieve their educational goals.

Values: First Nations Student Support personnel:

- will be accessible, open-minded and respectful in communications with students.
- respect the confidentially of the students' personal information.
- will treat all students fairly based on consistent policy approaches.
- will be transparent and accountable to all students.
- understand that decisions and communication with student is important in meeting deadlines at the post-secondary institution.

Guiding Principles:

First Nations Student Support personnel:

- require fair and transparent guidelines for the administration of funding for First Nations students in pursuit of post-secondary education,
- support First Nations students to achieve their educational goals, and
- need to guide and advocate for First Nations students when required and as requested.

First Nations post-secondary students:

- require access to clearly stated policies and processes to access the financial support required for post-secondary education,
- deserve to be treated fairly and respectfully, and
- may require guidance to access information to obtain financial and support services to be successful in their educational studies.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is two-fold:

1) This policy provides guidance to First Nations Student Support personnel who administer post-secondary funding for First Nations students who self-identified as having a mental health challenge as diagnosed by a qualified health professional or Indigenous health care professional.
2) This policy provides First Nations students with mental health challenge a pathway to seek accommodation when applying for and to maintain post-secondary funding support while pursing post-secondary education studies.

Procedures to Guide Students:

Students who self-identify as having a mental health challenge as determined by a qualified health professional or a local Indigenous health care professional should submit a recent psycho-educational assessment to the Counsellor at the post-secondary institution. The Counsellor at the post-secondary institution may work with the student to devise a learning plan.

The Counsellor at the post-secondary institution assists and continues contact with the student during their attendance at the post-secondary institution.

Students who self-identify as having a mental health challenge may possess documentation that includes a recent (within the last 5 years) psycho-educational assessment and a learning plan.

Step 1: The student should be encouraged to share any relevant documentation (i.e. the student learning plan) obtained regarding a mental health challenge to the First Nations Student Support personnel when accommodations are required.

Step 2: The First Nations Student Support personnel will advocate to the First Nation funding organization for accommodation as required and will communicate the decision-making process and the decision to the student.

Step 3: The student should be encouraged to keep the First Nations Student Support personnel apprised of any and all changes to the students learning plan. *Changes not communicated to the First Nations Post-Secondary Counsellor, could jeopardize financial assistance.

Notes:

All students must refer to policies of the First Nation post-secondary funding organization with respect to appeals and conditions to receive and maintain post-secondary funding support, i.e. must attain a passing grade, not attending school, etc.

This policy only refers to students currently enrolled in post-secondary studies.

This information is being provided to assist First Nations Student Support personnel in making policy decisions to support First Nations students. Amendments to suit individual organizations is encouraged.

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GLOSSARY

Ableism: refers to attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities.

Alter-abled: same as differently abled

First Nations Student Support personnel: this refers to individuals employed by First Nations communities to administer the federal Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

First Nations Organizations: organizations that employ First Nations Student Support personnel

First Nations Students: Status Indians (registered under the Indian Act) that are eligible for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

Indigenous: this term is used interchangeably with First Nations; it includes First Nations, Inuit & Métis.

Indigenous health care professional/Qualified health care professional: professionals regulated by the Regulated Health Care Professions Act, 1991 and health profession Acts.[1] Some examples of regulated health care professionals are: Audiologists, Chiropractors, Physicians, Psychologists and Nurse Practitioners.

Post-secondary institutions: this includes provincially recognized mainstream colleges and universities and provincially recognized Indigenous post-secondary institutions

Psycho-educational Assessment: a type of psychological report that focuses on assessment and interpretation of educationally related psychological tests and educational tests, including tests of intelligence and cognitive abilities, memory, achievement tests, and measures of behaviour. It is designed to answer these types of questions: Does the student have a learning disability, developmental disability, attentional problems? What are the students academic and cognitive abilities, strengths, and weaknesses?[2]

(Mental Health) Challenges: the term 'challenges' replaces what has been more commonly referred to as mental health disorders to acknowledge health and healing from Indigenous philosophies and worldviews; whereby health is based on a wellness model rather than the medical model which is based on illness.[3]

[1] For more information, refer to the Regulated Health Care Professions Act, 1991, Schedule 1 – Self-Governing Health Professions, https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/91r18#BK52

[2] Pellarin, Suzanne, Demystifying the Psycho-Educational Assessment Report, slide presentation accessed February 3, 2020 https://www.ldatschool.ca/demystifying-the-psycho-educational-assessment-report/

[3] Linklater, Renee, Decolonizing Trauma Work, Indigenous Stories and Strategies, Fernwood Publishing Company Inc., 2014

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