When the pandemic arrived in 2020, the need to keep our community safe and a surge of adrenaline sustained the health care workforce through its most challenging period in recent history. For a time, pots and pans banged each evening in encouragement of health care heroes and glowing hearts lit up living rooms across Toronto. Two years into life with COVID-19, support for health care heroes is less visible; however, demands on the health system remain greater than ever.

The pandemic exacerbated existing challenges in our sector and a protracted response has placed unrelenting demands on stretched teams. Patient mental health and surgical backlogs have grown. Pandemic precautions constrained scientific discovery. Staffing shortages became widespread. And health workers are burned out or languishing from two years of long hours, limited vacations, and managing challenges at work and at home.

Despite this, we face a need to innovate for sustainability to meet the needs of the community we serve, and we must fix the plane while we’re flying it. In order to do this, we must first repair and prepare ourselves. Using the Staff Health & Well-being Strategy as a blueprint, we must find novel solutions to reduce overload, model healthy behaviours in our leadership, culture, and daily activities, and create environments where teams and individuals can thrive.

We see your struggles. We have heard your suggestions and solutions. And we have taken heed. Please join us in bringing this strategy to life. Only together can we restore the health and well-being of our remarkable team.
### A FLEXIBLE STRATEGY FOR THE ENTIRE SICKKIDS TEAM

#### Staff, Students, Trainees, and Volunteers (2020-2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Role Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hospital Operations and Clinical Care</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,150</td>
<td>Nursing &amp; Nursing Specialists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>469</td>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>810</td>
<td>Allied Health and other clinical support roles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>319</td>
<td>Lab Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>340</td>
<td>Technicians and Technologists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,996</td>
<td>Management and support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>276</td>
<td>Scientists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>394</td>
<td>Project Investigators and Team Investigators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>762</td>
<td>Research Staff (primarily grant funded)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219</td>
<td>Research Operations staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>Core Facilities research staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students and Trainees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248</td>
<td>Research fellows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>592</td>
<td>Research graduate students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Research students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>Medical Affairs residents and fellows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>468</td>
<td>All other clinical and corporate trainees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>882</td>
<td>Registered volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>270</td>
<td>Women’s Auxiliary Volunteers (WAV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Staff and Volunteers</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,751</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the unique challenges encountered by clinical, research, education, and corporate support staff, tailored health and well-being programming will be available to meet the diverse needs of individuals and teams.
HOW WE GOT HERE…

445 SickKids trainees and staff contributing

16 Focus groups

125 Staff Wellness Survey responses

GUIDANCE FROM OUR STAFF

“If we don’t choose to place a focus on wellness, we’ll be forced to place a focus on illness.”

“Workload – this challenge looms massively.”

“Please don’t make me feel bad for working after hours if that is my passion and my choice, rather help me to work efficiently.”

“Work hard but don’t neglect yourself.”

“Well-being can’t simply be lip service. We must promote well-being, model behaviours at all levels, and shift expectations around how and when we work.”

“We do an excellent job of delivering child- and family-centred care. We need a similar emphasis on staff-centred work.”
WHAT IS HOLISTIC HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

- Physical
- Environmental
- Spiritual
- Mental
- Emotional
- Social
- Financial
- Occupational

Holistic Health & Well-being
SickKids Vision:

Staff Health & Well-being Strategy Aim:
Healthier Staff. A Better SickKids.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Emphasize proactive approaches to well-being
- Include a focus on mind, body, and spirit
- Address common goals and individual needs
- Build well-being leadership at all levels of the organization
- Encourage personal agency in improving well-being
STAFF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY
2022-2025

FOSTER HOLISTIC HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING IN OUR PEOPLE

- Identify physical and mental health risks and establish service pathways to meet employee needs
- Improve literacy and destigmatize mental health in the workplace
- Expand equitable, inclusive access to in-person and virtual well-being programming and resources

OPTIMIZE WORKLOAD TO
IMPROVE BALANCE

- Develop a menu of tactics to help teams and individuals reduce overload and after-hours work
- Embed opportunities to assess workload and promote well-being in organizational programs
- Phase out unnecessary bureaucracy, over-collaboration, and inefficient legacy practices

CREATE A SAFE, INCLUSIVE
WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure everyone is acknowledged and respected through a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Eliminate harm through physically and psychologically safe workplaces
- Champion civility, respect, and compassionate service excellence
- Maintain flexible work arrangements, ensuring connectedness and belonging

EMBED A CULTURE
OF WELL-BEING

- Build visible well-being leadership at all levels of the organization
- Establish a channel for staff to provide input on well-being efforts
- Integrate well-being programming across the enterprise and create a one-stop shop for resources
- Amplify recognition of staff efforts and achievements

WELL-BEING ENABLERS

- Employee Engagement
- Competitive Compensation
- Competitive Benefits
- Learning and Education
- Performance and Development
- Recruitment, Retention, and HHR Planning
OPTIMIZE WORKLOAD TO IMPROVE BALANCE

Develop a menu of tactics to help teams and individuals reduce overload and after-hours work

Embed opportunities to assess workload and promote well-being in organizational programs

Phase out unnecessary bureaucracy, over-collaboration, and inefficient legacy practices

There is no denying it – optimizing workload is the fulcrum that the health and well-being of our people rests upon. Successive years of contracting budgets have left teams running lean, asked to do more with less, with capacity further strained by a global pandemic.

Alongside sustained government advocacy to increase SickKids’ human and financial resources, we must act together to activate a litany of small changes that, taken together, will rebalance workload with capacity. In an organization as complex as SickKids, solutions will not be one-size-fits-all. By arming the organization with a playbook of tactics to reduce overload and recruiting well-being coaches to support conversations with leaders, teams and individuals can select options that make sense for them. Moreover, integration of well-being into organizational programs such as Daily CIP and iPerform will help leaders to set expectations, promote positive behaviours, and identify challenges upstream.

Sustainability necessitates that we critically examine the work we do and re-imagine it, eliminating that which no longer adds value and removing the pebbles from the shoes. Human-centered design and intelligent automation must be leveraged to ensure innovations have net zero workload impacts or achieve efficiencies, thereby creating space to balance staff well-being with continued progress impacting the community we serve.
CREATE A SAFE, INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Ensure everyone is acknowledged and respected through a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion

Eliminate harm through physically and psychologically safe workplaces

Champion civility, respect, and compassionate service excellence

Maintain flexible work arrangements, ensuring connectedness and belonging

The Staff Health and Well-being Strategy provides an opportunity to align with SickKids’ inaugural Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy. Together, these mutually reinforcing initiatives will foster an organization where all staff and their opinions are valued and respected, a strong contributing factor to well-being.

In synergy with SickKids 2025 objectives to eliminate preventable harm and champion civility in the workplace, we will continue to identify and eliminate toxic behaviours within our physical and virtual walls. Central to these efforts will be an incivility coaching and feedback program and policy enhancements that aim to protect staff from angry, aggressive, or violent actions of individuals in violation of SickKids’ code of conduct. We will work tirelessly to ensure no SickKids patient, family, or staff member ever feels threatened on the SickKids campus. And as the campus is redeveloped through Project Horizon, incorporation of well-being standards in the design of physical spaces will foster healthier everyday routines and activities for staff.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fuelled dramatic changes in the way we work. To support this ongoing evolution, SickKids will maintain a commitment to our Workplace Flexibility Program to meet the needs of on-site staff and decentralized teams. By connecting groups to innovative solutions and resources we will help teams maintain and strengthen a sense of belonging and support individuals to feel connected.
EMBED A CULTURE OF WELL-BEING

Build visible well-being leadership at all levels of the organization

Establish a channel for staff to provide input on well-being efforts

Integrate well-being programming across the enterprise and create a one-stop shop for resources

Amplify recognition of staff efforts and achievements

Transformation to a culture that enables health and well-being will begin with consistent modelling of behaviours by organizational leaders. A campaign to promote health and well-being through leader rounding and dialogue in public forums will signal a renewed focus on well-being at SickKids, cascading to all levels of the organization. Augmenting messaging with education on well-being, mental health literacy, moral distress, and EDI, and backing it with accountability, will catalyze change.

A range of well-being programming and resources currently exist at SickKids, yet this information is decentralized and can be difficult to navigate. By integrating resources from across the enterprise into a well-being hub, access and utilization will improve. An internal website can serve the needs of staff, while external facing materials will support recruitment of a new generation of professionals who place a heightened emphasis on well-being.

Staff recognition large and small is another factor that directly impacts well-being. Monumental achievements and day-to-day activities alike should be recognized, earnestly and often. Leveraging existing channels and novel solutions, SickKids will amplify staff recognition in all that we do and shine a light on those modelling health and well-being behaviours in the workplace.
FOSTER HOLISTIC HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN OUR PEOPLE

Identify physical and mental health risks and establish service pathways to meet employee needs

Improve literacy and destigmatize mental health in the workplace

Expand equitable, inclusive access to in-person and virtual well-being programming and resources

The culminating aim of this strategy is to restore the holistic health and well-being of our people. Emphasizing proactive approaches, SickKids will make voluntary physical and mental health screening tools available to staff, as well as opportunities to assess moral distress. Where results reveal needs, we will connect individuals to the resources and services necessary to address health and wellness before it becomes illness or injury.

By educating leaders across the organization, we will create a climate where mental health is destigmatized, prioritized, and supported. Recognizing that well-being is multifactorial, SickKids will expand and more effectively promote a wealth of resources available to staff, ensuring offerings are accessible to staff in all roles, working all shifts, and designed with inclusion of our diverse workforce in mind.
**WELL-BEING ENABLERS**

**Employee Engagement**
Ongoing cross-sectional surveys will facilitate understanding of staff perspectives, including health and well-being, permit action planning to address barriers preventing staff from thriving, and measure the impact of initiatives to improve staff experience.

**Competitive Compensation & Benefits**
Striving for internal equity and competitive positioning in external markets, components of SickKids Total Compensation include:
- Base Compensation (salary/wages, premiums, and other pay)
- Group Benefits e.g. health, dental, insurance, EAP
- Retirement Pension plans
- Educational support, e.g. SCPDF

Objectives are achieved through regular internal analysis and review, monitoring of the external marketplace (public and private sector) across role types, compensation policies, and funded strategic programs (e.g. Annual Increase program, Group Benefits plan, Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution pension plans).

**Learning and Education**
Organizational programming and resources will build competence and confidence in our workforce. Through creation of psychologically safe learning spaces, staff will be provided with environments to seek support, share, learn, and grow, together.

**Performance and Development**
Consistent approaches to setting clear short- and long-term goals will clarify how individuals can contribute to SickKids’ success, how SickKids can support staff in achieving their goals, and provide opportunities for ongoing conversations to foster improvement.

**Recruitment, Retention, and HHR Planning**
SickKids will implement targeted approaches to attract and retain a stable workforce representative of the community we serve, with skills matched to current and future demands across clinical, research, education, and corporate support functions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FROM 2022</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORKLOAD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORK ENVIRONMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CULTURE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEALTH &amp; WELL-BEING</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff Health & Well-being Strategy

- Foster Holistic Health and Well-being in our people
- Embed a Culture of Well-being
- Optimize workload to improve balance
- Create a Safe, Inclusive Work Environment

IMPACT THROUGH ALIGNMENT