
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020AEST0024-000698
April 16, 2020

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

Free counselling service launches for post-secondary students

VANCOUVER – The Government of British Columbia has launched Here2Talk, a new mental-health counselling and referral service for post-secondary students.

The service offers confidential, free single-session services by app, phone or online chat, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“Until now, post-secondary students have never had access to 24/7 provincewide mental-health support services,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. “Students advocated for years to fill the gap in available mental-health counselling services in British Columbia. Over the past several months, we’ve been working together to develop this new free service. With the advent of COVID-19 and the increased stress it puts on students, we doubled down to get students the supports they so desperately need. I’m very excited to say that Here2Talk is now available for all 555,000 post-secondary students registered across B.C.”

For the first time, every student in B.C. has access to 24/7 mental-health services – whether the students are rural, urban, domestic, Indigenous, international, public, private, full-time, part-time or in trades training. Here2Talk will complement other supports on campus and in the community, including new virtual mental-health supports announced April 9, 2020, by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

“For too long, mental-health care was an afterthought in B.C., and many post-secondary students weren’t able to access the help they needed. Here2Talk is changing that,” said Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. “Now every student can access supports 24/7 without stigma or judgment – and it’s free, because access to mental-health care shouldn’t depend on the size of your bank account.”

Chat sessions with a trained counsellor can be accessed by downloading the Here2Talk app or visiting: here2talk.ca

Students can speak to a counsellor by phone, toll free at 1 877 857-3397 or direct 604 642-5212. Students calling from outside Canada can dial 1 604 642-5212 (international calling charges may apply).

Hundreds of students throughout B.C. provided feedback and ideas that were used to develop and tailor Here2Talk to deliver the kind of help students felt they needed. The on-demand service, operated by Morneau Shepell, will support students dealing with challenges such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, pressure to perform, crises, racism and relationships. Counsellors will also be equipped to refer students to local resources in their communities.

For the launch, web, phone and chat services are currently available in English and French. Phone services are also available in additional languages upon request.

Government is providing \$1.5 million per year for the service.

Improving mental health at post-secondary institutions is an integral part of government's actions outlined in A Pathway to Hope, B.C.'s roadmap for making the system of mental-health and addictions care better for people no matter where they live in the province. Implementing A Pathway to Hope is a shared priority with the BC Green Party caucus and is part of the Confidence and Supply Agreement.

Quotes:

Jonny Morris, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association BC –

“Here2Talk means post-secondary students who need access to mental-health counselling services will have expanded virtual access to help anytime they need it, in a way that makes sense for them. Because it is designed for the post-secondary demographic, it provides targeted support for students at any time when they need to connect. This service stands to increase access to confidential student support provincewide, while linking to existing services on campuses and in community.”

Tanysha Klassen, chairperson, BC Federation of Students –

“Post-secondary education comes with lots of challenges and stress. This new service, Here2Talk, will help make a real difference in the lives of many students. Even though there are support services on some campuses and in the community, they're not always easy to access and some students feel uncomfortable asking for help. Here2Talk's chat, phone and online services will make it much easier for students to reach out for help when they need it.”

Norah Joyce, Canada chief commercial officer and executive vice-president, Morneau Shepell

“As the largest and the most fulsome provider of mental-health and well-being services in Canada, including for post-secondary students, we are excited to work with the government of British Columbia on this important partnership. We applaud its leadership in supporting the mental health of every student in this province through this program and are honoured to have been chosen to help provide it, especially now with anxiety related to COVID-19 impacting large sections of the population.”

Quick Facts:

- Morneau Shepell administers the largest clinical network in Canada. It has delivered mental-health solutions since 1974 and serviced more than 20,000 organizations worldwide. It supports more than 3,800 people across all services in B.C. and more than 200 post-secondary institutions across North America.
- The 2016 National College Health Association survey of Canadian post-secondary students found a significant number of students are experiencing mental-health challenges:
 - 44.4% of surveyed students reported at some point in the previous 12 months they felt “so depressed it was difficult to function”

- 18.4% reported being “diagnosed or treated by a professional” for anxiety
- 13% had seriously considered suicide
- 2.1% had attempted suicide

Learn More:

For children and youth up to the age of 19, mental-health resources and supports are also available at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health>

Contact:

Sean Leslie
Communications Director
Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and
Training
sean.leslie@gov.bc.ca
250 356-8485

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect