

2013

**Ryerson Mental Health Advisory Committee -
Appendix**

RYERSON STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO MENTAL WELL-BEING

Ryerson is committed to the success of all its community members by creating an environment that is supportive of mental well-being. This includes an ongoing dedication to creating and sustaining a supportive campus culture and institutional ethos without stigmatization and discrimination with regard to mental health.

Drawing from the Public Health Agency of Canada definition of mental health, Ryerson's understanding of mental well-being is: "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."

Issues of mental well-being, stigma, and sanism can affect all members of the Ryerson community, and can interfere with their success as well as impact on the university's mission. In order to support Ryerson's vision, the aim of this statement is to develop and maintain a vibrant, flourishing university community and environment that sustains mental well-being for all members to succeed. This will be achieved through providing opportunities for mental well-being promotion, education, capacity-building and support.

Equity, respect and fairness will be promoted through an accessible and accommodating work, learning and social environment. Ryerson will take a proactive stance regarding the mental well-being of all members of the community. Ryerson recognizes the shared responsibility of the institution and all community members to support mental well-being on campus, and encourages collaboration among all faculty, staff and students to this end. Ryerson will provide a range of services and programs that promote mental well-being awareness, education and support for all community members.

MENTAL WELL-BEING PRINCIPLES FOR RYERSON POLICIES

In order for Ryerson to effectively act on and maintain the “Statement of Commitment to Mental Well-Being” we need to ensure that our policies support mental well-being and embody a number of principles consistent with this goal.

We look to policy to provide an ethos of fairness and inclusion. With respect to ensuring that Ryerson policies are supportive of mental well-being, we recognize the potential for competing rights and responsibilities that can arise in the classroom and the workplace. At a minimum we need policies that meet legislative standards (for example, we need to comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act), but our expectation is that we will make every effort to meet the spirit of legislation and go beyond what is minimally required. In order to ensure inclusion we need to find the right balance between required rigor and standards in the classroom and the workplace, and the needs of those who require flexibility, accessibility and accommodation. We need policies and procedures that allow us to find that balance rather than simply indicating which rights and responsibilities “trump” one another. We need to recognize and allow for the time required for problem solving in complex situations and this has to be balanced by realistic timelines for everyone involved. We need to acknowledge that policy will never cover every eventuality and therefore an important goal of policy is to enable the fair and equitable exercise of discretion. We need to acknowledge all of these realities as we attempt to craft creative solutions/accommodations and a supportive working and learning environment for all members of the Ryerson community.

The following is a **list of Policy Principles** that we believe will support mental well-being at Ryerson. Ryerson University policies should:

- be respectful of human dignity, the whole person, multiple perspectives and experience, as well as individual privacy and confidentiality
- establish flexible responses with processes that create minimal barriers and stress for all involved parties
- promote a collaborative, compassionate and flexible approach to problem resolution; discourage adversarial processes
- seamlessly integrate and align with one another
- provide clearly identified ways to navigate systems and processes, ensuring that the people involved are adequately skilled and trained
- clarify roles and accountability for all parties
- be grounded in fairness, equity and transparency
- encourage and integrate universal design and accessibility
- reflect an anti-discriminatory and anti-stigma stance
- challenge unsupportive or poisoned working, learning or extra-curricular environments within the university
- be written in plain language

- undergo regular review

As noted, Ryerson policies should be reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the principles outlined in this document as well as the evolving Ryerson community.

Guidelines for consideration when reviewing a policy through a mental well-being lens:

Does this policy...

- Address our community's mental well-being?
- Do enough to benefit its constituents' mental well-being?
- Encourage our community's mental well-being?
- Promote an institutional ethos of emphasis on and support for mental well-being?
- Ensure there is no discrimination or stigmatization against issues of mental well-being?
- Ensure that there are no unintended negative consequences?
- Create processes for problem resolution that are easy to navigate and create minimal stress?
- Allow for and/or encourage consistent flexibility and compassion, particularly in cases of problem resolution?
- Ensure equitable treatment?
- Use appropriate language?
- Align with other related or relevant policies?
- Align with the "Access Ryerson" framework?

In addition, in keeping with the principles outlined, Ryerson should ensure transparency and accountability by conducting ongoing evaluations through the availability of feedback mechanisms for community members, and through periodic surveys, focus groups and other information collection instruments.