



# Recruitment for Student Engagement Initiatives Related to Mental Health

Reflection is an ongoing and consistent process. It allows space to understand your biases and intentions. This is a helpful practice while considering recruitment and working with diverse student populations. To support you in reflecting on your own personal values, beliefs, and biases, check out:

- [Cultural Humility Self-Reflection Tool for School Staff](#)
- [Cultural Humility Self-Reflection Tool for School Mental Health Professionals](#)

**Recruitment is the process of actively connecting with people for the purpose of building an initiative. More students can engage in mental health promotion initiatives through strategic and thoughtful recruitment.**

Actively recruiting students for mental health promotion initiatives contributes to a greater understanding of the unique challenges faced by students. When students are encouraged to participate openly, it helps normalize conversations around mental health, reduce stigma, and promote a culture of understanding.

Recruitment will look different for each program, context, or initiative. The process centres students as valued members. Therefore, their voices and perspectives should be centred, and their experiences should be reflected in the process.

Ensure the mental health initiative you are planning is aligned with your board/school mental health strategy and action plan. It is also important to ensure the mental health initiative is a good fit for your community. Review [Special Considerations for School-Based Mental Health Promotion and Literacy Initiatives](#) for guidance and additional resources.





## Before launching a recruitment plan

### Ask yourself

- What do you anticipate the purpose of your initiative will be? What value does it bring to students?
- What kind of role(s) do you anticipate students will take in the initiative? What is the level of commitment expected from students? Ensure that there is flexibility.
- How will students' roles leverage their strengths?
- How might students be compensated for their time and efforts? Or are students offered any incentives for participation? How might students be involved in determining what incentives or forms of compensation are valuable to them?

### Consider:

#### Diverse perspectives

Each student carries expertise and knowledge of their own lived experiences. Connecting with a diverse group of students who represent their own unique identities helps to ensure that your initiative captures various perspectives.

#### Relationships

Youth are keen to connect with people they feel are genuinely invested in their outcomes and well-being. Taking the time to build meaningful relationships and getting to know each student helps them to feel valued, and comfortable to fully engage.

#### Power dynamics

Positioning yourselves in the spaces where students' lives unfold, spaces that mean something to them, will show students that you are open to learning directly from them. This action helps to dismantle traditional power dynamics.

#### Intentionality

In the school environment, the recruitment process requires intentionality. This means that school staff should think beyond the typical or already engaged students and develop strategies that seek to connect with students who are also not typically engaged in school initiatives.





## Key components of a recruitment plan

### Build a team to inform and support your outreach

Your outreach support team can include different partners in your school environment, such as students and school staff. Students are experts in their own experience. They can offer insight into how to advertise effectively, where to go when connecting with students, and when it is the most appropriate time to share an initiative. They are your key stakeholders. School staff and caring adults with established relationships are also effective partners for recruitment. They can leverage their relationships to help draw students to an initiative. If an outreach support team is unavailable, consider connecting with established student groups.

#### Consider:

- How can students support your recruitment process? What role will they have in recruiting other students?
- Which staff members are well-positioned to help with the outreach process? How might they help?
- Who else might you need to partner with to support your recruitment process? Would community or parent/caregiver groups have a role?

### Develop a goal for your recruitment plan

Being clear about the desired outcome of the recruitment process helps to provide a focused direction for the outreach process. Aligned with the broader objectives of the initiative, a well-defined goal motivates and inspires the recruitment team, serving as a measurable benchmark for success. It enables strategic planning and encourages ongoing evaluation and adjustments as needed.

#### Consider:

- What does representation mean in the context of your initiative? How might you ensure inclusion across identity-related factors?
- How many students do you hope to reach?
- Do you anticipate any barriers in recruitment? If so, how will you overcome these barriers? How will you make this opportunity accessible to every student?

### Select strategies for recruitment

Below are some suggestions you may use to recruit students. These are merely suggestions. Work with your team to survey students in your school or board environment to determine what works, given your context.

In each of these strategies, ensure that materials are available in accessible formats.

- **Put a face to the initiative** – This is a small way to give students a better sense of the person/people behind it.
- **Small group or classroom presentations** – Smaller group presentations may be more effective than large assemblies as they allow for more personal connection and tailored messaging.





- **Staff liaisons** – If you know staff members with more influence and closer relationships with students, consider asking them to help spread the word.
- **Peer to peer** – Consult with your student partners about the best way to reach other students. You can do this through student groups that already exist.
- **Social media, electronic communication platforms, or posters** – Consider what platforms are available in your school or board that could help your message get in front of a large group of students at once.
- **Staff nominations** – Ask staff to nominate students they think would be a good fit for the program to serve as supportive endorsement and alleviate student hesitations.
- **Parent/caregiver partnership** – This can help to influence students' decisions and build support at home for engagement in mental health promotion initiatives.

If you find that a strategy worked for a different initiative but is not working for the current initiative, step back and consult with your key partners to adapt your plans and find a solution forward.

### Consider:

- Who are the students typically not heard from? How might you connect with them using one of these strategies or other strategies?

## Assess the recruitment process

Assessment may include informal and formal conversations with student participants to understand their experiences and perceptions. Examples of methods you can use to gather student feedback are anonymous feedback boxes that can be placed in a common area, and weekly check-in sessions with students individually or in groups. This can be used to determine if goals were met, celebrate successes, and identify areas of improvement.

Students are the main stakeholders; active participation by students in assessment efforts is crucial to gather more accurate information.

### Consider:

- How will you gather feedback from students during and after the recruitment process?
- How will you know if you met your goal for recruitment?
- How might you use lessons learned to inform future recruitment efforts?

This resource is part of our [Student Engagement Toolkit](#).

