



MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 17, 2019

ALBERTA SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

Alberta — Newly released survey data helps understand health issues on Alberta post-secondary campuses and highlights the need for continued mental health support.

The provincial results of the 2019 National College Health Assessment (NCHA) survey were released during the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention National Conference. The results are made available through Healthy Campus Alberta at <https://www.healthycampusalberta.ca/resources/ncha2019>, and are the largest dataset on Alberta post-secondary student health behaviours collected to date.

Report Details

The NCHA is a self-reported online survey that collects information on students' health behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions. It is a valid and reliable, web-based survey developed by the American College Health Association (ACHA). Representing a collaboration among 24 Alberta post-secondary institutions, 15,102 students participated in the survey in Spring 2019 with most institutions administering the survey on a three-year cycle.

Key Findings From The Survey

- 81.8% of students (or 12,240 students) report they would consider seeking help from a mental health professional if they experienced a serious personal problem (up from 78.6% in 2016)
- 16.4% of students (or 2,454 students) reported seriously considering suicide within the last 12 months (up from 13.1% in 2016)
- Within the last 12 months, one in four students report being diagnosed or treated for anxiety, and one in five students report being diagnosed or treated for depression
- 79.9% of students (or 11,955 students) report agreeing or strongly agreeing that their campus environment is one where their mental health is supported
- 78.1% of students (or 11,686 students) report having good to excellent health (down from 81.3% in 2016)

Post-secondary institutions in Alberta have been working together and with community partners to support student mental health. Since 2017, Government funding previously available to 5 Alberta universities has expanded to support 26 post-secondary institutions; this funding has supported the development and implementation of mental health strategies and frameworks on campuses, as well as the formal establishment of collaborative regional networks. The impact on student mental health has been substantial in the provision of services and programs, and in contributing to awareness, early help-seeking, and a reduction in stigma. However, there is still more work to be done through further



collaboration among post-secondary institutions and mental health service providers, and continued Government financial support.

Since 2016, many Alberta post-secondary institutions have seen an improvement in the creation of supportive environments on campuses and in help-seeking behaviours. With this comes the potential increased demand for health services and supports as stigma is reduced. This might contribute to the increase in the disclosure of self-reported mental illness diagnosis and suicidal ideation observed in the NCHA data. As such, there is still a great deal more work to be done.

Individuals with mental health concerns are encouraged to seek help; Alberta has a 24/7 mental health helpline: 1-877-303-2642

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