

Parents for Children's Mental Health

SUPPORT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

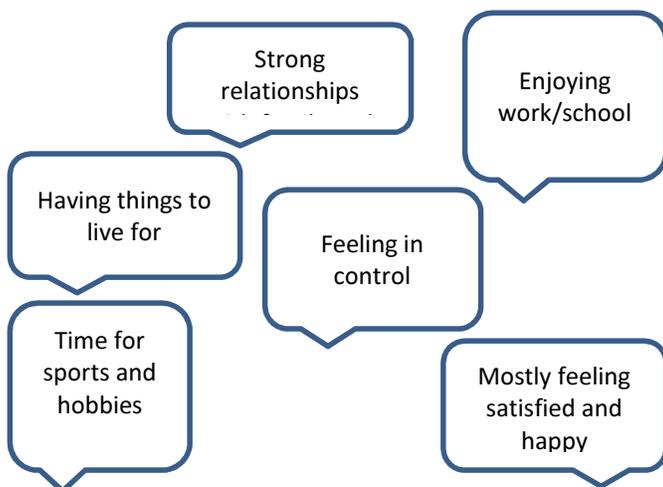
Mental Health Services for Children and Youth In Ontario -Fact Sheet for Families – What to Expect When Navigating the Child and Youth Mental Health System



INTRODUCTION

A person who is in good mental health is someone who is satisfied with life and is able to function well at home, work and/or school. It is not just the absence of mental illness, but the positive presence of health and wellness.

Mental Health is many things



On the other hand, mental health problems can occur when people experience significant problems with thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviour that get in the way of home, school and/or work.

Mental health professionals can help people to deal with problems with thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviours in situations such as:

- Mood problems such as anger, anxiety, depression
- Eating disorders
- Psychosis, schizophrenia
- Addictions (including problems with drugs, alcohol, gaming or gambling)
- Coping with stresses with relationships, school, work, and home.

Stigma unfortunately makes it hard for people to get help. They often feel guilty or ashamed about getting help. Yet, if your child broke his/her leg, you would immediately get help without any hesitation!

Families are key

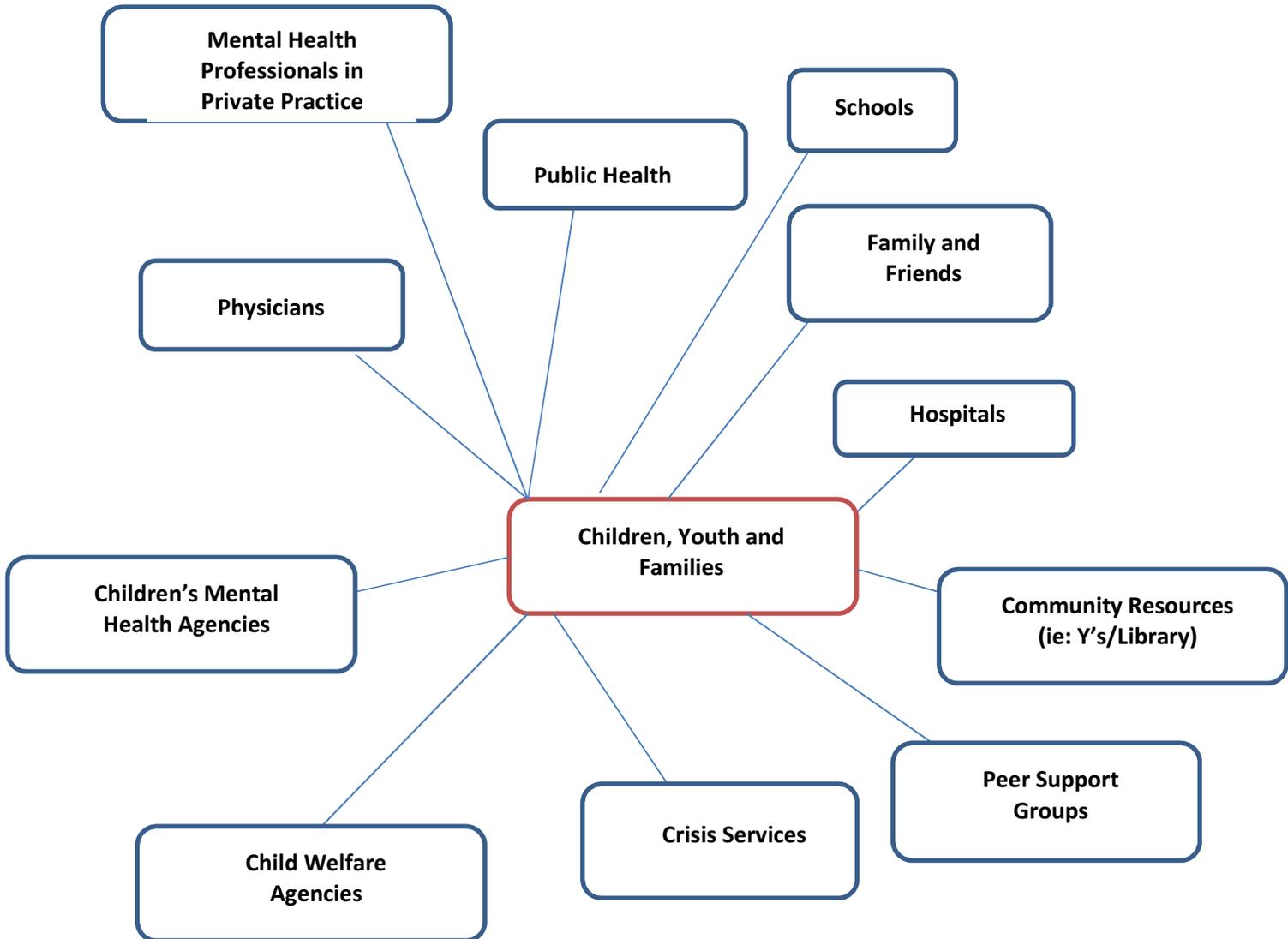
Your close relationship with your child is one of the strongest factors which helps keep your child healthy physically and emotionally. But sometimes that is not enough and a child can still develop mental health problems despite the most caring families in the world.

Thus, the other key role that families play is in being the first to recognize a mental health need, and connecting their children to help. Since supporting a child with mental health needs can be overwhelming it is essential to make sure you are mentally healthy as well – ensure you have support from your own networks of family, friend and professionals.



Ways to get help for your Child/Youth

Identify your Circle of Support...





Types of Help and Support

In Case of Crisis or Emergency

During times of crisis or emergency, services you can contact include:

Help Lines

Mental Health Service Information Ontario

1-866-531-2600

www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca

Telehealth Ontario

1-877-797-0000

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6867

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Gambling Hot Line

1-888-230-3505

www.opgh.on.ca

Drug & Alcohol

www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca

Crisis Lines

Sometimes you may feel you need more support than a help line provides. In these times, most local areas offer crisis lines for assistance. You should check local listings for your mental health crisis line and keep it recorded for these times. Some of the local crisis lines can be found at:

www.ementalhealth.ca

Emergency

Not knowing when and how to involve 911, police and EMS is the main reason things don't go well. Familiarize yourself with how these community services work.

When calling 911, it is absolutely essential that you cooperate with the dispatcher. This means

you should listen and answer their questions. Don't argue when they insist that you answer certain questions. They are trained to ask specific questions and to respond in a particular manner. There are reasons. Don't worry if you are upset. 911 dispatchers are experienced and trained to deal with people who are distressed or in a panic.

There are many reasons why you might call 911. The following is a partial list of the primary mental health and psychological emergencies that 911, police and EMS handle.

- **Suicidal behavior.** When there is evidence of intent or an [immediate risk of suicide](#).
- **Self-harming behavior.** When there is evidence of intent or an immediate risk of physical harm.
- **Strange, unusual or disorganized behavior.** When there is behavior that may be dangerous or the result of a medical emergency or health problem.
- **Violent behavior.** When there has been violence or there is evidence of an [immediate risk of violence](#).

A Word of Advice

- Not knowing how or when to involve 911, police and EMS is the main reason things don't go well. Familiarize yourself with these community services.
- You should contact a representative of 911 and your local law enforcement non-emergency number if it is your responsibility or you expect to rely on police for personal or public safety. Find out how things work and what you can expect.
- To deal effectively with a mental health, crisis or psychological emergency, you must understand that what you can realistically expect from 911, police and EMS services.
- Once you are in the middle of a problem, there is not much you can do that will force

911, police and EMS to do things your way. Cooperation can help tremendously.

- Police, 911 and EMS have procedures and general orders to follow as well as responsibilities to other field officers who may need their assistance.
- Most mental health and psychological emergencies are predictable.
- **The best thing you can do is to take responsibility for the problems you may be facing and develop a plan to manage a crisis when it occurs.** If you suspect the possibility of a mental health or psychological emergency in the future, take time to learn more about emergency services in your community.
- The best way to develop a crisis intervention plan is to consult with a qualified mental health or crisis intervention professional in advance. Be sure you work with someone who understands community crisis services and has experiences using these services.

Excerpts taken from author Michael G. Conner

Family Physicians/Pediatricians

One good place to start is by taking your child to see your child's family physician or pediatrician. The doctor can help refer your child to other, more specialized services. In addition, your child's doctor can ensure that there are not any medical issues that might be contributing to your child's problems. It is important for you to remember however, that family physicians and pediatricians do not receive specialized training in mental health issues, and therefore often times must rely on the specialities of other community based services and physicians. It will be important for you to help with the collaborative process that will be required to assist the services in working together to help manage and treat your child/youth's mental health concerns.

School

If your child is having difficulties at school such as poor grades, behaviour problems with peers speak to your child's teacher. In certain cases schools can offer additional professional supports such as resource teachers, social workers, and school psychologists.

For students attending college or university, there is help available through Student Health Services.

There are a number of useful documents that can be of help to support you in your child/youth's journey through school on the Ministry of Education's website www.edu.gov.on.ca.

Often, the best way for you and your school to understand the nature of the difficulties for your child/youth is to perform a psycho-educational assessment. This should be performed ideally every four years while in elementary school. This assessment will help advise the development of an IEP and help you learn more effective ways of dealing with your child's difficulties. Schools have a limited budget to contract this service for pupils; consequently, often times there are long wait lists to have this completed. If you cannot get one through your school, you can check with your employer's benefits package to see if this can be covered by insurance.

Conflicts do sometimes arise while dealing with your school. The Ontario Ministry of Education has documents to help you work within their framework and problem-solve. Parents, schools, and school-board administrations do not always interpret the directives in the same way. It helps to identify what you are advocating for when you engage in problem-solving with your school. It does bear mentioning that you do need to be realistic and focus on one need at a time, rather than multiple requests or demands.

To access assistive technologies or devices that your child may require to learn, you should be aware of SEA (Special Equipment Amount) and what equipment is covered under this funding. For more information:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1011/2010-11_SEA_Guidelines.pdf



Useful School Resources

The following chart provides some resources by areas of concern.
This is by no means an exhaustive list.

Concerns About:	Supporting Ontario Ministry of Education Documentation (under Special Education) www.edu.gov.on.ca
Accommodations/Technology/Assistive Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEA (Special Equipment Amount) SIP (Special Incidence Portion)
Bullying (victim or aggressor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying: A Guide for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students (updated Spring 2011)
Conflicts with School or Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared Solutions – A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs
Identifications, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Individual Education Plan (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Introduction to Special Education in Ontario The Identification, Placement and Review Committee Resolving Identification or Placement Issues – Procedures for Parent(s) Guardian(s) Individual Education Plan Samples Individual Education Plan – Standards for Development, Program Planning and Implementation 2000
IPRC Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Education Act on Special Education Regulation 18/198 The Ontario Special Education Tribunal (for when a parent/guardian disagrees on the placement of their child)
Progressive Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring and Safe Schools: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SIP (Special Incidence Funding)
Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic Headings Are: Overview, Policy Direction, Funding, Special Education Advisory Committee, Resource Documents, Special Education Reports/Recommendations, Roles and Responsibilities, Additional Information, Related Information, Advice to Parents, Questions and Answers
Suspensions/Voluntary Withdrawal from School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring and Safe Schools: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Making Ontario Schools Safer: What Parents Need to Know (click on <i>Parents</i> and then <i>Safe Schools</i>)
Teaching Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education for All: The report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005
Transition Planning (14+ years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition Planning, a Resource Guide, 2002



Types of Support (cont.)



Self-Help, Mutual Aid, and Advocacy Organizations Include....

In addition to professional mental health services, self-help organizations provide another form of information and support that paid professionals simply cannot provide.

Why Join a Parent Support Group?

There are several reasons to join a parent support group:

- ❖ You will meet other people who are having similar experiences, which can also lead to lasting friendships for you and your child.
- ❖ You can ask questions and clarify things you may not understand.
- ❖ You can see and hear guest speakers on relevant subjects.
- ❖ You will learn about workshops and seminars that are pertinent to you.
- ❖ You can learn about the newest technologies to accommodate your child, or breakthroughs in the medical treatments or alternative therapies that are successful.
- ❖ Some groups offer resources such as libraries from which you may sign out books, DVDs, etc. for yourself and your child.
- ❖ You may receive handouts on parenting tips, or tips for teachers & schools.
- ❖ Some groups offer in-service. In-service consists generally of an accredited person (someone the group recommends, either from within the group, or a professional) providing through assemblies in school, or at a staff meeting, a speaker to address the issues around the child's disability or disorder.

- ❖ Some groups offer workshops or courses that teach parents new skills, from dealing with a child with a disability to advocating for that child in school.
- ❖ You can share your stories with other adults without judgment.
- ❖ You can learn advocacy skills.

Support Groups offer vital links to others with similar situations. When no one else seems to understand, when blame seems to be coming from all sides, and when you need information and ideas from families; a support group can provide a safe harbor in the midst of the storm.

Benefits to Families:

Acceptance – Families deal with strong and conflicting emotions. We need to be able to express our feelings safely, without being criticized or judged.

Affirmation – Families may sometimes feel discouraged and powerless, peer support groups celebrate the resiliency, determination, and ability that is seen in each other.

Sense of Belonging – Families sometimes describe themselves as living in a different culture or foreign land and may feel isolated and that they do not belong anywhere. A true sense of belonging may only come in the companionship of others facing the same challenges and overcoming the same barriers.

Information – In order to be confident and effective, all families need the information to support their child's development, and families with children with mental health issues require tremendous additional information that can be gathered from a peer support network.

Understanding – Few understand the intensity of every day life experiences of having a child with mental health problems. Peer support groups offer that understanding and knowledge of that intensity and the struggles that accompany it.

www.pcmh.ca To Find Your Local Support



Types of Support (cont.)

Information About Local Services

Looking for local mental health services or Information?

www.ementalhealth.ca is a publicly-funded website that provides families with easy access that provides information about mental health and services in local areas.

Parents for Children's Mental Health (PCMH) has developed Local Family Resource Guides in for many local areas. For copies of these Family Resource Guides go to www.pcmh.ca

Mental Health Professionals In Private Practice

Although mental health professionals work as part of an organization (such as hospitals), many of them also have private practices.

In most cases, when you see someone in private practice, you must pay a fee for services. However, if you have an external health insurance plan (such as through a workplace), you can sometimes get back at least part of this.

The advantages of seeing someone in private practice (compared to publicly funded) are that therapists in private practice may have shorter wait times and you also have more choice about who exactly you want to see.

There are as many different types of therapists as there are types of problems. The result for you as you look for help can be confusion and frustration.

Psychologists and Psychological Associates

Psychologists (Ph.D) and Psychological Associates are licensed mental health professionals who specialize in the evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions. They can give a mental health

assessment (known as Psychological Evaluation). Psychologists can also give a more specialized type of assessment known as PsychoEducational Assessment which detects whether or not a child has a condition affecting learning.

In Ontario, psychologists and psychological associates are both licensed through the College of Psychologists of Ontario www.cpo.on.ca

Before you begin make sure that you know what you want.

Here are a few things to keep in mind.

- How much can I afford to pay?
- How long do I want to be in therapy?
- Do I want therapy that is interactive?
- Do I want therapy that is more analytical and less interactive?
- Is the therapist's office in a location that I feel comfortable with?
- How often do I want to see the therapist?

There are a few good questions that you can ask. All therapists should be willing to answer them. If they won't, move on!

Buyer beware. There are lots of people who claim to be therapists but who do not have the credentials or professional memberships to support the claim. When you are making your first exploratory phone calls:

Ask these questions

- What's your education?
- What's your professional / clinical training?
- Do you have experience in treating mood disorders?
- Are you a member of a professional association or college?
- How long have you been practicing?
- Do you have experience with my specific problem?
- What are your fees?

- How many sessions do you think it will take to reach my goals?
- Can we work as a team to set the goals for my therapy?
- Do you have a waiting list?

Here are some questions to ask yourself after the first couple of sessions:

- Am I beginning to trust this therapist?
- Does the therapist seem to understand me?
- Do I feel at ease with the therapist even though it's a difficult situation?
- Are the fees okay?
- Is the location good?
- Do I feel comfortable in the therapist's office?
- Can the therapist accommodate my schedule needs?
- Do I feel that we make a good team?
- Do I feel heard?
- Do I feel supported?

Make sure that you feel comfortable.

Remember, this is an important and courageous step that you have taken and you need to be on the journey with someone that you know you can count on.

If you don't feel that you and the therapist are a good fit, let him/her know. Some problems can be resolved but sometimes it's just a matter of "mismatched personality". This is no one's fault but will require you to find a different counsellor. If you do need to find a new therapist ask your current therapist to help you by providing some names of other therapists. He/she should be able to accommodate this request.

How much will this cost me?

- OHIP covers Psychiatrists and Medical Doctors.
- Psychologists and Clinical Social Workers aren't covered by OHIP but are often covered by private or company insurance policies.
- Fees can range from as low as \$0.00 per hour at public agencies all the way up to \$160+ per hour.

Where can I start to look?

College of Physicians and Surgeons:

Telephone: 416.967.2603
Toll free: 1.800.268.7096 ext. 306
Website: www.cpso.on.ca

G.P. Psychotherapy Association:

Telephone: 416.410.6644

Ontario Association of Social Workers:

Telephone: 416.923.4848
Website: www.oasw.org

Ontario College of Social Workers:

Telephone: 416.972.9882
Toll free 1.877.828.9380
Website: www.ocswssw.org

Ontario Psychological Association:

Telephone: 416.961.5552
Toll free: 1.800.268.0069
Website: www.psych.on.ca

Summary

One in five children will deal with a mental health problem during childhood. However, a variety of mental health services do exist to support children and youth and their families. Early intervention is key, and you will be key in ensuring that early intervention is obtained. Remember: YOU are the expert in your child/youth. YOUR gut is your guide.

About this Fact Sheet

Written by Parents for Children's Mental Health. The only Ontario Provincial, family-led, non-profit organization representing the voice of families raising children and youth with mental illness.

Special thanks to the Mental Health Information Committee of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) for permission to adapt content from their handout "Mental Health Services for Children and Youth" .

Excerpts also taken from the PCMH Family Resource Guide – PCMH Waterloo Chapter.

Disclaimer

Information in this pamphlet is offered "as is" and is meant only to provide general information that supplements, but does not replace the information from your health provider. ALWAYS contact a qualified health professional for further information in your specific circumstance.