



LET'S PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER.



Coalition *for* Children
AND Youth Mental Health

Let's put our heads together.

Coalition *pour* la santé mentale
des enfants ET des adolescents

Réfléchissons ensemble.



Starting with the Facts

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- 1 in 5 children and youth suffer from a diagnosable mental illness.
- Depression, anxiety, disruptive behavior problems, eating disorders, ADHD, and development disorders are the most common mental health problems for children and youth.
- For more than 70% of adults with a mental health illness, the onset of difficulties occurred before age 18.
- Up to 50% of children and youth experience mental health issues that have a significant impact on academic, social, and family life.
- In a minority of cases, the issues are so severe as to prevent students from attending school. Most of the time, students struggle with these issues on a daily basis at school, further contributing to their functional problems.
- Stigma is a reality for those who suffer from a mental illness – how others judge and perceive them is one of their biggest barriers.
- A recent survey suggests that shame and stigma prevent people from seeking help for mental health problems. Youth are least likely to confide in a medical professional, but are more likely to seek help from peers or teachers, if at all.
- Up to 80% of children will not receive treatment for mental health difficulties.
- Mental illness is the number one leading cause of disability in the world and five of the 10 leading causes of disability are related to mental disorders. (World Health Organization WHO)
- The World Health Organization predicts that by the year 2020 depression will become the No. 2 cause worldwide of years lost due to disability.
- Mental illness costs the Canadian economy a staggering \$51-billion a year, and each day 500,000 people will miss work due to mental health problems.

Up to 80% of children will **not** receive treatment for mental health difficulties.

Suicide

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadian youth, surpassed only by accidental deaths.
- Suicide rates among Canada's Aboriginal population are three to 6 times the national rate.
- 1 in 10 youth report having attempted suicide.
- Young women are twice as likely as young men to actually attempt suicide; however, young men are three times as likely as women to die as a result of suicide.
- Feelings of hopelessness, isolation, and lack of support can result in suicidal behavior.
- Over 85% of people who kill themselves have a pre-existing psychiatric disorder. The best treatment of suicidal behavior is to treat the underlying psychiatric disorder.
- Most people who have thoughts about suicide or make an attempt do not necessarily want to die – they are looking for a way to cope with their emotional pain but see no other alternative.

Depression

- Depression is more than just being sad or unhappy. It is a medical disorder. It is real, can have serious implications, and can affect a young person's thoughts, feelings, physical health and behavior.
- Young people with depression may have a hard time coping with everyday responsibilities and activities, have difficulty getting along with others, and experience low self-esteem.
- Depression is treatable – between 80% and 90% of all depressed individuals respond to treatment and nearly all depressed people who seek treatment see at least some relief of their symptoms (Mood Disorders Association of Ontario).
- Depression is common. Researchers believe that about 1 in 5 children and youth will go through a depression by the time they turn 18. Studies tell us that, at any one moment, between 4 and 8 of every 100 children and youth are having a major depression.

Addictions

- Drugs and/or alcohol can mask or even worsen symptoms of certain mental illnesses such as depression.
- Young people often self-medicate with drugs and alcohol to manage their mental health symptoms.
- It is estimated that about 50% of individuals going through substance abuse treatment have some type of psychiatric disorder (Health Canada, 2000).

Mental Health Literacy and Schools

- The World Health Organization suggests that schools are the best place to promote mental health for children.
- A 2009 Ontario study Scanning the practice landscape in school-based mental health, found that:
- A majority of educators are either “very concerned” or “extremely concerned” about student mental health.
- A majority of educators consider that student emotional well-being is either “very important” or “extremely important” for academic achievement.
- A majority of educators feel that their preparedness to identify and manage student mental health needs ranges from “somewhat prepared” to “not prepared”.



About us

Beliefs and Purpose

The Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health believes that fostering social and emotional health as a part of healthy child development must be a priority in Ontario schools and a priority for integrated public policy in the province. Nurturing the whole child promotes children's rights. It involves engaging with the entire community of caring adults to provide a full continuum of services that includes mental health literacy, promotion of positive social-emotional development, prevention of mental health problems, intervention services and clear pathways to care.

The Coalition advocates for the conditions that promote student success in school and in life and recognizes that this is strongly linked with student mental health and well-being. It is vital to recognize that investing in mental health and well-being of children and youth is an investment in Ontario's future sustainability and prosperity.

Membership

Membership in the Coalition continues to grow and currently includes the following organizations:

- Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario
- Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens
- Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques
- Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards
- Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health*
- Children's Mental Health Ontario*
- Council of Ontario Directors of Education
- Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario
- Hincks Dellcrest Centre
- Hospital for Sick Children
- Kids Help Phone*
- Kinark Child and Family Services
- Mental Health Commission of Canada*
- Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth*
- Offord Centre for Child Studies
- Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies
- Ontario Association of School Board Chief Social Workers
- Ontario Association of Social Workers*
- Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association
- Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health*
- Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association
- Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
- Ontario Native Education Counselling Association
- Ontario Principals' Council
- Ontario Psychological Association
- Ontario Public School Boards' Association
- Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
- Ontario Student Trustees' Association*
- Ontario Teachers' Federation
- Parents for Children's Mental Health
- Pediatricians Alliance of Ontario
- Peel Children's Centre*
- Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health
- Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario*
- School Based Mental Health and Substance Abuse Consortium
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

In addition, there has been strong response to the invitation to every school board in Ontario to become a member of the Coalition.

*Organizations that provide services/information in English and French

The Work of the Coalition

Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health

On June 2, 2011 the Coalition spearheaded a very successful Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health. This landmark event brought together educators, parents and students, professional student services personnel, mental health and health professionals, children's services agencies and children's services advocates. The Summit was designed as a forum to unite the power of collective voices, commitment and efforts, bringing a sense of urgency and action to the vital issue of mental health.



The dynamism of the event is captured in a video presentation prepared by TV Ontario a leading sponsor of the Summit. This can be viewed at: tvoparents.tvo.org/video/162593/summit-children-and-youth-mental-health

The day was hosted by award-winning journalist Cheryl Jackson and well-known host of TVOparents.com. Keynote speakers featured:

Valerie Pringle, a mainstay of Canada's daily news and current affairs programs, and an ardent activist for mental health

The Honourable Michael Kirby, Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada and passionate leader in the realm of public policy, particularly in policy to address the challenges of mental health

Dr. Ian Manion, Executive Director for the Provincial (Ontario) Centre of Excellence

Dr. Bruce Ferguson, Director, Community Health Systems Resource Group, The Hospital for Sick Children

The themes of the Summit were built around the lived experiences of young people and their families who have struggled with mental health issues. The struggles of young people and the stigmas they face were uniquely represented in a dramatic performance by the group Elevated Grounds. A further highlight was the Student Charter of Rights on Mental Health and Well-Being (see p. 9) developed by the Ontario Student Trustees' Association and introduced for the first time at the Summit. These youth-led and very powerful insights offered inspiration for working sessions later in the day.

The goal of the working sessions was to involve all 500 participants in a dialogue leading to development of strategies and actions that will guide the ongoing work of the Coalition and shape advocacy both locally and provincially. The remarkably rich suggestions that emerged from the working sessions have since been consolidated by the Coalition and form the basis for action plans for 2011-12.

Based on advice from participants, the Coalition plans to hold annual Summits on Children and Youth Mental Health to discuss progress, share successes and challenges, network, and extend dialogue across sectors to make more people aware of opportunities, options and issues.

Advice to the Coalition from the Summit Working Sessions

The following are highlights from participant feedback. Full details available on the Speechbobble networking site, see p.13.

Reaching for the best in Children and Youth Mental Health Services

- The right level of service for every child/youth at the right time – not just at times of crisis.
- Equitable access to supports, resources and services across the province in culturally sensitive and preferred language.
- Mental health literacy for professionals in all sectors and for the public, including parents and children/youth.
- A system where Mental Health is as important as Literacy and Numeracy and explicitly taught in school curriculum K-12.
- Elimination of stigma.
- Shift from an illness to a well-being model.
- Emphasis on early intervention and prevention that involves professionals in all sectors Seamless integration of services across sectors, collaboration with a shared responsibility model – no silos.
- Coordinated inter-ministerial policy and funding support for children and youth mental health.
- Environments with caring adults for children and youth that build wellness, coping skills and resiliency.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this declaration is to encourage a united stance on the mental health issues that affect Ontario's children and youth. The following fundamental rights describe a set of ideal standards for accepting, respecting, assisting, and engaging children and youth in the context of mental health within their communities. These rights express OSTA-AECO's call for inclusive and equitable opportunities for all children and youth and are a basis for improving the quality of school and life experience.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Each child and youth is responsible for knowing, acknowledging, and respecting the rights of other children and youth, as well as all other members of the community. **Each adult is responsible for** recognizing their role in caring, listening and becoming knowledgeable about different aspects of mental health. Any adult who works or interacts directly with children and youth must recognize the importance of mental health issues in the context of well-being at school and in life. Adults should commit to working collaboratively to support a revitalized system that adequately addresses the mental health needs of its children and youth and builds mental health literacy and promotion within communities.

CHARTER of RIGHTS

ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH SHALL HAVE THE FOLLOWING SIX INALIENABLE RIGHTS REGARDING
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:

THE RIGHT TO RESPECT

To live and grow in a culture of care and respect, where an individual's emotions and mentalities are to be treated with dignity.

THE RIGHT TO ACCEPTANCE

To not simply be tolerated but be accepted; to not face discrimination or be treated differently on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, aboriginal identity, sexual orientation, social class, disability, language, faith/religion, body image or on any other physical, social, mental, emotional, or cultural representation.

THE RIGHT TO SUPPORT

To be able to approach individuals within school and the community who are knowledgeable and compassionate in dealing with mental health concerns, and who are representative of the cultural diversity of the children and youth that they serve.

THE RIGHT TO SERVICE

To receive equitable and timely access to mental health supports and services, in an individual's preferred language and be made aware of such support and resources regardless of where they live.

THE RIGHT TO SUCCESS

To be supported in achievement, and thrive in a fun and engaging environment that emphasizes learning and living at one's own pace; to be fairly assessed in schools; to be understood and accommodated.

THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION

To be safe from harm, bullying, or any form of harassment; to be able to freely voice opinions and input without reprimand.



Acting on Priorities in Children and Youth Mental Health Services

Skill/Knowledge-building:

- Mental Health “First Aid” and promotion programs for all – delivered to all professionals working with children and youth as well as the public and the children and youth themselves.
- Explicit and mandatory teaching of Mental Health Literacy and Wellness within the FDK-Grade 12 curriculum.
- Mental Health and Well-being policy in every organization dealing with children and youth.
- Sharing of evidence-based and field-tested practices – build a repository of resources, initiatives and models in the top 25 languages spoken in Ontario for youth, parents/guardians and professionals.

Service/Delivery Infrastructure:

- Continue local grass-root discussions with all community based agencies, school boards and services that support mental health for children and youth – locally develop linkages, solutions, common goals, and protocols.
- Put in place models of navigation/navigators that give parents, guardians, children and youth the kind of supports needed to create seamless and timely pathways to care across the province.

Advocacy:

- Actively engage with OSTA-AECO to actualize the Student Charter of Rights-Mental Health and Well-Being for Children and Youth as a point of mobilization and dialogue.
- Work to ensure that there is a provincial vision that is coordinated across government Ministries to establish a comprehensive Mental Health Strategy for children and youth to address anti-stigma, mental health literacy, parental and youth engagement and community access.
- Call for dedicated and pooled funding to support the comprehensive strategy.

Growing Momentum – Government Announcement

On June 22, 2011, the Ministries of Children and Youth, Education and Health jointly held a media conference to release the document *Open Minds, Healthy Minds* and to announce investments in children and youth mental health. (Document available at: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/mental/pdf/open_minds_healthy_minds_en.pdf)

The Coalition will seek a role as an advisory group to the three Ministries on implementation of measures to support children and youth mental health, particularly in areas of cross-sectoral collaboration, a common repository of resources on mental health and promising practices, and mental health literacy.

The Coalition has initiated communications with the three Ministries to promote its involvement in an advisory capacity and to highlight the multi-pronged work that members of the Coalition have already launched. These include: partnership-building across sectors, development of an easily accessible repository of resources through the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Children and Youth Mental Health at CHEO and the School Based Mental Health and Substance Abuse Consortium, and preliminary work on a template policy on children and youth mental health which can be used and adapted by organizations.



Staying connected Taking action

Social Networking Site

The Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health is using Speechbobble™* to build a dynamic on-line community that will encourage communication, networking and sharing of evidence-based practices among the many different organizations that support children and youth. It has many useful features including: timely feedback on issues using conversations or bobbles, real-time polling, a resource repository, and an RSS daily feed. Participants can share materials and resources through this site, initiate conversations, respond to others and create a poll for others to answer.

Plans for the site include having a different Spotlight Leader in the field of children and youth mental health take on the role of leading conversations each month. Conversations (bobbles) on the site can be conducted in both French and English. Access to Speechbobble™ is by invitation only; for more information, contact jnyman@opsba.org

The Coalition would like to hear from you about:

- Your successes and challenges in working to build local community networks to support children and youth.
- Your experience with effective community-school board partnerships.
- Promising mental well-being awareness programs in your area.
- Advocacy efforts to increase the level of coordination and integration among community partners and provincial ministries.

*Speechbobble™ is a social business software that incorporates the most current of new information/social networking technologies in a completely confidential web site.

Some Other Useful Sites

The Coalition's Speechbobble™ site offers information on other useful websites including:

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association web page dedicated to the Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health at:

http://www.opsba.org/index.php?q=advocacy_and_action/coalition_for_children_youth_mental_health

Open Up is a video produced by Canadian educators, for Canadian educators, by the School-Based Mental Health and Substance Abuse Consortium (SBMHSA). It aims to raise awareness about the role of schools in supporting positive student social and emotional well-being.

To Play Video: <http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/e-best/SBMHSA/video.wmv>

To Download Video: <http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/e-best/SBMHSA/SBMHSA.zip>

The video comes with a User Guide featuring suggestions and guiding questions to stimulate dialogue with various audience groupings.

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/com/Mental%20Health%20Docs/OPEN%20UP%20-%20User%20Guide.pdf>

The Algoma Model: The website is a portal developed by Algoma DSB and Huron-Superior CDSB in conjunction with community partners to assist schools, agencies and the general public in searching key services, supports and resources that address the mental health and well-being of school-aged children and youth in the Algoma District.

<http://www.algomamodel.ca/>

The WRAP program at Bluewater District School Board: The partnership between Bluewater District School Board and Keystone Child, Youth & Family Services, integrates children's mental health and education as well as other appropriate community services to provide a "wrap-around" service system. (Working To Reinforce All Partners – WRAP)

http://www.bwdsb.on.ca/stserv/speced_plan/WR.A.P

Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health “Op-Ed” Article

Children’s Mental Health – The Last Frontier

There isn’t an educator in this province who wouldn’t put mental health at the top of their list of issues affecting children and youth. School principals are concerned they don’t have adequate ways to help students and families get access to services. They say the waits are incredibly long and they are often in crisis. The undisputed link between student emotional well-being and academic achievement makes this a profound issue for the learning environment and for the entire culture of education. It is a profound issue for families when mental illness affects the child directly or through the suffering of another family member. Students spend the majority of their days in school and it is a sad reality that few resources exist to prevent, identify and respond to emotional pain, anxiety and other threats to mental well-being.

Beyond the walls of the school and the family home, there is a great deal at stake as well for our society in terms of lost potential. One in 5 children suffers from some form of mental illness; if it is not experienced in our immediate family, it is in our extended family or in our circle of friends. Over 70% of adult mental illness starts in childhood and across Canada half a million people miss work every day because of it. So we invest now or we pay later. Mental well-being is everyone’s business.

Families know deep change has to happen across the various government silos so that children and youth aren’t passed from one service to another and actually end up with no real service at all – nothing that makes a dent in their silent suffering or allows them to reach their full potential and become competent and confident members of their communities. We have to change the statistic that says only one in 6 children and youth actually get the help they need.

In the face of competing priorities the education sector has not always embraced the responsibility to address mental health; but the time has come to be part of the solution. Schools offer an obvious place to renegotiate a more progressive conversation about mental well-being. They can and should be a key community centre, part of a coordinated approach to helping families and their children navigate a direct path to services that are better funded and more easily accessed. Schools need help to do this. They need mental health professionals on site and direct access to community services; they need teachers to be literate

about mental health issues and supported in their efforts to build a caring, inclusive environment where the stigma of mental illness is eliminated, where children and youth can be well, can cope and can build resilience.

In addition to student achievement, school board trustees have a new legislated responsibility for student wellness. The two are tightly linked and we will never reach our best without uniting with families and communities in the common cause of radically improving conditions for children and youth who struggle with mental illness. We have to eliminate stigma, fix fragmented and inequitable services, and support families in navigating a complex system.

Families also see the opportunities to work collaboratively with educators to ensure there are solutions that put children and youth at the centre of concern. The participation of families will be central in inspiring and defining the transformation in mental health services needed in this province so that the right level of service for every child and youth is there at the right time – not just at times of crisis.

Schools and families working together will drive significant and long overdue change in how mental health services are delivered and how they are funded, creating a system where barriers are eliminated between agencies, hospitals and schools and where there is a secure, coordinated inter-ministerial policy supported by levels of funding that ensure a reliable safety net for our children and youth. Joining with the education system in the shared goal of relieving the pain of mental illness and providing strong futures for all children and youth is an energizing prospect for families and a big step in building a stronger Ontario.

It’s time for a new form of leadership. It’s time for everyone who can make a difference to start working together. At the Provincial level coalitions of education advocates, students, parents, and mental health professionals have joined forces for real and profound change in how we as a province deal with the growing epidemic of mental illness.

We know there is political will to find solutions for the challenges of mental health and to invest in the well-being of children and youth. Our challenge is to make sure this goes to the deepest level and creates a mental health model that is comprehensive, accessible and sustained. Mental illness is in many ways a last frontier for us, a startling realization when we know it is an issue that touches us all.

Sarah Cannon
Executive Director
Parents for Children and Youth Mental Health

Catherine Fife
Past President
Ontario Public School Boards’ Association

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The information in this fact sheet was drawn from the following sources. Please visit these websites for more detailed information on issues in children and youth mental health

YouthNet Fact Sheet

www.youthnet.on.ca/main_english.php?section=viewarticle&article=10

CMHA MH Week Fact Sheet

www.mentalhealthweek.ca/data/MentalHealthisEveryonesConcernFactSheet.pdf

Here to Help (BC)

www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/images/ChildrenYouth_MentalHealth.pdf

CPA Fact Sheet

publications.cpa-apc.org/browse/documents/20

Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers

www.cheo.on.ca/uploads/Mental%20Health/Mental%20Health%20and%20Illness%20Overview.pdf

Fact Sheet for Youth on Psychotropic meds

www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/docs/psy-photropics_focus_on_the_facts.pdf

Joint Consortium on School Health and PHAC

eng.jcsh-cces.ca/upload/Emo_health_ENG.pdf

Mental Health Commission of Canada

Countering Stigma and Discrimination: Operational Plan, June 2008

<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/AntiStigma/Operational%20Plan%20SD%202008%20sept2908.pdf>

Scanning the practice landscape in school-based mental health,

August 2009

www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/position_sbmh_practice_scan.pdf



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