



McMaster Student Nightline and Recommendation Report Overview

16 March 2024

Updated: 29 July 2024, 6 August 2024

This document is created to serve as an overview of the proposed Student Nightline at McMaster University. This is not the final recommendation report that is to be submitted to the McMaster Students Union (MSU) VP of Education and is only created to serve as an overview document and the main goals of the project and recommendation report to be submitted. For more information, visit bit.ly/msnightline or shl.joshuamjbell.ca.

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Proposal Overview

Student wellness is at a crisis point. With 1 in 5 students experiencing increased loneliness or higher rates of anxiety, and school-related stress, something needs to be done to better support students and their wellness.

That is why I am proposing the implementation of a Student Nightline at McMaster University following a similar implementation at McGill University by the student body.

Following the successful implementation of a student-run peer-to-peer student nightline at McGill University in Montreal, QC, this recommendation report that is being submitted to the McMaster Student Union (MSU) Vice-President, Education will seek to have the same or



similar student-run helpline at McMaster University. Such a helpline will provide an alternate route for students to connect for more minor and non-professional mental health or stress-related issues (ex. exam stress, loneliness, anxiety during times of testing/during the day, or any other topic that an individual wishes to talk about).

A final recommendation report is being completed, with notice being given to the MSU VP of Education about its creation and upcoming submission, taking into account the input from meetings and the input form below, and will be submitted to the MSU VP of Education and VP of Administration in September of 2024 providing a glance look at student support for such a number and if it should be looked into more by the MSU.

Goal of Recommendation Report

The goal of the meetings is to gather input as to whether people would be willing to access, use, and/or promote such a helpline on campus for students, as well as how such a line may operate. The creation and presentation of the recommendation report will focus on the views of the student body and if they express interest and support for such a number, would use a number, promote such a number, and how such a number would even be used on campus while also working to set out a draft operations strategy for such a service at McMaster.

Background on McGill Student Nightline (via nightline.ssmu.ca)

McGill Students' Nightline is a confidential, anonymous, and non-judgmental listening service run by McGill students. We aim to provide the community with non-professional support in all kinds of situations, including information, guidance during a crisis, or an empathetic space to share your experiences and emotions. Please note that we are an English service that is not able to accept calls in French or any other language. Feel free to [click here](#) for other phone lines, chat lines and resources.

Note about Crises: As we are a non-professional, student-based active listening service, in specific circumstances where you may be at risk of harm to yourself or others, we will connect you to Tracom, a crisis centre that will be better equipped to meet your needs. We still welcome every call made to our service and look forward to hearing from you.

Note about Confidentiality: Protecting the confidentiality of our callers and chatters is one of our highest priorities. The only situations in which we cannot maintain your confidentiality is if you are in immediate danger of harming yourself or others, or if you reveal that abuse of a child likely is or will be taking place. In these situations, it is our legal obligation to report the information you share with us to emergency services. In all other situations, our callers and chatters' confidentiality and anonymity will be protected with the utmost care.



Project Timeline

The following is an estimated timeline for this project and subsequent recommendation report:

Mid-March - 26 April 2024	Meetings and input period 1 from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input from student clubs • Internal and External student life/association groups • Input from Public Input Form (directed towards students at McMaster)
May 2024	Reviewing of input from public input round 1
1 June 2024 - 15 August 2024	Meetings and input period 2 from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input from student clubs • Internal and External student life/association groups • Input from Public Input Form (directed towards students at McMaster)
June 2024 - September 2024	Recommendation Report for a Peer-to-Peer Student Nightline creation, drafting, and final editing
Mid-September 2024	Submission of Recommendation Report for a Peer-to-Peer Student Nightline at McMaster to the MSU

Common Questions

How Would it be Used?

Such a helpline will provide an alternate route for students to connect for more minor and non-professional wellness or stress-related issues (ex. exam stress, loneliness, anxiety, or just someone to talk to when they feel a bit down or like they need to get something off their mind). By providing another avenue for students to connect with each other, you are providing a more comfortable and relatable space for students to connect and support each other with issues that they understand. While this is only one aspect of how this line could be used, such a line should accept a range of calls from student to student whether it be questions, seeking support, or more minor things.

What if there is a crisis call?

Such a service will not offer immediate crisis services such as 988 or Kids Help Phone. Connections that are received in this way will be immediately redirected towards 988 or the appropriate wellness support. People connecting with such a service at McMaster will be made aware of this when they first join or make that connection with the service if it is implemented. Urgent calls will also be directed to EFRT or a community partner as needed for a response.



Who would provide the support for such a service?

The purpose of such a line at McMaster would be to allow students to connect with their peers to discuss issues that they may have on their mind that could be related to more by other students. It provides another avenue for students to connect with each other by providing a more comfortable and relatable space for students to connect and support each other with issues that they understand. Due to this, the service would be run by students-for-students with precautions put in place for people providing support (ex. pre-start screening), connections, and services provided through the line.

What's with the name of the line?

While for ease of typeability here it is referred to as a "Student Wellness Line" or a "Nightline" to convey how it will support students, such a line can and should be used for anything peer-to-peer related at McMaster. Providing services for not only feelings and an outpost for students to seek support but also a comfortable place where students feel that they can reach out to another student and have a question answered. The name of such a line at McMaster has yet to be decided and a final recommendation will be made within the submitted report.

Has the MSU been consulted or made aware of this?

Previous conversations dating back to December of 2023 and February of 2024 were held where such service at McMaster was one of many mental health and student well-being topics of discussion. The MSU VP of Education has been made aware of the incomings of such a recommendation report and indicated that it will be looked at and reviewed for further debate and conversation. The report will be submitted to both the VP of Education and the VP of Administration.

How can people provide input?

Anyone is welcome to provide input or request a meeting to discuss this project and the recommendation being made to the MSU by visiting bit.ly/msnightline and completing the input form. If people wish to request a meeting to discuss their thoughts more, they can do so from the form.

Recommendation Report Overview

Layout Overview

The recommendation report to the MSU is being divided into different sections to provide the most information possible and to ensure that everything is covered that may need to be addressed.

The current layout and objectives of each section are as listed below:

Part A: Background Information

- Information about the creation of this recommendation report to the MSU, information about a student nightline at McMaster and what that would consist of, and other general background information



Part B: State of Student Wellness and Mental Health

- Background information about the current state of student mental health on campus and in general

Part C: Student Input

- Information from the student body and meetings about such a service at McMaster
- What people would want to see out of it, hours of operation, what they would use the line to connect about, who they would want to connect with, how people would want to connect and what would make people feel comfortable reaching out if this support exists, etc

Part D: Recommendation for a Student Nightline and Proposed Operational Strategy for a Student Nightline

- Outline of the recommendation to the MSU to create and implement a student Nightline at McMaster and recommendation on how to create and implement a recommendation report
- Outline of a proposed operations strategy for a student Nightline and information how how it would operate, be used, staffed, and more

Part E: Appendices and Endnotes

- References, endnotes, and other helpful information that may be used to accompany this report

This layout is subject to change with additional sections being added as needed or required to ensure proper information is given within the report. A full table of contents or draft copy is not available for public or external review before publication.

Questions or Concerns

Any questions about this project can be directed to Joshua Bell at josh@joshuamjbell.ca. Additional information may be found online at bit.ly/msnightline.

Disclaimer

This project is being organized by a student of McMaster University and a Mental Health Advocate seeking changes to allow better access to supportive resources for students. The MSU VP of Education has been made aware of this incoming recommendation report for the creation of a Student Nightline and indicated that she would welcome any input for such a number through this project and subsequent report. All input provided during this recommendation report project and consultation period is subject to and will be done in accordance with the [OJB privacy policy](#).