



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Associate Vice President: Services

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**TO:** Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
**FROM:** Simranjeet Singh, Associate Vice President: Services  
Christina Devarapalli, Vice President (Administration)  
**SUBJECT:** Emergency First Response Team (EFRT) Review  
**DATE:** Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

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### INTRODUCTION

To the esteemed members of the Executive Board of the McMaster Students' Union,

The following report is a review of the McMaster Students' Union (MSU) service known as the Emergency First Response Team (EFRT). The aim of this review is to give an overview of how successful the service is in fulfilling its purpose and mandate. Surveys were conducted of the general student body as well as volunteers and employees of the service to gain an understanding of how the service functions, how it is perceived, and what programming/services it delivers to the student body. This review contains an analysis of those results, as well as a summary of external research that has been done. The external research took a focus on other university student unions in Ontario to understand if they offer clubs or services with strategies which can be adopted by EFRT. The result of this internal and external research is summarized to give a series of recommendations made in concert by the Services Committee, Vice President (Administration), Administrative Services Coordinator, and Associate Vice President: Services.

### SERVICE OVERVIEW

#### Service Purpose and Mandate

EFRT is one of approximately 20 student led services that are offered by the MSU. It is categorized as a Student-Life Enhancement Services under section 3.2.2 of the Operating Policy – Services. As stated in the Operating Policy – Emergency First Response Team, the purpose of EFRT is:

“To provide basic life support and first aid care, free of charge to the McMaster community.” (1.1)

To achieve its purpose,

EFRT must act through the following operating parameters:

- The EFRT shall provide basic first-aid assistance and basic life support (9CPT) 24-hour 7 days per week service beginning on the first day of Welcome Week and ending on the final day of exams, with the exception of the following occasions: Fall Reading Week, Winter Break, Winter Reading Week, Easter Weekend
- Beginning on the first day of Welcome Week and ending on the final day of exams with the exception of the occasions listed (Fall Reading Week, Winter Break, Winter Reading Week, Easter Weekend), there shall be three responders available, in addition to one executive
  - o The three responders shall remain on campus for the entirety of their shift
  - o The executive shall remain within ten minutes of campus
- The EFRT shall provide basic first-aid assistance and basic life support (CPR) from 9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday beginning on the day following residence move-out and ending the day before the start of Welcome Week with the exception of the following occasions: Victoria Day, Canada day, august civic holiday
- Beginning on the day following Residence move-out and ending the day before the start of Welcome Week with the exception of the occasions listed (Victoria Day, Canada day, august civic holiday), there shall be two responders available, in addition to one executive

- The two responders shall remain on campus for the entirety of their shift
- The one executive shall remain within ten minutes of campus
- The EFRT shall operate out of the EFRT office located in the McMaster Student University Center (MUSC) as well as respond to calls to the EFRT Response Line (905) 522-4135, the McMaster phone extension “88” or Emergency buttons on campus telephones
- The EFRT shall update the emergency health services that they provide by performing monthly training and individually completing continued medical education
  - Responders must successfully complete formal mid-year evaluations and retraining at the beginning of the academic year (as determined by the executive members).
- The EFRT shall remain a confidential service with limited access to information to executive members and the medical director for quality assurance purposes
  - Any information disclosed to the team shall not be identifiable and purely for educational purposes
  - No patient information shall be discussed outside of the team
- The EFRT shall assist McMaster Security Services in arranging transportation for patients to appropriate medical facilities
- The EFRT shall create public awareness about the emergency services available to the McMaster community
- The EFRT shall provide First Responders with the opportunity to further develop their first-aid skills
- The EFRT shall continually update its emergency health care services
- The EFRT shall promote the use of the “88” extension or “emergency” button on campus telephones as the primary means of requesting Emergency Response via McMaster Security Services

## Service Structure

EFRT is overseen by a Director and Assistant Director in part-time paid positions who then oversee a series of volunteers in various roles. The Director plays the main leadership role, with their purpose to allow EFRT to achieve its mandate and supporting the other executives in fulfilling their responsibilities. The Director is also the main individual responsible for the budget of EFRT, and the person who sets specific, actionable goals for new/modified programming or changes in service purpose in their year plan based on consultations, research, and their personal views.

The Assistant Director works as a bridge between the other executives and Director, and aids in providing leadership to the entire team. In addition to this supportive role, they also lead the delivery of Canadian Red Cross, First Aid, and CPR courses to the entire EFRT team.

The Training Coordinator leads the creation and delivery of regular training modules to the EFRT Team. Their purpose is to ensure that all members of the EFRT team are in fact able to deliver basic life support care to students in need and have the tools to manage health emergencies they are likely to be presented with.

The Scheduling Coordinator is responsible for proper scheduling of all responders to shift times in keeping with expectations for weekly EFRT work, while being aware of their availability with class, work, and other extracurricular obligations. They create schedules on a monthly cycle.

The Public Relations Coordinator organizes all community relations and promotional activities and materials. They ensure that EFRT programming, events, and services are well described through social media and other platforms and the services can communicate effectively with the greater student body.

The Internal Coordinator keeps records of all inventories, equipment, supplies, and tools held and used by EFRT. This is to ensure that EFRT is constantly aware of what resources it has at its disposal to ensure effective delivery of services, and if further resources need to be procured for specific uses.

The responders are the EFRT volunteers tasked with delivery of emergency healthcare services to the student body during healthcare emergencies. These individuals serve as the main group through “face to face” interaction occurs between EFRT and students.

The Medical Director is the sole authority over all medical records and responsible for approving changes to first aid and emergency care policies and procedures of EFRT. Essentially, they ensure that EFRT is successfully able to provide students with appropriate basic emergency health care in keeping with best practices.

# INTERNAL RESEARCH

## General Student Body Survey

The general student body survey consisted of 29 questions to gauge how effectively EFRT delivers its services to the student body. This allows for reviewers to understand how the student body perceives the service and will allow us to gain an understanding of where there exist areas to make service delivery or communication with the student body more efficient. There were 145 responses to the survey, with the plurality from first year students. As this represents only about 0.5% of the student body, this is not a highly representative sample.

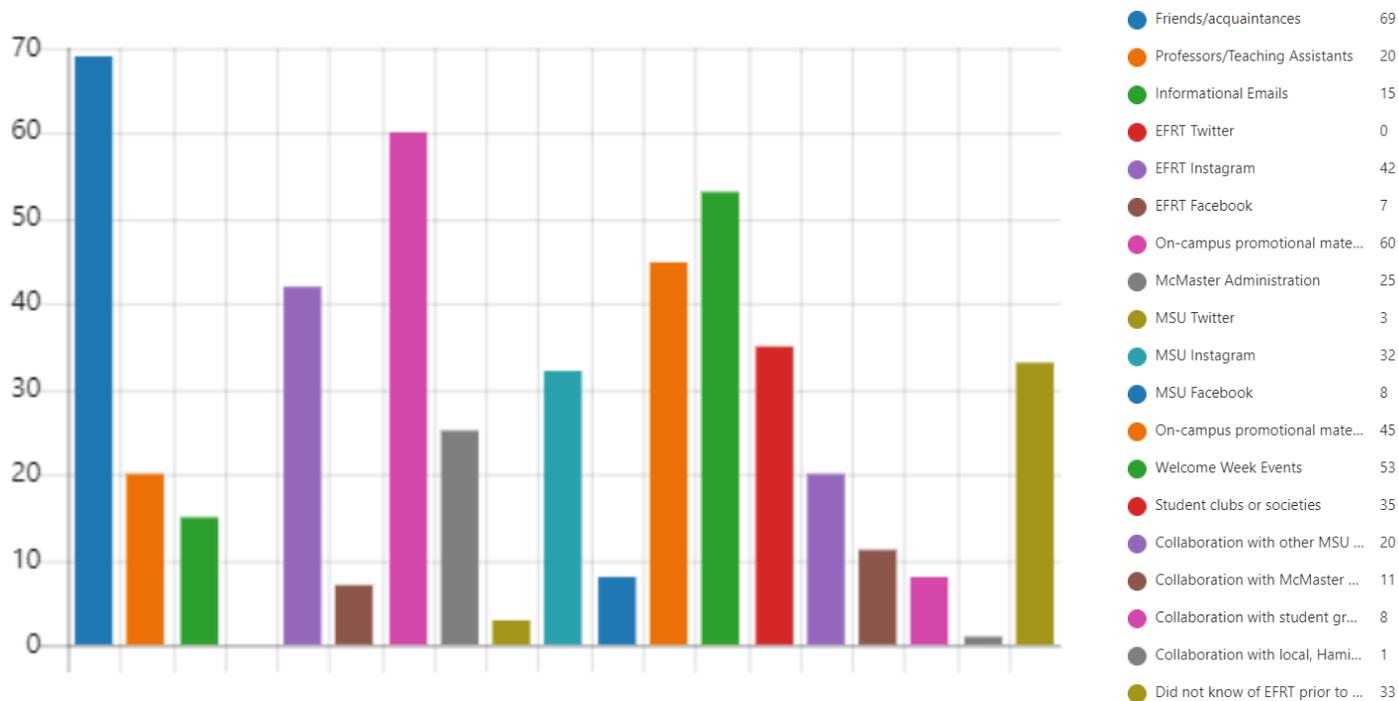
The greatest number of responses came from Science students (31%) followed by Social Science students (16.6%). Approximately 90% of respondents were domestic students from Ontario, with those from out of province and international students making up the remainder.

In order of greatest to least number of respondents, the three largest ethno-racial groups were White/European, East or Southeast Asian, and South Asian. Cisgender women made up the supermajority of respondents (73.6%) with most of the remainder made up of cisgender men, and about 8% made up of individuals of various non-cisgender identities. About 80% of respondents were heterosexual, with the remaining 20% comprising various homosexual, asexual, and bi/poly/pansexual identities.

Each of the three options of residence (those who live in McMaster residences, students who live in off-campus housing, and students who commute) were selected by approximately 1/3 of respondents. Average annual family income appeared to be within the range of \$100,000 to \$150,000, with most respondents originating from family units composed of four to five individuals.

Generally, respondents felt that the role of EFRT (from the definition provided) was appropriate and should be expanded. Most stated they had first learned of EFRT through Welcome Week events, friends/acquaintances, posters and promotional materials, and through the EFRT Instagram. These four methods of communication were also the main means by which respondents continued to hear of or interact with EFRT after having already learned of the service. About one quarter of respondents had no knowledge of EFRT before the survey. A figure shows all of the results below

**Figure 1.** A figure to show the various platforms on which respondents interacted with EFRT.

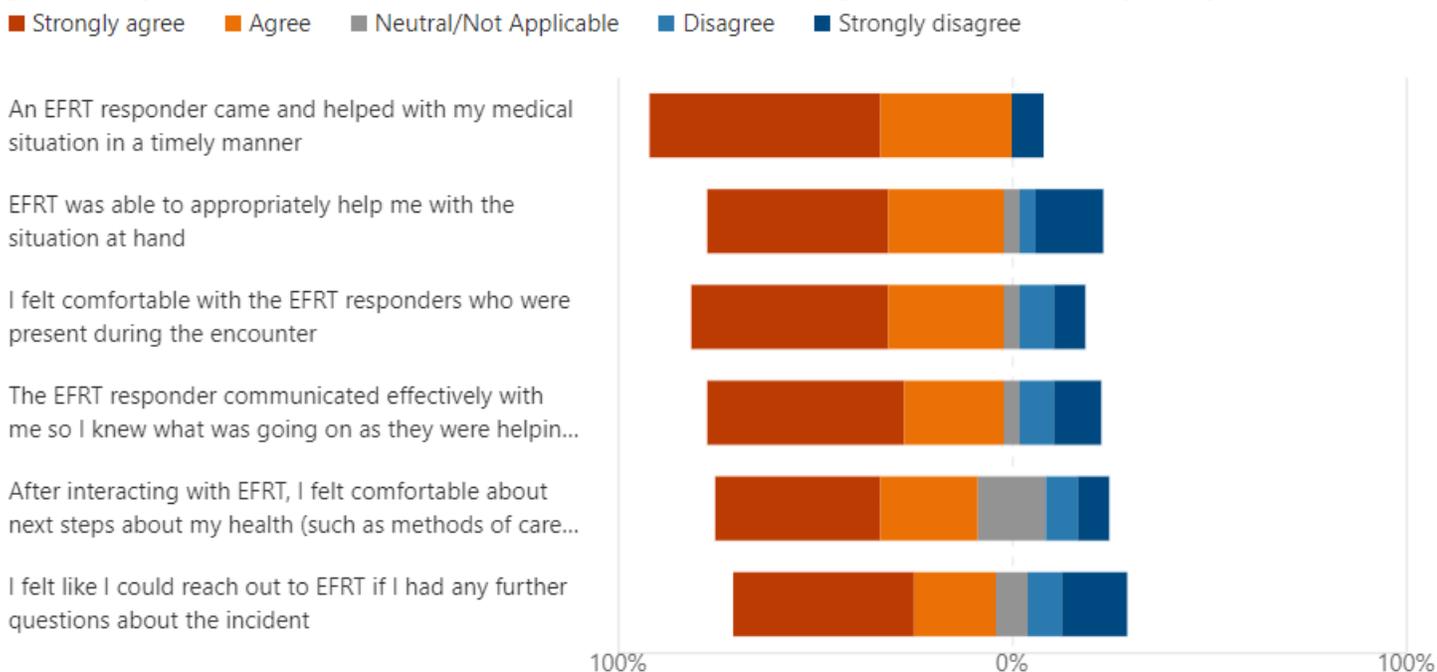


Approximately 17% of respondents had called EFRT for either a personal emergency or that of a friend, while the remainder had not. About 75% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the existing methods to contact EFRT were simple, fast, and straightforward.

Regarding performance during calls, strong majorities expressed that EFRT had performed very well during all aspects of delivering medical care. Over 90% felt EFRT was punctual when responding to calls, about 80% felt comfortable when interacting with EFRT responders, about 75% felt EFRT was able to help appropriately and that communication was

effective, with clear majorities also expressing that they knew of following healthcare steps and the fact they could contact EFRT for further assistance.

**Figure 2.** A figure to show respondent perception and experiences during EFRT responses during emergencies.



Regarding whether other support staff should accompany responders, about 67% of respondents felt they would be most comfortable if a paramedic could accompany EFRT responders to calls, while private security contractors were most strongly opposed by respondents, with 43% selecting them as the last option for individuals to accompany EFRT responders. Generally, social workers were the second most preferred group (after paramedics) to accompany EFRT responders to calls, with police being the second least supported group, and McMaster Special Constables landing in the middle regarding respondent sentiment.

Finally, respondents expressed a moderately strong desire for webinars, social media campaigns, and talks by speakers regarding healthcare topics to return as a hallmark part of EFRT programming. About 38% of those who expressed an opinion felt that such programs should be increased, while about 57% preferred the status quo in which such programming is of secondary priority. Only about 5% of respondents felt that webinars, social media campaigns, and talks by speakers should be removed entirely to give EFRT a strong, singular focus on delivering emergency response care.

### Volunteer and Executive Survey

The executive and volunteer survey consisted of 60 questions to gauge how effectively EFRT's executives and volunteers view its functioning and delivery of services to the student body. This allows for reviewers to understand how the leadership and volunteers of EFRT perceives the service and will allow us to gain an understanding of where areas for improvement exist. There were 16 responses to the survey (about 80% of whom were responders), which represents approximately 40% of all executives and volunteers with EFRT.

Health Science represents the faculty from which the greatest number of volunteers and executives originate, with half from that faculty. Science is a distant second, with 25% of volunteers from that faculty. Second year and fourth year students represent the years with the greatest number of respondents, with approximately 90% of respondents being domestic students from Ontario, with the remainder fully composed of out-of-province domestic students.

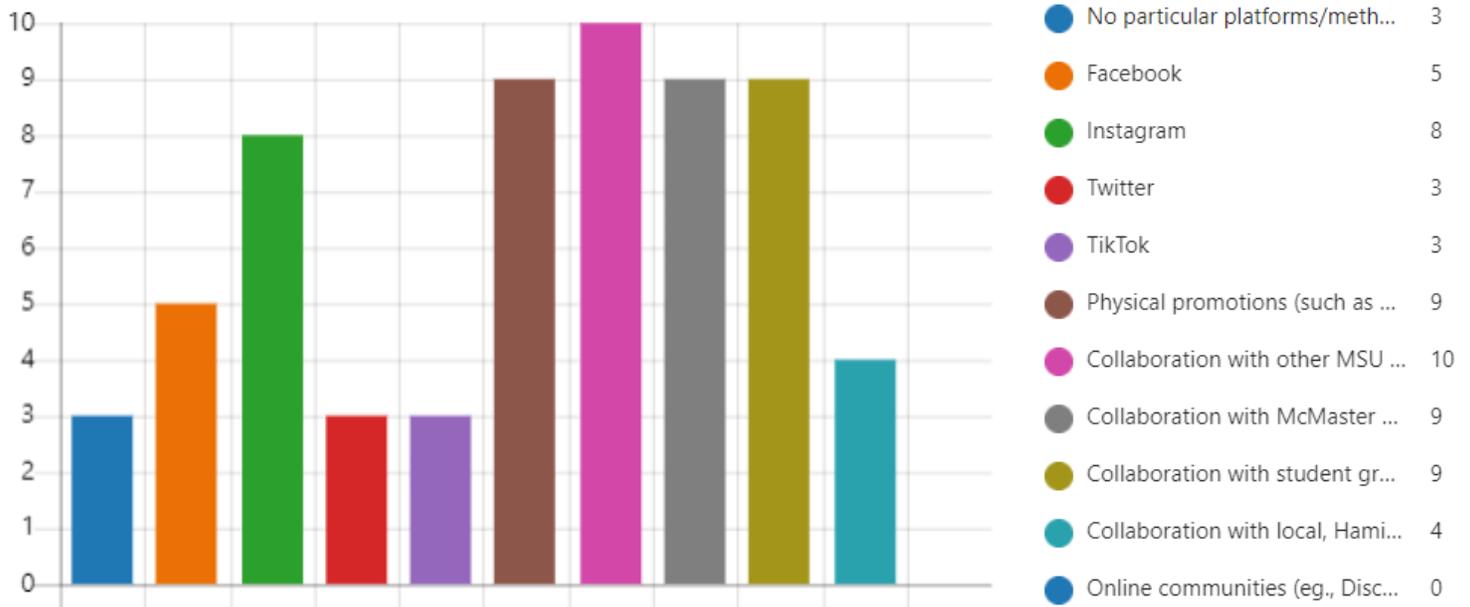
In order of greatest to least number of respondents, the three largest ethno-racial groups were East or Southeast Asian, White/European, and those of mixed ethno-racial origin. Cisgender men made up a slight majority of respondents (53.3%) with most of the remainder made up of cisgender women, and one respondent having a non-cisgender identity. Slightly more than half of respondents were heterosexual, with virtually of the remainder having either a homosexual/gay or bi/poly/pansexual identity.

The vast majority of respondents live in off-campus housing, with the next largest group commuting, and one respondent living in a McMaster residence. Average annual family income appeared to be within the range of \$100,000 to

\$150,000, though near the higher end of that threshold. Most respondents originated from family units composed of four individuals, with both parents/guardians having an average of a Bachelor's degree in education.

Generally, respondents felt that the role of EFRT (from the definition provided) was appropriate, but unlike the general student body survey, were more lukewarm regarding expansion and hoped to keep the status quo. Most stated they had first learned of EFRT through friends/acquaintances, the EFRT Instagram, and through the Welcome Week events. These three methods of communication, in addition to the EFRT Facebook and physical promotional materials (such as posters) were also the main means by which respondents continued to hear of or interact with EFRT after having already learned of the service. Collaboration with MSU Services, McMaster University services/initiatives, student clubs/groups, and greater use of the EFRT Instagram were methods viewed by the respondents as the most effective means by which the awareness of EFRT can be expanded.

**Figure 3.** A figure to show platforms/methods which EFRT executives/volunteers believe should be used to expand awareness of the service.

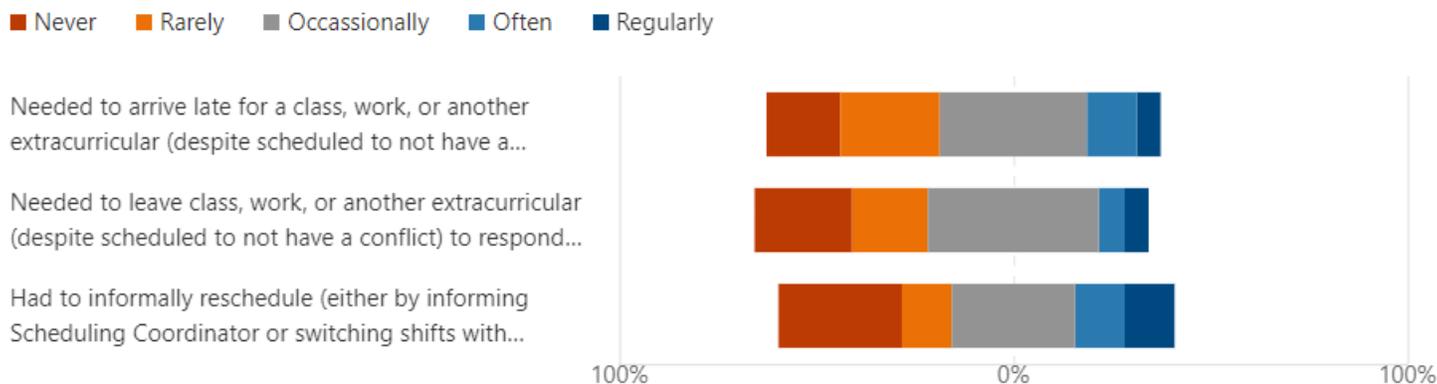


Communication between EFRT and both the Marketing & Communications Department and the Underground was viewed as being quite efficient. However, communication between EFRT and MSU Administration was viewed through a more lukewarm lens. Job descriptions were also generally seen as being appropriate to expected task and work. Similarly, the workload expected of individuals did not generally impede on other responsibilities had by respondents, though there does appear opportunity for improvement. The hiring process was viewed as being fair and legitimate by the vast majority. In addition, volunteers expressed that they generally felt comfortable during trainings, during calls, and during other events. They felt that they were also able to reach out to executives in the case of concerns or questions, and to receive other support during calls, after calls, during training, and during other events. An important point of note is that while respondents did feel there was generally enough time to decompress and emotionally/physically recover after calls, the responses indicated potential for burnout/overburdening in a large minority.

Furthermore, events such as team building exercises, weekly trainings, competencies, and group events were generally viewed as being very appropriate, effective, and useful. Only regarding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training was there a degree of disagreement, as some viewed them as appropriate, while other felt areas for improvement exist, though the reliability of this is hampered by the low number of responses to this question (7 responses).

The accessibility, ease, speed at which respondents felt they could respond to calls was also quite high, meaning the views of how successfully the service fulfills its primary goal were quite positive. However, there was a notable number of respondents who felt they had to arrive late or miss other obligations such as classes, work, and other extracurricular obligations due to EFRT, despite appropriate scheduling to ensure no such conflicts should have arisen.

**Figure 4.** A figure to show the frequency at which responders had to arrive late or miss other academic, work, or extracurricular obligations due to EFRT despite originally being scheduled to ensure no conflicts should exist.



Regarding Security Services' collaboration with EFRT, respondents felt that generally, McMaster Special Constables were punctual, were able to appropriately provide support when needed, and their presence made responders feel significantly safer than they otherwise would have. Respondents expressed strong support for maintaining the present arrangement and ensuring responders are accompanied by support staff.

Regarding whether other support staff should accompany responders, 37.5% of respondents felt they would be most comfortable if a paramedic could accompany EFRT responders to calls, while another 37.5% felt most comfortable with McMaster Special Constables. When viewing all assignments of preference by respondents, McMaster Special Constables appear to be the slight favourite, with paramedics a close second and social workers holding the third position. Police were most strongly opposed by respondents, with private security contractors being second most strongly opposed by respondents.

The EFRT Main Office, loft, washroom, fridge, bikes, and other common tools/supplies/resources were almost universally viewed as being cleanly, accessible, inviting, usable, and well-maintained, allowing them to serve their functions well. An area for improvement however is regarding snacks and availability of food items. Respondents noted the need to purchase or bring personal snacks and meals virtually all shifts. Increased availability of snacks and meals is a prudent course of action to allow improvement of morale amongst the EFRT community.

## EXTERNAL RESEARCH

As a part of the external research strategy, Services Committee embarked on a research planning aimed to review all undergraduate student unions of universities in Ontario. While this goal was not met, in total, detailed information of relevant structures at other institutions was collected from more than 10 Ontario universities. This has helped shed light on the interesting and unique arrangements which exist at other educational institutions, and important areas in which the MSU can potentially improve delivery of programming by EFRT. Services similar to EFRT existed at basically all undergraduate student unions into which research was conducted.

Brock University community offers a First Responders program aimed at delivering first aid. However, little information is available about the breadth of the service, hours of operation, or if there are any supportive advocacy initiatives included within the service. When looking at the Carleton University Community, we see that the Carleton University Student Response Team is the service most like EFRT. CUSERT is run not by the Carleton Undergraduate Student Alliance, but by the University's safety services. It offers 24/7 first aid response and also provides services during large events. CUSERT is made up of 40 volunteers who have Canadian Red Cross certifications of standards matching those held by EFRT volunteers. There does appear to be no advocacy or health promotion related aspect of CUSERT, though it is unclear if this is done at a smaller scale via social media or other platforms.

The Guelph Central Student Association also has an EFRT-esque service, that offers 24/7 operations during the academic year at all times except for on holidays. It seems similarly robust to EFRT and CUSERT in the types of first aid care it can deliver. A notable area where it and CUSERT are lacking appears to be in lack of specific mental health support training, an attribute that separates EFRT from most other similar services. However, the service within the Guelph community is unique in that it is a partner with the Canadian Red Cross and offers opportunities for non-volunteers to gain training and certification at the Standard First Aid & CPR level. Potentially seeing if a similar capability can be adopted by EFRT may increase the positive impact had on the student community.

The Alma Mater Society, the undergraduate student union of Queen's University offers a service known as the Queen's Special Constables. This service appears to be more aimed at having a student group that can help prevent crime or dangerous and ill-advised activities within students. Nonetheless, all volunteers a part of this service carry naloxone, first air kids, and have Standard First Aid and CPR training, thus appear to fulfill a role akin to EFRT. The more formalized, police-esque arrangement within the Queen's community is a significant departure from what exists at McMaster. This strategy should likely be avoided due to implications its adoption may have on the perception of the MSU and trust afforded to EFRT.

The different branches of the University of Toronto also showcase unique approaches. The Campus emergency response team for the St. George Campus of U of T is a recognized student group that offers first aid courses, provides services at large events, and also offers emergency first aid in a manner similar to the service at Carleton. Meanwhile, the Scarborough campus has a group called the Emergency Medical Response Group (EMRG) which offers basically all services of EFRT, but includes publicly available Standard First Aid & CPR courses akin to the service of the Guelph community. The University of Western Ontario appears to also have a student union-led EFRT-equivalent service which has developed services akin to those seen in the Guelph community, meaning everything offered by EFRT plus publicly available Standard First Aid & CPR trainings. The University of Windsor's student union has a service very similar to EFRT in terms of resources and supports while also lacking any Standard First Aid & CPR training to the general public.

The University of Ottawa community is an interesting exception, as it appears to have no student-led volunteer service akin to EFRT, with all first aid and emergency response activities led by campus security services.

In summary, we see that the services offered by EFRT are very similar to what is offered at other southern Ontario undergraduate student unions. EFRT could likely pursue furthering of its impact on the student body by expanding access of Standard First Aid & CPR trainings to those outside of its volunteer base.

## CONCLUSION

From the information gathered through surveying of the student body and volunteers + executives of EFRT, it is evident that EFRT makes up a very important factor of the fabric of the MSU. Its services are vital to the safety of students, and it is an important factor ensuring emergency health services are readily accessible. While EFRT excels in the vast majority of metrics, this review has unveiled a few areas in which EFRT service delivery can be improved to ensure it continues to represent a high standard of care.

Firstly, the survey results have unveiled what appears to be a strong want in the student body for individuals other than McMaster Special Constables to assist EFRT. EFRT itself has a very strong and positive relationship with McMaster Special Constables. Thus, the MSU should potentially investigate if other professionals such as paramedics or social workers are able to accompany EFRT responders in calls in some circumstances, including whether this would be economically feasible for either the MSU or McMaster to incorporate as an in-community resource outside of those available through publicly offered Emergency Medical Services.

Furthermore, survey results revealed a moderately strong desire for EFRT to promote health and wellness generally. Thus, EFRT should invest in collaborations with SHEC and other campus-based health and wellness advocacy groups as a supplementary aspect of service delivery. This can be left up to the leadership of EFRT as to how it is implemented, but examples include either EFRT holding webinars, workshops, or talks by speakers, or supporting existing events done by other groups.

In addition, there should be continued strong usage of Instagram due to its near ubiquity amongst the student body. Simultaneously, there should be a strong focus on potentially adding TikTok as a new platform as it was strongly expressed by the student body as an area in which EFRT should have a presence.

Hiring of more volunteers to work as responders is also a task that should be undertaken by EFRT in the future as many felt overburdened by current obligations, especially as their EFRT responsibilities sometimes impede on other academic, extracurricular, and professional obligations.

Increasing availability of snacks and occasional free meals would also be a useful method of boosting morale. Thus, this initiative and should be implemented in coming years, especially as it can be a useful method to ensure EFRT responders are prepared for calls and can decompress after calls.

The sixth recommendation states that the MSU should investigate the conversion of the Director of EFRT role into a one-year Student Opportunity Position (SOP) as the associated increase in hours-worked and responsibilities may be more in line with the demands of EFRT. This should be investigated by the Administrative Services Coordinator, Human Resources Department, General Manager, Vice President (Administration), Director of Finance, and Vice President (Finance) among others.

The final recommendation is for EFRT to re-introduce its Standard First Aid & CPR Trainings to the general student body as they had existed prior to the pandemic when COVID-19 restrictions have sufficiently been relaxed.

With these steps in place, EFRT will be able to successfully improve its service delivery and continue its role as a vital part of the McMaster Community. I would like to thank the Services Committee, Administrative Services Coordinator, Director of Marketing and Communications, the Director of EFRT, everyone on the EFRT Team who helped, and those in the student body who responded to the surveys for their help in the creation of this report.

## Recommendations

1. The MSU should investigate if professionals such as paramedics or social workers are able to accompany EFRT responders to calls at least in some circumstances instead of McMaster Special Constables as it appears to be what is desired by the general student body.
2. In future years, EFRT should take have increased collaboration with SHEC and other campus-based physical/mental health advocacy groups to enhance awareness of health topics. This can be done through increased creation of webinars, events, and holding of talks by speakers to raise awareness.
3. Keep continued focus on Instagram as main means of social media promotion, with TikTok as a secondary focus.
4. Hire a slightly increased number of volunteers to reduce overburden of individual volunteers and conflicts with other academic, professional, and extracurricular obligations.
5. Increased number of snacks and occasional free meals in group spaces to boost morale.
6. Investigate the possibility of the Director of EFRT becoming an SOP as this may allow for EFRT to more appropriately meet its goals. This would involve work by the Administrative Services Coordinator, Human Resources Department, Vice President (Administration), Director of Finance, and Vice President (Finance) among others.
7. Re-expansion of First Aid & CPR Training availability to the entire student body requesting certification, not simply volunteers with the service.

Best regards,

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