

September 8, 2023

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities
Consortium Centre Jules-Léger
Mental Health Leaders
Superintendents with Responsibility for Mental Health

From: Clayton La Touche
Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Support and Field Services
Division

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Subject: Update: *PPM 169: Policy/Program Memorandum on Student Mental Health* Implementation for the 2023-24 School Year and Grades 7 and 8 Mental Health Literacy Modules

On July 28, 2023, the ministry released [PPM 169](#) related to Student Mental Health. The purpose of the memorandum is to outline requirements for school boards and school authorities, and the Consortium Centre Jules-Léger to provide culturally responsive, evidence-informed student mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention services that respect students as complex individuals and provide appropriate supports for their diverse needs.

Many of the requirements outlined in the PPM build upon current school board practices. To ensure consistency, the PPM outlines requirements for all school boards, including two new requirements: 1) a new reporting template to track implementation and 2) the mandatory mental health literacy modules for Grades 7 and 8 students. All requirements are mandatory as of January 1, 2024.

Reporting Template

As outlined in the PPM, school boards are required to report on the implementation of the PPM requirements on an annual basis. Attached is a link to the annual reporting template which must be completed and submitted to the ministry by June 30th, 2024 along with a copy of the board's three-year mental health and addictions strategy and one-year action plan. Please submit your strategy and action plan to the studentmentalhealth@ontario.ca email account. The link for the reporting template can be found below:

- [PPM Reporting Template](#)

Mandatory Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grades 7 and 8 Students

On August 28th, 2023, the Minister of Education reiterated his commitment to improving student mental health literacy in schools through the development of Grades 7 and 8 mental health

literacy modules for students that will become mandatory for instruction beginning January 2024.

The mandatory mental health literacy modules for Grades 7 and 8 students will be teacher-led and are aligned with the [2019 Health and Physical Education curriculum](#). These resources have been developed by the ministry's implementation partner, School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON), in consultation with experts such as SickKids Hospital. The modules follow a familiar lesson plan format and have guiding prompts and language for teachers to draw on.

There are three, 40-minute modules in Grade 7 and three, 40-minute modules in Grade 8.

Grade 7 students will learn:

- the definition of mental health and mental illness and the relationship between the two;
- how to recognize possible signs of mental health problems as well as when and where to seek support and;
- the relationship between mental health and substance use.

Grade 8 students will learn:

- about mental health stigma and ways to counteract it;
- how to manage stress and;
- ways to seek support for themselves and their peers.

Additionally, parent/guardian resources such as a tip-sheet and module-specific letters will be provided to support mental health literacy beyond the classroom. These resources:

- highlight key classroom learning to keep parents/guardians informed about what is being taught to students about mental health;
- offer conversation starters to support extended discussions about mental health at home;
- help parents/guardians identify ways to spot potential mental health problems and;
- provide resources available in schools and in their communities that parents/guardians can connect to for additional support.

Accessing the Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grades 7 and 8 Students on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

The mental health literacy modules for Grades 7 and 8 students are available for teachers to use with their students through ECommunity. To register and access the modules, teachers should:

1. Login to their school board instance of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Teachers who are unsure of the URL for their school board instance of the VLE can visit <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/vle> and use the drop-down list.
2. Select the "ECommunities Available for Self Registration" from the My Courses in Other Orgs widget and search for "Mental Health Literacy Modules" to register.

Professional Activity (PA) Days and Implementation Supports

In alignment with [PPM 151](#), under the broader topic of **Student Well-being, School Safety and Violence Prevention**, time must be dedicated specifically on the implementation of the Grades 7 and 8 mental health literacy modules. Teachers from other grade levels may focus on those modules or other relevant material to enhance educator capacity to support student mental health.

Ensuring school boards and schools have the tools they need to implement this learning is key. SMH-ON will be supporting the implementation of the modules with a resource series for school board leadership teams and Grades 7 and 8 teachers to take place this Fall.

Should you have any questions or require additional information about the contents of this memo, please reach out to Shirley Carder, Director, Mental Health Branch - Ministry of Education, at Shirley.Carder@ontario.ca.

Thank you for all that you do to support student mental health.

Sincerely,

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