



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Associate Vice-President (Services)

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Veronica Larrazabal Zea, AVP (Services)  
SUBJECT: SHEC Service Review  
DATE:

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### Introduction

To the esteemed members of the Executive Board,

The following report is a review of the McMaster Students' Union (MSU) service known as the **Student Health Education Centre (SHEC)**.

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 SHEC. The result of this internal and external research is summarized to give a series of recommendations made in concert by the Services Committee, VP Administration, and AVP Services.

### Service Overview

Please see [Operating Policy – Student Health Education Centre \(SHEC\)](#) for a full service overview.

The purpose of SHEC is to engage and inform students of various health-related topics, particularly surrounding sexual wellbeing, empowered bodies, substance use and mental wellbeing. This is done by an executive team and peer-support volunteers.

### Internal Research

#### Volunteer/Executive Survey

There were 48 responses to the volunteer and executive survey. The purpose of this survey was to determine feedback from within the service's team regarding the structure and dynamics as well as overall operations of the service.

The majority of the team originated from the health sciences faculty, with 47% of students. The science faculty is second, with 39% of students. 33% of students were in their fourth year, with 27% in second year, 23% in third year, 15% in first year, and 2% in fifth year or

higher. The majority of respondents (96%) are current volunteers, with 35% of students having volunteered the year before.

Most respondents had first encountered SHEC through social media pages, as shown in Figure 1.

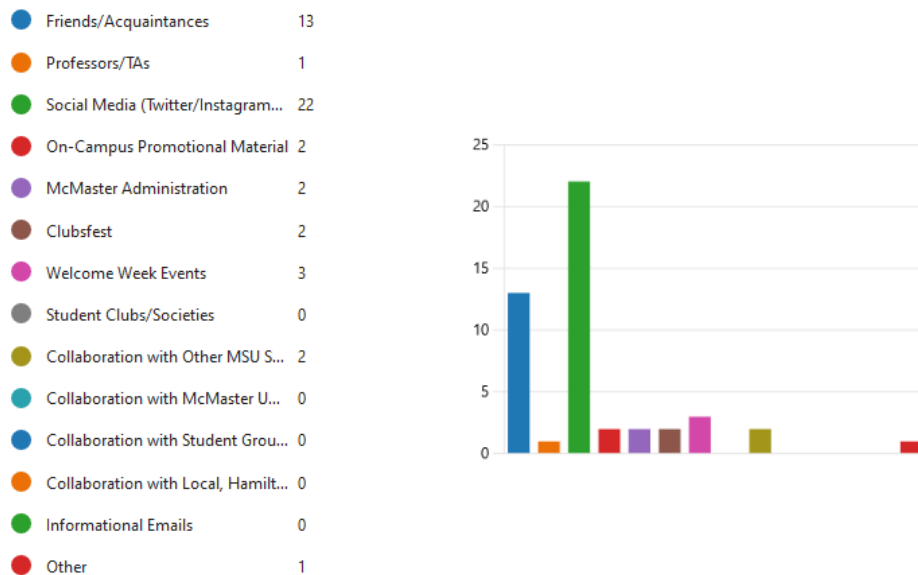


Figure 1. Responses to the question: “I have seen/heard of SHEC in the following areas.”

Overall, the feedback to media quality is positive, with 46% responding ‘Excellent,’ 33% responding ‘Good,’ and 21% responding ‘Average.’ Most respondents believe that SHEC should use more social media platforms such as Instagram or Tik Tok, and should collaborate with other groups to help promote the service, as shown in Figure 2.

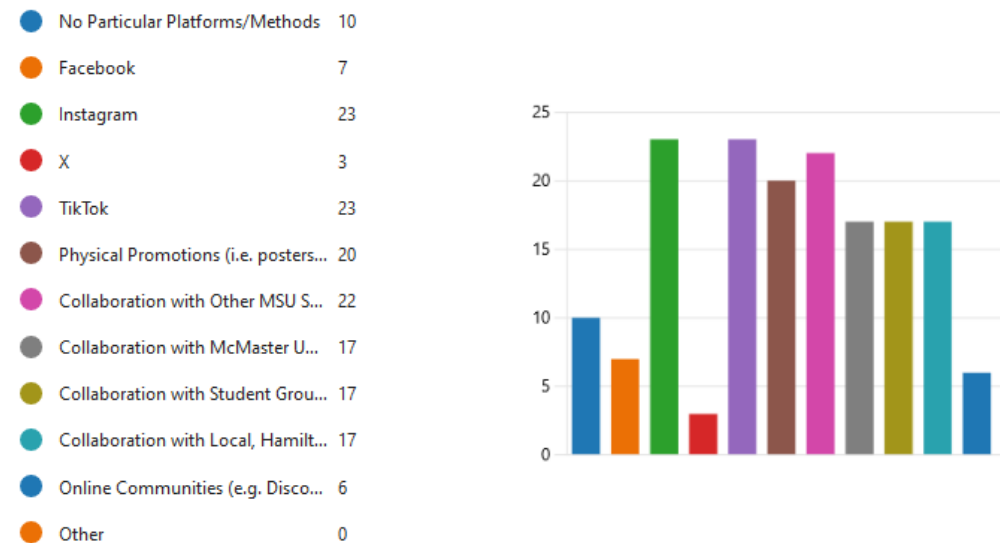


Figure 2. Responses to the question “I think SHEC should use the following platforms/methods to increase awareness of its services.”

Responses to questions regarding team dynamics are mainly positive, as shown in Figure 3.

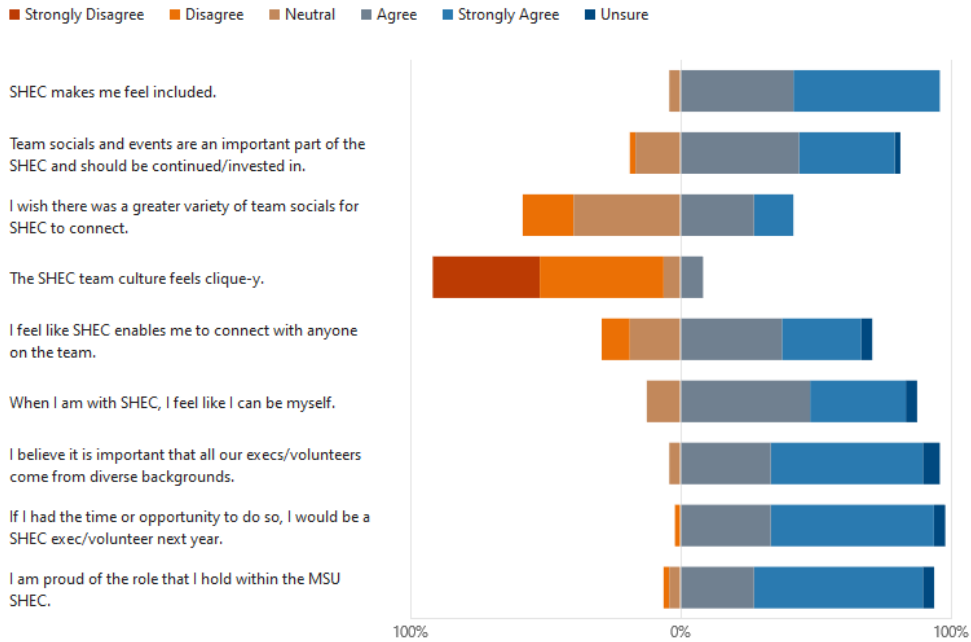


Figure 3. Responses to the questions regarding team dynamics shown in the figure.

One major source of feedback was regarding the peer support aspect of the service. Many volunteers believe that peer support is an underpromoted and underutilized service. Some peer support volunteers state that it feels as though they don't do much within the SHEC space as a result and have asked for other possible tasks while on shift.

Responses regarding the SHEC space are also mainly positive, as shown in Figure 4.

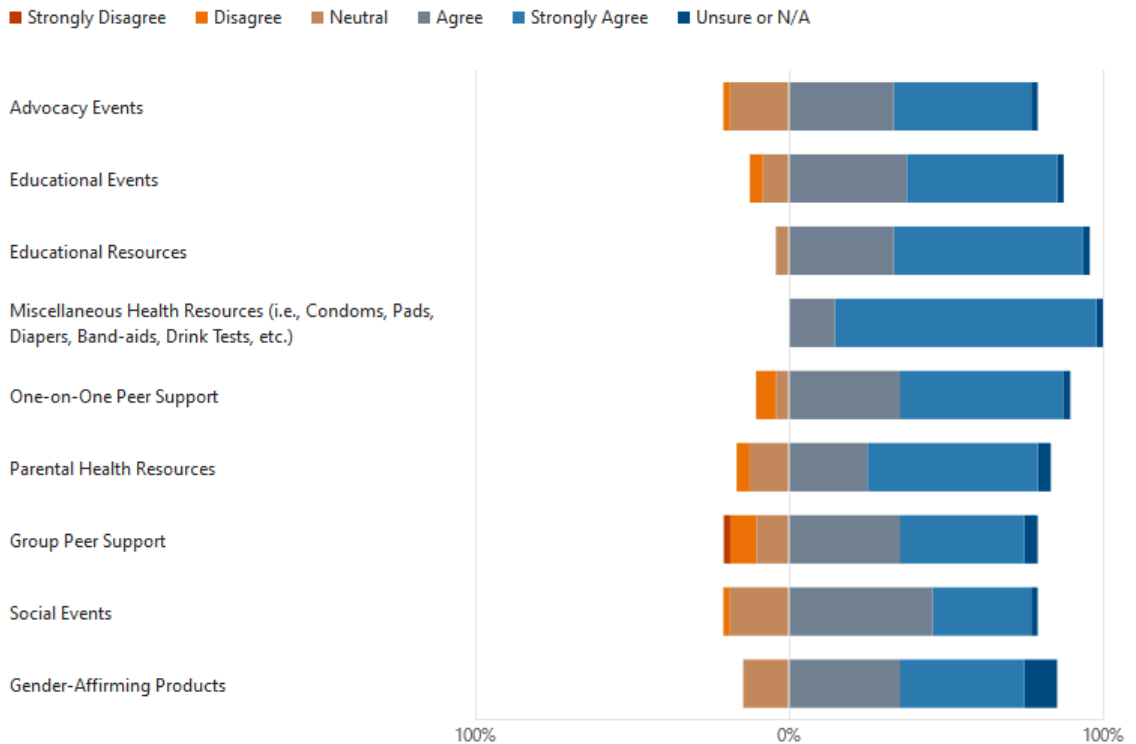


Figure 4. Responses to the question 'I feel that the MSU SHEC space is valuable for the following reasons.'

General Student Body Survey

There were 98 responses to the general student body survey. The purpose of this survey was to determine feedback regarding the efficiency and role of the service. 51% of respondents had previously interacted with the service.

The majority of respondents were in first year (42%), followed by third year (26%) and fourth year (15%). 26% of students were in engineering, 25% were in science, 12% were in kinesiology, and 11% were in health sciences.

Overall, it seems that SHEC well advocates for its pillars, as shown in Figure 5. Most respondents agree with education on mental and sexual wellbeing, with less agreeing on empowered bodies and substance use/harm reduction.

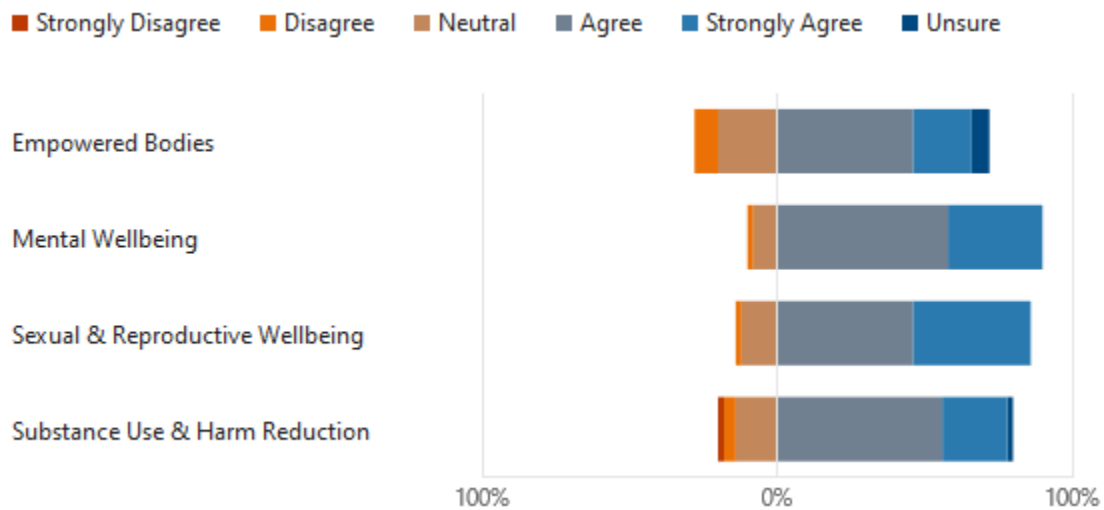


Figure 5. Responses to the question 'I feel that MSU SHEC advocates for a campus that addresses and educates students on:'

Overall, there were positive responses about the events hosted by SHEC, but the feedback stated that the weakest aspect was its promotion, as shown in Figure 6. 52% responded Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Neutral for the Well-Promoted question, compared to the rest where the majority leaned towards Agree/Strongly Agree.

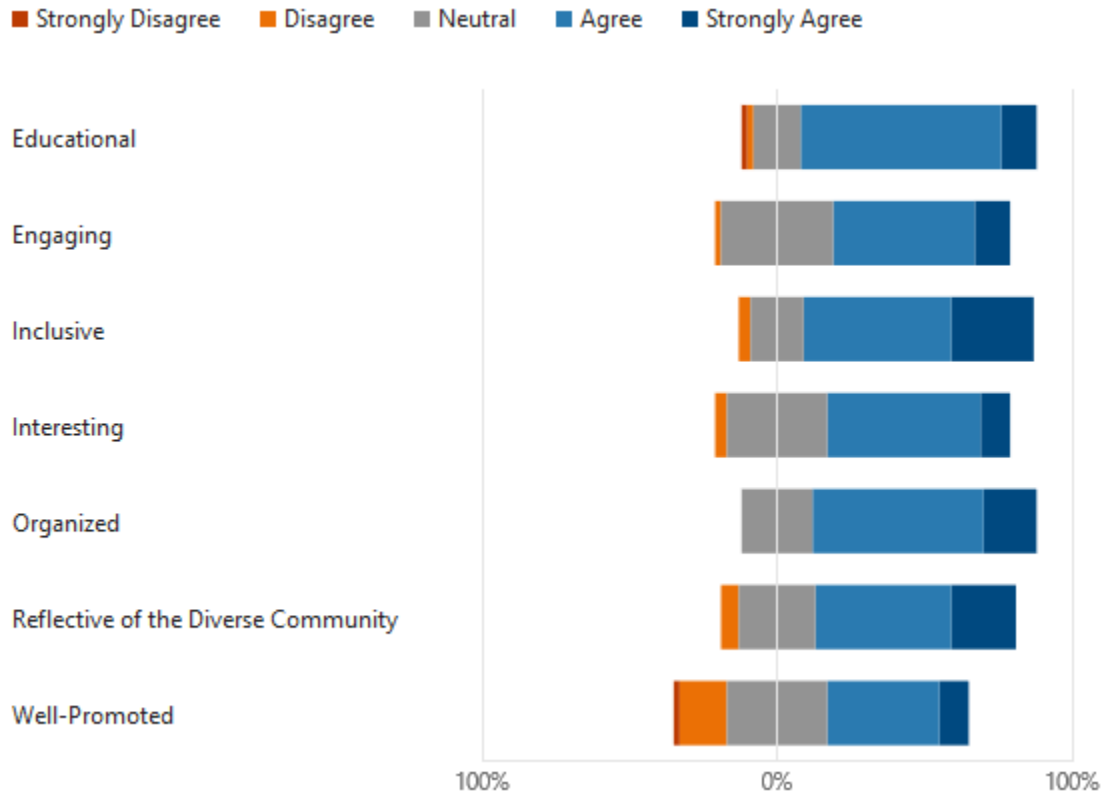


Figure 6. Responses to the questions 'I feel that MSU SHEC hosts events that are:'

Educational resources and social events are the most popular reasons for students accessing the SHEC space, with 54% of responses being 'Agree/Strongly Agree' for both options. The least popular reason is peer support, with 46% of responses being 'Disagree/Strongly Disagree.' Distribution is shown in Figure 7. Out of the students who have interacted with the service, only 14% have accessed it for peer support.

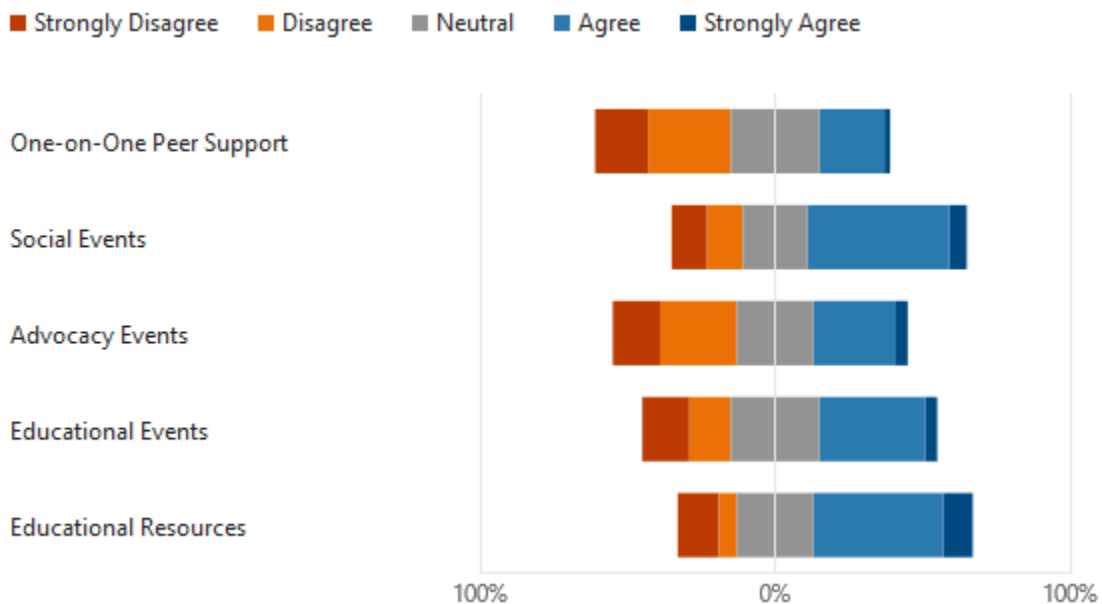


Figure 7. Responses to the question 'I have accessed the MSU SHEC space for the following reasons.'

Most written responses state that the space would be more accessible if there were more promotions for it. In addition, most people who have not interacted with the service have not done so because they are unaware of what SHEC entails.

As for resources, students are most aware of and most comfortable accessing menstrual products and safe(r) sex products, as shown in Figures 8 and 9.

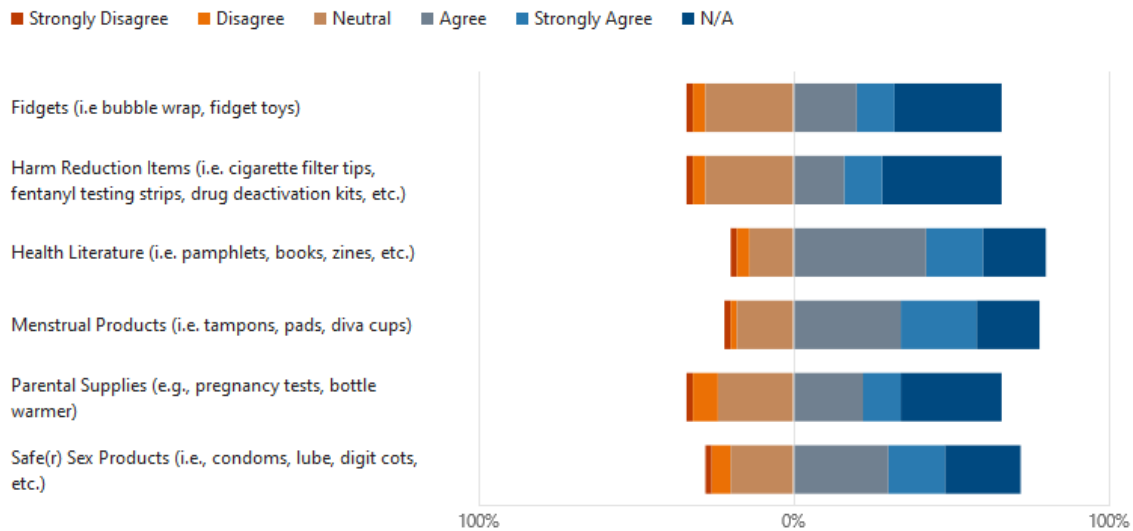


Figure 8. Responses to the question 'I felt comfortable accessing the following resources from MSU SHEC.'

- Fidgets (i.e bubble wrap, fidget t... 16
- Harm Reduction Items (i.e. cigar... 13
- Health Literature (i.e. pamphlets... 32
- Menstrual Products (i.e. tampon... 37
- Parental Supplies (e.g., pregnan... 20
- Safe(r) Sex Products (i.e., condo... 38
- None of the Above 6

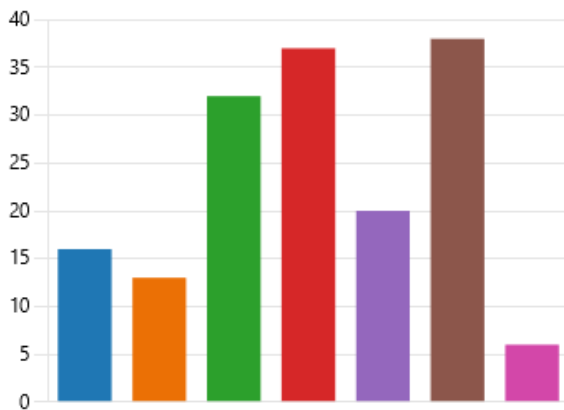


Figure 9. Responses to the question 'I was aware the following resources were freely available from MSU SHEC.'

### External Research

Many universities do not have a student-run health service but do have equivalent services to the McMaster Student Wellness Centre. Since they are university-run and not student-run, they will not be discussed in this review.

The following services are offered by universities' student unions:

- Carleton University Students' Association provides a service called The Wellness Centre, which provides peer support and mental health resources. They organize events dedicated to wellbeing and self-care.
- Although the Nipissing University Students' Union doesn't have a health-related service, it does have resources and external services linked on the student union website.
- Ontario Tech Students' Union offers a service called MyWellness, which focuses on awareness, education, and care regarding mental health and wellbeing. They also have a Period Bank and a project called the Period Project where students can access menstrual products.
- The Alma Mater Society of Queen's University offers a program called Empower+, which provides access to 24/7 crisis support, access to virtual therapy and coaching sessions. It also has a general Peer Support Service that provides support to all undergrad students regarding personal grievances, mental health, discrimination and/or instances of oppression, and sexual violence.
- The Guelph Central Student Association offers an initiative called the Menstrual Hygiene initiative that provides free menstrual hygiene products to students.
- The University of Toronto Mississauga Students Union has a general Peer Support Program for students.
- The Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association has a service called Mates, which offers peer support and a wellness lounge where students can participate in wellness-related activities.
- The University of Western Ontario Students' Council offers a general peer support service and a service called Free the Dot, which focuses on providing menstrual products to students.
- The Wilfrid Laurier Students' Union offers a service called Healthy Lifestyles, which is dedicated to the education and support of undergrad students with a focus on healthy practices and responsible decision-making, learning about the 7 dimensions of wellness.
- The York Federation of Students has a wellness centre which focuses on 4 main pillars of operation (mental health, physical health, sexual violence, and harm reduction).

## **Conclusion**

### **1. *Continue to promote the peer support aspect of the service.***

Based on volunteer and general responses, it seems that the peer support within the service is underutilized, mainly due to lack of awareness and promotion. Using social media and physical promotions, as well as educating the audience on what peer support entails, could help increase usage.

### **2. *Expand collaborations with faculties and student groups.***

This year, there was a lot of collaboration with the McMaster Engineering Society and discussions with residence to provide physical resources. It is a great starting point and is encouraged to continue these sorts of collaborations with other faculties to further promote engagement. Furthermore, as shown in the internal research, students and volunteers believe that collaborations with local groups could also help with promotions. If there are more collaborations regarding resources and dispensers, take note of which groups are responsible for buying and replenishing these stocks.

**3. Increase physical and social media promotions.**

Most students who had not interacted with the service have done so because of lack of awareness. Further promotion of events through Instagram and physical posters around campus, coupled with collaborations with other groups, could help increase awareness. This could also look like A-frames such as the ones used by the Student Walk Home Attendant Team.

**4. Ensure to promote all aspects of the service.**

Many responses show an imbalance of awareness/interest in the pillars of the service. Consider further promoting and applying the pillars of harm reduction, mental wellbeing, and empowered bodies. This may be done by outlining in the year plan what pillar corresponds to planned events and initiatives. Throughout the year, take note of what pillar was focused on and what pillar might have been neglected. Then adjust future initiatives/events to focus on other pillars. Also consider the feedback to those initiatives to gauge interest.

**5. Diversify volunteer and executive academic background.**

A majority of the executives and volunteers study in the faculty of Science or Health Sciences. Although understandable due to the scope of the service, consider engaging with other faculties to further diversify the team.

Best,



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