

LGBTQ2S+ STUDENT CONSULTATION & SERVICE RESPONSE



THEMES



THE PROMISING PRACTICE

To inform positive change within Wellness Services, an in-person consultation was conducted with LGBTQ2S+ students on campus as an opportunity to assess the needs for more inclusive, responsive, and appropriate services. This needs assessment was a collaborative effort, co-developed and hosted by Mount Royal University's Wellness Services and the Student Association's Pride Centre.

WELLNESS SERVICES is committed to ensuring our services and programs are inclusive for LGBTQ2+ Individuals

Hello my pronouns are: _____ Activated a pronoun preference question on the demographic form

Held a focus group within the Pride Centre to understand facilitators and barriers to well-being among LGBTQ2+ individuals

Facilitated the inclusion of student voices on AHS' Provincial Advisory Council focused on healthcare delivery and services for LGBTQ2+ individuals

mru.ca/wellness

We want to hear from you on how we can continue to improve our services and programs

Monday, November 5 | 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Drop in to the new Pride Centre to share your thoughts

Figure 20. The promotion created and disseminated for the LGBTQ2S+ student consultation in the Pride Centre.

RATIONALE

The interest in creating a consultation with LGBTQ2S+ students resulted from feedback from an institutional well-being survey and a subsequent consultation conducted in 2017. Noting specific concerns regarding service provision for the health and well-being of the LGBTQ2S+ population, Wellness Services saw the benefit in conducting a joint-collaboration consultation to discern opportunities to make Wellness Services at Mount Royal University more inclusive, responsive, and appropriate.

PURPOSE

To co-develop meaningful conversation with LGBTQ2S+ students at Mount Royal University and respond appropriately by building connections between this population and service providers. This process was done to improve trust and accessibility of on-campus mental health services, as well as use feedback to inform change in processes, programs, and services accordingly.



Figure 21. The Pride Centre on Mount Royal University's campus.

GOALS

- 1 To ensure that MRU Wellness Services and programs are inclusive, responsive, and appropriate.
- 2 To encourage access and increase accessibility of Wellness Services to LGBTQ2S+ students.
- 3 To build relationships with other institutional stakeholders and diverse students through co-facilitation.

IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the implementation of this initiative, employees ensured that voices would be heard and that an accurate record of the dialogue was created. After the institutional well-being survey in 2017, Wellness Services discussed the idea of a joint-effort student consultation with the Pride Centre and Students' Association in order to connect with LGBTQ2S+ students on campus. The Pride Centre was sought as a collaborator due to the accessible nature of the space; it was already a high-traffic safe space that LGBTQ2S+ students were utilizing. There was a clear benefit in meeting with students where they felt most safe to foster a trusting relationship.

In preparation, employees in Wellness Services conducted background research on how to

consult with this particular group, including considerations of confidentiality, potential barriers, and how to incorporate inclusive language. Employees wanted to create an environment that was accepting, safe, and knowledgeable of the diversity of experiences in the LGBTQ2S+ community. As the format of the consultation and questions were developed, all resources were piloted with the Pride Centre Co-ordinator and a Students' Association representative, and their feedback was incorporated. The final guiding questions for the consultation were as follows:

- A. What are some of the barriers you may have experienced in accessing MRU Wellness Services?
- B. What specifically can Wellness Services do to make their services more inclusive of the needs of LGBTQ2S+ folks?
- C. In past group discussions, we've heard that it may be important for Wellness Service offerings to be promoted to LGBTQ2S+ folks in a targeted way. How can this be done so that it's not tokenizing?
- D. What can Wellness Services do to make the Wellness Services space (physical or social/emotional) itself feel more comfortable for you to access?
- E. How can we demonstrate that we are committed to supporting the LGBTQ2S+ community?
- F. What else would you like us to know?
Other suggestions?

It was decided that the consultation should be held in the Pride Centre. Promotion for this

event was done mainly through Pride Centre communication channels. The final decision to be made concerned the moderators and support personnel in the room; a Healthy Campus Team Lead within Wellness Services would moderate the consultation, supported by the Wellness Services Administrator of Health Services and Optimal Therapy, and the Chair of Student Counselling. The intention behind the presence of these individuals was to answer questions related to service delivery in real time.

There were four ways in which students were invited to participate. As the moderator guided discussion among students, there were chart papers set up in the space with the same guiding questions for students to respond to as an alternative to the discussion. A room was set aside where students could have private one-on-one interaction with either the Wellness Services Administrator or Chair of Student Counselling. Additionally, a Google form was shared after the consultation for students to give final thoughts. Prior to commencement, all participants were given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their pronouns to the group through an oral introduction and name tags. The consultation lasted a total of two hours, during which time students were able to drop-in and participate as they could.

EVALUATION

Immediately following the consultation, Wellness Services staff held a debrief meeting during which staff reflected on their service delivery from an inclusivity perspective.

The consultation data was summarized into themes, which were then transformed into actionable items and assigned to different units based on capacity and type of service provision. For example, it was the responsibility of Health Services to find local physicians who offered services specific to the LGBTQ2+ community, and start conversations about building connections between that individual and MRU.

It took approximately one week for all action items to be confirmed. These were shared with the Pride Centre Co-ordinator, thereby setting up a system of accountability for Wellness Services. Since this time, Wellness Services has maintained a relationship with the Students' Association and the Pride Centre, through consistent commitment to these action items. For example, the consultation resulted in a counsellor being made available in the Pride Centre weekly.

SUCCESSSES

The ability of all those involved to listen to what people were saying was critical to the success of this case study. By facilitating, listening, and creating a safe place for difficult conversations, Wellness Services was able to understand gaps in offerings and how to respond appropriately. Having various levels of Wellness Services' leadership in the room was also beneficial, as many questions were directed to leadership, and students appreciated having a direct line of contact. Additionally, this project ran smoothly largely due to pre-existing relationships between Wellness Services, the Students' Association, and the Pride Centre.

NOTED CHALLENGES

The nature of the consultation resulted in challenges in advertising. When asking for individuals to share their personal experiences, it is critical to be mindful that a person is willingly being vulnerable. There should be an effort to give something back to that person directly. This was achieved through the sharing and execution of action items by Wellness Services. Conversations with stakeholders emphasized the benefit of the consultation for all parties involved, rather than focusing on the benefits only for Wellness Services.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mount Royal University's Student Counselling Services is open to the possibility of a bookable hour with students using the Pride Centre in the near future. Based on identification of themes, Student Counselling Services would be interested in exploring the expansion of mental health programming into the Pride Centre, such as anxiety groups. There is also a sustained relationship between Wellness Services and the Pride Centre. ●