

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Demand for student mental health support surges during the COVID-19 pandemic - keep.meSAFE by guard.me helps Canadian schools provide continuity of care

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**MARKHAM, ONTARIO** – With demand for counselling and mental health services surging over the past several months, **guard.me** is helping Canadian colleges and universities support their students through their **keep.meSAFE** program, a cornerstone of the **guard.meCARES** mental and physical wellness platform.

Though most on-campus health services and clinics are closed due to the pandemic, **keep.meSAFE** provides students with access to mental health support and services whenever and wherever they need it. In addition to a range of self-help programs and mental health webinars available, linguistically and culturally-matched certified counsellors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, via text, email, phone, or video chat – providing access to care that is now more important than ever.

“Between school closures, border restrictions, financial pressures and the ongoing threat of COVID-19, many students are in limbo and experiencing additional stress right now,” says Christina Furtado, Mental Health and Wellness Specialist at **guard.me**. The increase in **keep.meSAFE** app downloads and clinical sessions from January through April paints a clear picture of the added demand for student mental health support during the pandemic. “We saw a nearly 50% increase in downloads of our mental wellness support app from January to April,” continues Ms. Furtado. “It’s obvious that COVID-19 has added considerable stress above and beyond the strain study places on students. It’s essential that our partner schools and organizations can provide continuity of care to their students around the globe during these unprecedented times. The **guard.meCARES** platform of programs, tools and services allows them to do just that.

Providing access to health and wellness programs and services, reaching well beyond the traditional notion of insurance, is nothing new for **guard.me**. “It’s been our mandate for over 20 years,” adds Keith Segal, Founder and CEO of **guard.me**. “And it’s why we continue to evolve and grow our **guard.meCARES** resources. We want to be there for our students and educational partners even when insurance isn’t needed. For us, it’s about keeping students healthy, happy and learning as well as mitigation of potential crises. The world has changed, but we still want to make sure we’re working every day to make it a better place.”

#### About keep.meSAFE

The **keep.meSAFE** Student Support Program is a partnership between **guard.me** International Insurance and Morneau Shepell that began in 2015 and promotes early intervention and timely access to mental health support targeting students who may not typically reach out for help. The **keep.meSAFE** program works with over 60 partners across Canada providing students with 24/7/365 access to immediate mental health support with a licensed clinician who is linguistically and culturally matched.



**About guard.me INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE**

For over 20 years, **guard.me** has been an innovator in the student health insurance industry. Always making student health and wellness its number one priority, **guard.me** has launched **guard.meCARES (Compassionate Awareness Response for Educators and Students)**, its innovative mental and physical wellness platform encompassing all the risk mitigation programs, tools and resources necessary to help schools support their students. **guard.me's** mandate is to provide **Real People Real Solutions** for **Real Life**, mitigating risk and reducing the administrative burden on schools by providing easily accessible tools and programs directly to students. The team at **guard.meCARES** are committed to being there for each student day-in and day-out, especially in times of crisis, providing a suite of physical and mental health resources unmatched in the industry.

**For interviews:**

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