

The Ministry of Children and Family Development offers a range of mental health services for children, youth and their families, including assessment, treatment, consultation and education through their Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) Offices.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM Community Child & Youth Mental Health Services

What You Can Expect From Child and Youth Mental Health Services

There will probably be a wait before you are given an appointment to see someone.

- ✿ Your child's need for service will be prioritized according to the severity of the problem. Children and youth who are suicidal or experiencing extreme impaired functioning due to acute mental illness have the highest priority.
- ✿ While on the wait list, Child and Youth Mental Health will try to touch base with you once a month, to see how it's going and possibly to let you know about groups you might be interested in.

When you begin to receive services, they will likely want to do a complete assessment.

- ✿ The assessment process will attempt to identify your child's difficulties and your child's strengths.
- ✿ Child and Youth Mental Health may ask for your permission to see records (school, medical, etc.), or consult with your child's school or family doctor.
- ✿ You can receive information on the assessment and a recommended individualized treatment plan.

Child and Youth Mental Health will use evidence-based treatments—ones that have been shown to work.

- ✿ Treatment may involve the use of medications, a combination of medication and therapy or just therapy. Your child may be involved in individual or group sessions. Medication would be prescribed through your family doctor or a psychiatrist.
- ✿ The clinician will likely need to work with other professionals who are involved in your child's care including your child's teacher, school counsellor or others in student support services in the school district you attend.

When You Contact a Child and Youth Mental Health Office:

- ✿ You will speak with an intake worker who will talk to you about your concerns.
- ✿ You will most likely be asked to do a brief child and family phone interview. This is a basic screening tool used to help determine what help is needed.
- ✿ The intake worker may direct you to other community resources, if they feel your child's problem may be better helped through those resources.
- ✿ You may be advised to go to a hospital if it is determined that your child is in immediate danger of hurting themselves or others.



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You may also be referred by Child and Youth Mental Health to:

- ✿ A day treatment program that combines therapy, school and life-skill building to youth.
- ✿ A tertiary care (hospital) in-patient unit where more extensive assessment and observation can take place.
- ✿ Other community programs that offer more specialized mental health support and education to children and youth.

What You Can Expect From Your Child's Therapy or Treatment

By going to therapy, your child will have an opportunity to learn a set of skills that can prove useful to them throughout their life. In therapy your child may learn about:

- ✿ Why they are having difficulties.
- ✿ Different ways to deal with their difficulties.
- ✿ How to change negative thinking patterns and how to use healthy problem solving and coping skills.
- ✿ Situations that can make their symptoms worse and new skills that can help either prevent or cope with symptoms.
- ✿ More appropriate ways of expressing their feelings or learn how to distinguish between different emotions.

You will probably be asked to:

- ✿ Participate in therapy sessions, particularly if your child is young. Older adolescents and teens generally come for their sessions alone.
- ✿ Stay at the office while your child is receiving therapy.
- ✿ Help with homework assignments to practice newly learned skills at home.

You do not have to:

- ✿ Accept the recommended treatment—Child and Youth Mental Health will still see your child.
- ✿ Give any information from outside professionals before you have read the reports and understand the information.

The F.O.R.C.E.

Families Organized for Recognition and Care Equality
Society for Kids' Mental Health

 **BC Partners for
Mental Health and
Addictions Information**