



Behavioural Health | DALTON  
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# Mental Health Services for Children and Youth

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TORONTO | News

Most Ontario youth experienced depression during pandemic, early data suggests

## COVID-19 and Education Disruption in Ontario: Emerging Evidence on Impacts

*Mental Health Week*

**Kids in crisis: Inside Ontario's overloaded mental-health system**

- Initial research from Sick Kids suggests that most children and youth have experienced a decline in their mental health during Covid-19.
- The Ontario Covid-19 Science Table has reported that children and youth's learning and academic performance has been negatively impacted by the recent school closures
- Many children and youth are experiencing mental health, behaviour, and learning challenges but families may not know what services are available or where to access support.

# What are signs of possible mental health concerns?

Getting significantly lower marks in school

Avoiding friends and family

Having frequent outbursts of anger

Changes to sleeping or eating habits

Acting out or rebelling against authority

Drinking a lot and/or using drugs

Not doing the things they used to enjoy

Worrying constantly

Experiencing frequent mood swings

Not concerned with their appearance

Obsessed with their weight

Lacking energy or motivation

Increased risk-taking behaviour

Feeling very down

Reference: Canadian Mental Health Association <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/child-and-youth-mental-health-signs-and-symptoms/>

# When should I seek help?

**You should seek help for your child or youth if your concerns about their mood or behaviour:**

- are intense
- persist over long periods of time
- are inappropriate for the child's age
- interfere with the child's life

Reference: Canadian Mental Health Association <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/child-and-youth-mental-health-signs-and-symptoms/>

# What services available for children and youth?



**Psychotherapy** involves a clinician working with the child and their family to bring about positive change in the child's thinking, feeling, behaviour, and social functioning. This includes identifying strategies for both the child and family to use, based on their goals for therapy.

## What does it involve?

- 1 For younger children, therapy may occur within the context of play or other fun activities. For older children and youth, it will focus more on talking about their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.
- 2 Sessions are generally brief (an hour) and typically have “homework” for child/youth to work on in between session related to the therapy goal.
- 3 Parents are often involved to reinforce the use of strategies developed in session.

# Psychological /Psychoeducational Assessment

A **psychological assessment** provides in-depth information regarding your child, based on data from standardized testing and information provided by parents and other professionals involved with your child. Psychological assessments are often completed to identify a specific psychological diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

**Psychoeducational assessments** are a specific type of assessment that determines how your child learns across a number of domains. It assists in diagnosing learning disabilities and other disorders that may interfere with learning. A psychoeducational assessment also provides recommendations on how to best support your child's learning at school and home.

# Psychoeducational assessment

## Pre- Assessment

- Initial call with a psychologist to identify your concerns.
- Gathering background information from parents, school, and others.
- Completing questionnaires around your child's learning, thinking, adaptive, and social emotional skills.

## Assessment

- Parent interview to review the child's developmental history.
- Direct testing with the child using standardized testing across a number of domains:
  - Cognitive, Academic, Learning and Memory, Attention, Language, Social Emotional

## Report and Feedback

- Once all information is gathered and testing complete, the psychologist will complete the report.
- This will outline results, diagnostic considerations, and recommendations for home and school.
- A feedback meeting is completed to review the report and results.



Behaviour support provides tools for parents to teach new skills or reduce challenging behaviours at home. A clinician develops a treatment plan in conjunction with parents or caregivers to implement at home for their child or youth.

Behaviour support is well suited for younger children or children with behaviour challenges. It is time limited based on an agreed upon treatment goal.

## What does it involve?

- 1 Parents/caregivers meet with the clinician to discuss their concerns, identify a treatment goal, and discuss the process.
- 2 Information is gathered by parents and shared with the clinician in order to develop a behaviour support plan.
- 3 Once developed, parents are coached on how to deliver the plan. This includes how to prevent challenging behaviours, consistently respond to behaviours when they occur and how to teach adaptive skills.
- 4 The clinician completes several follow up appointments after the plan is implemented to problem solve as needed.

# Specialized services and supports

Specialized services are often diagnosis specific. These may include:

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) coaching:
  - A clinician provides coaching directly with a child or youth to work on skills related to ADHD, including self regulation, organization, and study skills.
- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):
  - Children and youth with ASD can benefit from ABA, which provides behaviour support to learn new skills and decrease challenging behaviours.
- Intensive mental health supports:
  - These are typically for children and youth experiencing serious mental health concerns. Services can include intensive day programs or residential treatment.

# How do I access services and supports?

Encompas:  
[www.encompascare.ca](http://www.encompascare.ca)



ConnexOntario:  
[www.connexontario.ca](http://www.connexontario.ca)



Referrals from your family physician or nurse practitioner: Your primary health care provider can often provide suggestions or referrals for mental health services in your area.

## Crisis Resources:

- Kids Help Phone Line: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>
- Encompas: [encompascare.ca](http://encompascare.ca)
- Canadian Mental Health Association ON:
  - <https://ontario.cmha.ca/mental-health/child-and-youth-mental-health/> <https://ontario.cmha.ca/mentalhealth/child-and-youth-mental-health/>

## Additional Resources

- **Togetherall** which offers anonymous support moderated by professionals and counsellors for those 16 and older: <https://togetherall.com/en-ca/>
- **BounceBack**® is a free skill-building program designed to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression, anxiety, stress or worry. Delivered online or over the phone with a coach, you will get access to tools that will support you on your path to mental wellness: <https://bouncebackontario.ca/>
- **Wellness Together Canada** is Canada's first and only online platform offering immediate mental health and substance use support for all ages, funded by the Government of Canada: <https://wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA>
- Children's Mental Health Ontario: <https://cmho.org/>
- Government of Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/mental-health-services-children-and-youth>

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