



When you have concerns about your child's or young person's mental health you are not alone. Mental health concerns affect at least one in five children and youth. The recommended first steps to get help for your child are to talk with your family doctor or the physician at your walk-in clinic, and/or contact your local Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) services office.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM Your Child's School

Mental health can interfere with a child's learning in school. The role of the school is to ensure that all students have access to education with the necessary supports in place to help a child succeed to the best of their abilities.

YOU CAN EXPECT THAT:

- Your school may contact you if they are seeing mental health challenges and/or behaviours exhibited by your child because they care. These symptoms may not be evident at home.
- Teachers may want to consult with you and discuss implementing strategies to manage the symptoms and behaviours for your child in the classroom.
- If your child continues to experience significant academic, social or emotional difficulties that interfere with their learning, the teacher may seek assistance from other school-based services.
- You may be invited to a meeting that may include your child's teacher, principal, school counsellor and other school staff that support your child. These meetings are intended to share information and discuss next steps.
- If difficulties continue for your child, assessments may be recommended to provide a better understanding of your child's functioning, abilities, learning and patterns of behaviour. These assessments provide important information needed for developing a plan of support for your child. Information from parents is important.
- It may be recommended that you involve your family doctor to rule out other health concerns and provide referrals to specialists. You may also be referred to Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) for further assessment and support.
- A recommendation for psycho-educational testing may be made if your child is having difficulties with learning. There may be a concern that an underlying disability is causing the mental health challenges for your child.
- If your child requires a special education designation and continuing supports, the school will work with you to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will help identify the necessary accommodations and interventions designed for your child's needs. Schools work to have support services staff who are there to help in this case.

If your child expresses suicidal thoughts or is at risk of harming themselves or others **call 911** or immediately go to your nearest emergency department.

For 24/7 Mental Health support for you or your family **call 310-6789** (no area code required) from anywhere in BC.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL

GET SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

- If your child requires services and supports outside of school it may be helpful to request an Integrated Case Management (ICM) meeting that includes many of those involved in the care of your child. You can discuss this with your child's school.
- You may wish to bring a support person with you to meetings. Have your support person take notes for you. Be sure to advise the school ahead of time that you will have someone joining you.
- Ask for links to services, resources, and supports that may be helpful to your child and family.

SHARE WHAT WORKS

- Provide the school with a description of your child's strengths, likes, challenges, friends, and life at home. It is also helpful to share strategies that are used at home. Using common language and approaches at home and at school can be very important and helpful for your child.
- Prepare for meetings with your notes and questions and asks. Focus on your child's strengths. Acknowledge what is working well and what matters to you and your child.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL CONTINUED

ASK QUESTIONS

- Understand your rights as a parent and the services and supports that are available to you and your child. Do not hesitate to ask questions and seek clarification of information you do not fully understand.
- Ensure that you understand and agree with the supports, strategies and goals for your child.
- You may request to review your child's file and ask for copies of documents that would be helpful for our records. The school will need time to get the copies

to you. Provide access to reports and information that could help the school understand and manage your child's symptoms, too.

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Establish a good working relationship and communication plan that will allow you to regularly check in on your child's progress.
- Ask to include your child's principal, counsellor and other school supports in meetings where you feel it may be helpful.

WORKING WELL TOGETHER

- Work in partnership, as a team, and presume you are both working towards what is best for your child.
- Practice respect, non-judgement and kindness when communicating, and recognize the "expertise" you each offer.
- Make appointments to schedule time with your child's teacher. It is okay to ask for privacy and a reasonable amount of time to discuss your child.

- Be prepared that finding strategies that work for your child may take time and patience.
- Be flexible and allow for adjustments to plans if necessary.
- Establish a plan for emergencies and difficult situations that may arise for your child.

HELPFUL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT:

BCCPAC | BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils:
www.bccpac.bc.ca/resources

Individual Education Plans. A Guide for Parents:
www.bccpac.bc.ca/resources/individual-education-plans-a-guide-for-parents/

F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids Mental Health:
Parents in Residence and Youth in Residence support youth and families of children/youth with mental health challenges through peer support, education, system navigation and resource sharing. 1.855.887.8004 www.forcesociety.com

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre:
A provincial resource centre that provides mental health and substance use information, resources and peer support to children, youth and their families from across BC. 1.800.665.1822 www.keltymentalhealth.ca

Here to Help BC:

A comprehensive resource website of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information.
www.heretohelp.bc.ca

Anxiety BC:

Free online resources at www.anxietybc.com

Community Child and Youth Mental Health Services location and resources:

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health
You can also call 811 for additional help finding a child/youth mental health team in your area.

Notes and Questions:



**INSTITUTE
OF FAMILIES**
for Child and Youth Mental Health