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Building a better health care experience for kids

Edmonton – Walking into a clinic, emergency department or examination room can be scary for anyone. If you are a child or a teen that’s also experiencing bullying, facing sexual exploitation, or having body image issues, it can be even scarier.

That’s why a group of MacEwan University third-year nursing students is trying to help health care providers turn their workplaces into safe, welcoming and caring environments. As part of their third-year clinical experience, groups of students spent five weeks working with the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (Safe and Caring), producing evidence-based resources and content that will eventually make its way into a manual.

“To reduce bullying, violence and exploitation of children we need to build an environment that is safe, positive and takes care of the whole person – their physical, mental and emotional health,” said David Rust, director of community partnerships with Safe and Caring.

Linda Cavanaugh, a faculty member in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program agrees. “The literature shows that health care settings aren’t always safe places for children,” said Cavanaugh. The students’ first step was to research and build materials around dealing with at-risk youth, bullying, building healthy relationships, LGBTQ rights, mental health and addictions, multiculturalism and diversity, sexual exploitation, violence and harassment. Next, they began sharing the resources with partner organizations, taking them to content experts and testing them against real-life situations.

Not only is the project creating important resources, it’s also providing and experience that will serve the nursing students – and their future patients – for years to come.

Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.

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