

# Answers to Your Questions About **GETTING HELP** For Children with Mental Health Concerns

## Where do I start if I think my child is having difficulties?

A good place to begin is with your child's doctor. Many physical illnesses can mimic the symptoms of mental illness. A physical exam can help to rule out certain illnesses. Children who have brain disorders can be very difficult to diagnose because often the symptoms of the disorder in children are different from the symptoms experienced by adults. It is important that your child receive an accurate diagnosis, especially before considering medication.

You can help your child's doctor or specialist arrive at the right diagnosis by writing down:

- Things your child has difficulty with
- The times of the day that your child is affected the most
- Settings that are the most difficult
- Events or circumstances that led up to your child experiencing difficulty
- Things you have done when your child is having difficulty

Ask your school about psycho-educational testing to rule out any learning disability.

There are also private agencies that provide psycho-educational testing. Check the Learning Disabilities website at [www.ldav.ca/referrals.html](http://www.ldav.ca/referrals.html) for more information.

## My child seems to need a lot of blood tests, is there any way to make this easier for him or her?

Getting a needle is not a fun experience for children. Ask the lab technician to use a butterfly needle on your child, as it seems to cause less discomfort for children. Also, there are creams available now that are applied to the skin that freezes the area and results in less discomfort when the blood is taken.

## Where should parents look when searching for a mental health professional?

Mental health therapists and clinicians are available by contacting your local office of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Ask for the mental health intake worker. A listing of community offices can be found online at [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental\\_health/pdf/services.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/pdf/services.pdf). Anyone can make this call—young people themselves, parents, guardians or others directly involved in the child's life. In addition to government services, families can also check the BC Psychological Association website for listings of registered psychologists at [www.psychologists.bc.ca](http://www.psychologists.bc.ca). These are user-pay services and may be covered by your extended health plan.

## What can I do while I'm waiting to see a specialist?

Educate yourself. Search the library or Internet for information on child and youth mental health to gain as much information as possible. There are some good tips from books like *The Explosive Child* by Dr. Ross Greene. Parents have indicated that his practical advice really helped them to learn how to minimize their children's emotional explosions. In addition, look for family support agencies such as the F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids' Mental Health that may be able to assist in answering any questions you may have and locating support groups for parents.

## What are some things my child's school can do to help while I am sorting out testing, services, etc. for my child?

You could request to have a meeting with your child's teacher(s) and other relevant school personnel to look at alterations that can be made to accommodate the difficult times that you are experiencing. These may include less or no homework, altered start and finish times for school, an alternate room or place your child can go if they are experiencing problems, and more breaks from work.



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## Where do I start seeking help for my child at school?

Contact your school's principal or your child's teacher and ask for the name and contact information of the counselor that services your school. Also, many school districts now have a school mental health liaison worker. Call the Student Support Services office in your school district to ask about these workers.

## What does it mean if my child receives a special needs designation from the Ministry of Education?

A designation code means that a child is recognized as having special needs and entitles your child to extra funding and an Individual Education Plan to meet his or her unique needs at school.

## What if my child needs to be hospitalized or requires more extensive intervention?

BC Children's Hospital is the only facility that offers provincial in-patient psychiatric care for children under 12. Regional hospitals offer various youth psychiatric services. The Ministry of Children & Family Development, in partnership with some local school districts and Health Regions, offer day treatment programs. Check with your local Student Support Services office for availability and contact information, as a referral is needed to these programs.

## How do I apply for a disability tax credit for my child?

The Disability Tax Credit is available to those who have an impairment in physical or mental functions that is severe and prolonged. There is a government form that your physician must complete for filing with your taxes. For more information, please visit [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/disability-e.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/disability-e.html).

## What can I do if I don't seem to be getting anywhere?

Often it helps to bring together key people who can help put a care plan together and ensure all pieces come together. Here are some of the people who can help.

- Social worker—can assist in coordinating other services like in-home support
- Mental health clinician/therapist
- Community team leader for mental health
- Child/youth care worker
- Student support services
- Community services manager
- Teachers
- Advocate

Make a list or have someone help you to identify what your needs are before requesting a meeting.

## The F.O.R.C.E.

Families Organized for Recognition and Care Equality  
Society for Kid's Mental Health



BC Partners for  
Mental Health and  
Addictions Information

# CHILD & YOUTH Mental Health Services

When seeking mental health help for your child, it isn't always easy to find out what's available and where to go. Learning about the vast array of services can seem like an overwhelming task. Providing comprehensive care and support for a child often involves a number of professionals and services. To help you on your journey, we have provided a roadmap of the main sources of help for families.

## Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)

### Child and Youth Mental Health Services

- Psycho-educational testing
- Cognitive behavior therapy
- Other best practices therapies
- Family therapy and education
- Referral to day treatment programs
- Social workers (case managers)
- Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre
- Community services (e.g., in-home support)

Learn more about the mental health services offered by the Ministry of Children and Family Development at [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental\\_health](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health), or by contacting your local Child and Youth Mental Health Office, listed in the blue pages of your local telephone directory.

## School

### Teachers

- Adapted or modified lesson plans
- Seating alternatives
- Test alternatives
- Homework alternatives
- Oral presentation alternatives
- Silent reading alternatives

### School Counsellor

- Referral to mental health services
- Counselling
- Assessment
- Referral to student support services
- Class or program placement assistance

### Student Support Services

- Program placement
- Assessment and psycho-educational testing
- Referral to mental health services
- Designation for funding
- Assignment of support time

## Doctors

### General Practitioner

- Assessment
- Medication
- Order diagnostic tests
- Referral to specialists
- Blood workup
- Monitoring
- Referral to hospital in-patient units

### Specialists (e.g., psychiatrists, pediatricians)

- Assessment
- Medication
- Order diagnostic tests
- Referral to other specialists
- Blood workup

### Psychologists

- Assessment
- Therapy



MORE HELPFUL RESOURCES 

# CHILD & YOUTH Mental Health Services

## Helpful Resources and Support

### Local Child and Youth Mental Health Offices of the Ministry of Children and Family Development

Find your local office in the online directory at [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental\\_health/pdf/services.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/pdf/services.pdf) or in the blue pages of your local telephone directory. Check out the MCFD mental health site for more resource links at [www.mdf.gov.bc.ca/mental\\_health/links.htm](http://www.mdf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/links.htm).

### School Support

Contact your child's school and ask for the telephone number of the student support services.

### Youth In BC

A youth oriented website that provides information and support to youth at [www.youthinbc.com](http://www.youthinbc.com) or through their 24-hour phoneline at 1-866-661-3311.

### Early Psychosis Intervention Program

Aims to increase the understanding of psychosis, decrease stigma associated with having this disorder and provide direct treatment. Visit the website at [www.psychosissucks.ca](http://www.psychosissucks.ca) or call 604-538-4278.

### The Crisis Centre

Provides British Columbia crisis line numbers and related links and resources at [www.crisiscentre.bc.ca](http://www.crisiscentre.bc.ca) or 1-800-784-2433.

### BC Mental Health Information Line

Puts free information about mental health and mental illness at your fingertips. Anyone can use it, 24 hours a day at 604-669-7600 or 1-800-661-2121.

### HeretoHelp.bc.ca Website

The BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information website provides information and toolkits on mental health and substance use problems at [www.HeretoHelp.bc.ca](http://www.HeretoHelp.bc.ca)

### BC NurseLine

provides British Columbians with a 24-hour toll-free access to registered nurses to provide confidential health information and advice on the telephone at 604-215-4700 or toll free at 1-866-215-4700 and for the hearing impaired at 1-866-889-4700.

### The Federation of Invisible Disabilities

Their popular Parent Reference and Resource Kit is available to order from [www.fidsbc.com](http://www.fidsbc.com) or by calling 1-800-549-1999.

### Disability Tax Credit

A tax-free benefit is available for low and modest income families who care for a child under age 18 with a severe and prolonged mental or physical impairment. Forms and information is available from [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/disability-e.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/disability-e.html) or by calling 1-800-387-1193.

## Other Parent Support Information

- **Autism Society of BC** • [www.autismbc.ca](http://www.autismbc.ca) • 1-888-437-0880
- **CHADD** • Children and Adults With Attention Deficit Disorder • [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org) • 604-233-4043
- **FAS/E Support Network of BC** • Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects support network • 604-589-1854
- **SNAP** • Society of Special Needs Adoptive Parents • [www.snap.bc.ca](http://www.snap.bc.ca) • 604-687-3114
- **Tourette Syndrome Foundation** • [www.tourette.ca](http://www.tourette.ca) • 604-732-3594
- **Parents Together** • parents of troubled teens • 604-321-5621
- **Parent Support Services of BC** • parents of children under 12 • [www.parentsupportbc.ca](http://www.parentsupportbc.ca) • 1-800-665-6880
- **Grief to Action** • alcohol/drug problems • [www.fromgriefftoaction.org](http://www.fromgriefftoaction.org) • 604-454-1484
- **Alcohol & Drug Information and Referral Service** • 1-800-663-1441
- **Learning Disabilities Association** • [www.ldac-taac.ca/chapters/bc-e.asp](http://www.ldac-taac.ca/chapters/bc-e.asp) • 604-873-8139

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