

Improving Mental Health Supports for Ontario Kids and Families*McGuinty Government Releases Comprehensive Mental Health And Addictions Strategy***NEWS**

June 22, 2011

Over 50,000 Ontario kids and their families will now have quicker and easier access to the right mental health supports, when and where they need them.

Today, Ontario released a Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, which focuses on children and youth in the first three years. Supports for kids target three key areas: fast access to high-quality services, early identification and support, and helping vulnerable kids with unique needs.

Key Investments for children and youth include:

- Placing mental health workers and nurses with mental health expertise in schools – benefitting over 9,000 kids – and giving educators, social workers and other professionals tools and training to identify mental health issues early on.
- Providing more services such as short-term therapy and crisis intervention in community agencies to help 13,000 more kids and reduce wait lists.
- Expanding telepsychiatry (video counselling) services to rural, remote and underserved communities to provide more kids with consultations with child psychiatrists.
- Providing culturally appropriate services to 4,000 more Aboriginal kids by hiring new Aboriginal mental health workers.
- Keeping 2,300 youth out of the justice system by adding more mental health court workers who can refer them, instead, to community-based services, such as clinical counselling.
- Helping more than 16,000 youth transitioning from secondary to post-secondary school by adding more mental health workers on campuses in colleges and universities.

Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy will create a more coordinated and responsive mental health system. The strategy will focus on building awareness and support around mental health issues by reducing stigma and discrimination, identifying problems and intervening early, and delivering more high quality and timely supports.

The government will also develop performance measures for publicly reporting wait times, client experiences and health outcomes.

QUOTES

Today's announcement will literally change the lives of thousands of kids and their families across the province. These new services and expanded supports will help children and youth with mental health challenges reach their full potential and thrive.

-Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services

Mental health issues often begin during childhood and I'm proud that today's announcement will help to lay the foundation for good mental health early in life. It's the right thing to do and the right time to do it and I know not only youth will benefit, but also thousands of Ontario adults who will get the services they need quicker and more effectively to prevent and reduce mental health and addictions issues.

- Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

The professionals in our education system are often in the best position to identify the need for mental health services at an early age. The additional resources we are providing to our educators will help break down barriers and ensure our children get the support and services they need to succeed.

- Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education

QUICK FACTS

- More than 50,000 kids and their families will immediately benefit from Ontario's new strategy for Mental Health and Addictions.
- Ontario's investments will start this year and total \$257 million over the next three years.
- Since 2003, the government has increased funding by 80 per cent for community mental health services, and by 49 per cent for addiction programs.

LEARN MORE

- Read [*Open Minds, Healthy Minds: Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy*](#).
- Find out about [child and youth mental health services in Ontario](#)
- See [what experts are saying about Ontario's strategy](#)

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Approximately one in five Ontario children and youth has a mental health challenge. These young people dealing with issues such as anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, mood disorders, schizophrenia and eating disorders.

Starting With Kids

Early identification and intervention leads to improved school achievement, better health outcomes and cost-savings to the health care and social service systems. And 70 per cent of mental health issues have their onset in childhood and adolescence – which can lead to conflicts with family members, trouble in school and feelings of isolation. Left untreated, mental health issues become more serious and difficult to manage.

New Services and Supports

New services and supports focus on three key areas – fast access to high-quality services, early identification and support, and help for vulnerable kids with unique needs. Over 50,000 kids and their families will benefit from the significant investments that will total \$257 million over the next three years.

Fast Access to High-quality Services

- Helping community-based agencies to hire more workers to serve an additional 13,000 kids and reduce wait lists
- Establishing a directory to help families find services in their communities
- Developing and implementing a wait-time strategy to track and reduce wait times
- Training workers at mental health agencies on the use of short-term therapies so help can be provided more quickly
- Improving service and accountability through the introduction of standards and performance measures

Early Identification and Support

- Training and resources to help educators, social workers and other professionals work together to identify kids with mental health issues sooner
- Placing mental health workers and nurses with mental health expertise in schools, benefiting more than 9,000 more children and youth
- Developing a resource guide and website to provide elementary and secondary school teachers with information on the early signs of mental health issues
- Helping school boards work with community partners to deliver mental health services and provide mental health literacy training for all educators in the province

Vulnerable Kids with Unique Needs

- Expanding and enhancing telepsychiatry mental health services to rural, remote and underserved communities - benefiting 800 more kids and their families.
- Hiring new Aboriginal mental health workers to provide culturally appropriate services to 4,000 more Aboriginal children and youth
- Hiring more mental health court workers to keep 2,300 youth out of the justice system and referring them instead to community-based services, such as anger management and clinical counselling
- Increasing inpatient and outpatient services for 300 more kids with eating disorders
- Hiring more service coordination workers to help children and youth with complex mental health needs access multiple services quickly and easily
- Providing more mental health workers in colleges and universities to help more than 16,000 youth make an easier transition from secondary to post-secondary school settings.

Ontario's comprehensive Strategy for Mental Health and Addictions puts kids first. It will strengthen services, expand supports, build awareness and capacity within the education system and create a more integrated and responsive system for children and youth with mental health challenges and their families.

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Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy

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Ontario's new Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy will create more coordinated, responsive, client-centred mental health and addictions services throughout the province. It aims to:

- Improve mental health and well-being for all Ontarians by:
 - Identifying mental health needs as early as possible and provide coordinated, high quality programs and services closer to home.
 - Improving mental health literacy through targeted education and awareness programs to reach people most at risk.
 - Involving workplaces and encouraging them to develop and deliver education and awareness programs and services, while helping those with mental health and addictions issues to better cope in the workplace.
- Create healthy, resilient, and inclusive communities by:
 - Reducing stigma and discrimination through more mental health promotion practices for children and youth, educators, health providers, workplaces, seniors' service providers, municipal service providers, justice providers and the public.
 - Building on current programs to deliver services through community settings.
- Identify mental health and addiction problems early and lay down a foundation for good mental health early in life by focusing on kids first and:
 - Enhancing the capacity of our first responders to identify people with early signs and symptoms of mental health or addiction problems.
 - Building school based capacity and enhancing mental health resources at school.
 - Strengthening the capacity of family health care providers to offer mental health and addiction services.
- Provide timely, high quality, integrated, person-directed services. For example:
 - Creating a single-access directory with information on mental health and addictions services, self-care and peer support.
 - Delivering mental health and addictions services in schools, universities, colleges, community services, settlement services and long-term care homes.
 - Improving transitions between different services, including between youth and adult services, between adult and seniors services and between the justice and health systems.
 - Better coordination across the health system to reduce avoidable emergency room visits, hospitalization and wait times.

Moving the Strategy Forward

Delivery and implementation of the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy will be a standing item at the Deputy Minister Social Policy Committee, including the development of common performance measures and clear accountabilities. The government will also establish a Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council of leaders from health, adult, and child/youth community-based mental health, education, justice, municipal sectors and consumers, to provide advice to the Ministers on the strategy.

Regional leadership will work with community partners to improve transitions between acute and community services, children/youth and adult services, and justice and health care systems.

Ensuring Accountability

The government will work with experts and stakeholders to develop performance measures for monitoring and reporting wait times, client experiences and health outcomes, as well as to standardize public reporting across Ontario. Every two years, the government will work with a Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council to develop a public progress report on the Mental Health and Addictions strategy.

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What Experts Are Saying About Improving Mental Health Services for Children and Youth

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"Children's Mental Health Ontario is pleased with the government's commitment to improving services for young people across the province with mental health issues. These financial investments will assist in providing the highest quality treatment efficiently and effectively, allowing for the best possible outcomes for young people and their families. We look forward to working with Minister Broten on the implementation of these investment priorities."

- Gordon Floyd, President and CEO, Children's Mental Health Ontario

"Today's announcement by Minister Laurel Broten is an important and positive step, prioritizing family-centred and direct services. The range of government initiatives, including support for the Navigator/Support Services for families marks real progress toward comprehensive reform of child and youth mental health services."

- Sarah Cannon, Executive Director, Parents for Children's Mental Health

"This investment will help to save lives and change futures. Through the leadership of the Government of Ontario in recognizing children's mental health as a priority, we can collectively bring hope, optimism and possibilities to the children and families we serve."

- Calvin Younger, Board Chair, Hincks-Dellcrest Treatment Centre

"Investing in the early years, when more than 70 per cent of mental disorders begin, is critical to good outcomes later in life. The Government's cross-sectoral approach to children's mental health and emphasis on early intervention is an important step forward in a province-wide mental health strategy".

- Dr. Catherine Zahn, President and CEO, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

"Today's announcement offers critical support to people living with mental illness and addiction and their families. The strategy has the essential ingredients needed to enable a true and effective continuum of care and support. By having tangible mechanisms of accountability in place, we can ensure we remain on the right track in delivering mental health care to all Ontarians. With emphasis in the first stage on early-intervention with children and youth, coupled with ways to improve timely access and resources, today's announcement is an impressive and right step forward. We welcome the opportunity of working with the various Ministries and our partners in implementing this vital strategy".

- George Weber, President and CEO, The Royal Ottawa Mental Health Group

"Investing in the mental health of children and youth is an investment in Ontario's future sustainability, cohesiveness and prosperity. There has never been a better time for Ontarians to join the conversation and advocate together for a concrete commitment to improved mental health supports and services."

- Catherine Fife, President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association

"The government of Ontario has taken a major step forward with the release of this strategy. I'm pleased to see Ontario adopt an "all-of-government" approach to mental health and addictions, given the number of government departments with a role to play in improving the mental health of Ontarians. I'm also pleased to see the comprehensive nature of the strategy, which focuses on everything from stigma reduction to the training of first responders."

- Michael Kirby, Chair, Mental Health Commission of Canada

"It is so refreshing that the Government of Ontario appears to understand the day to day realities faced by those with mental illness and/or addictions. In tough times, issues like mental illness tend to lose the focus of government, but not in this case. The report benefits greatly from the input sought from all sectors. Though ideally, coffers would have overflowed to correct the long-standing issues, these tough times dictate restraint. Nonetheless, this places us solidly on the right road. I am especially pleased with the intent to get behind a more integrated system of supports that reduces barriers to employment."

- Pat Capponi, Psychiatric Survivor, Lead Facilitator - Voices From the Street

"Addiction and Mental Health issues have been pushed to the sidelines for too long. With this announcement today and the commitment to mental health and addictions in the recent budget, Ontario has decided to make sure that this is no longer the case. Starting with children and youth and by addressing the other parts of the strategy, Ontario is now on the road to recovery".

- David Kelly, Executive Director Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs

"Ontario's doctors want to congratulate the government on the release of a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. A renewed focus on mental health, especially children's mental health was a key plank in our election platform released earlier this year and we look forward to working closely with the government on the implementation of the strategy to ensure patients get the care and services they need."

- Dr. Stewart Kennedy, President, Ontario Medical Association

"The earlier we can identify mental illness, the greater the chances of a successful recovery. Provisions in the 10-year mental health strategy will help educate key professions and the general public to recognize and respond to symptoms more quickly."

- Mary Alberti, CEO, Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

"I applaud what Minister Matthews and her department are doing in this area. It's where mental health has to start. The Honourable Michael Kirby, Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada says 'If mental health is the orphan of the health care system, then youth mental health is the orphan of the orphan'. Child and youth mental health is everyone's business. Early detection and intervention is key. We need to build a mental health literacy among teachers, physicians, police officers, coaches, judges and lawyers, dentists, clergy, child welfare and youth justice workers...anyone coming into contact with children and young people. We need to listen to young voices to get it right".

- Shelagh Rogers, Order of Canada, Host, CBC Radio One, *The Next Chapter*

"AEFO welcomes the new investments in mental health services for children and youth in the province. Young people facing mental health issues must be able to access specialized help quickly. Otherwise, their learning and indeed their future can be jeopardized."

- Anne Vinet-Roy, vice-présidente de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens

"The government acknowledged in this year's budget that resources are needed to ensure that the province's mental health support systems are responsive to the needs of children and youth. OCSTA welcomes the government's investment in a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy that will begin with children and youth."

- Nancy Kirby, President, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

"Stephanie and I support turning conversations about mental health and suicide into real actions and initiatives that will raise awareness and provide early-intervention in schools, in sport arenas and in the workplace. We feel that focusing on child and youth will help keep our youth healthy and alive."

- Luke Richardson, Father, Assistant Coach, Ottawa Senators

"In the Ontario budget tabled in March, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) was pleased to see the province's commitment to child and youth mental health. The release of Open Minds, Healthy Minds places that commitment in the context of a comprehensive, integrated strategy to address mental health and addictions in Ontario. This strategy, and the actions which will flow from it, will help to improve the mental health of people across Ontario,"

- Louise Bradley, President and CEO, Mental Health Commission of Canada

"We welcome this announcement as new annualized dollars and investment in aboriginal child and youth mental health is the right thing to do. Mental health often goes unaddressed in the lives of Aboriginal children. We are very encouraged that the government has recognized the unique needs of Aboriginal children. With this investment we can begin doing the important work that needs to be done in our community."

- Kenn Richard, Executive Director, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

"Improving mental health supports for children and youth represents our best chance to make a life-changing difference – now and for years to come."

- Dr. Ian Manion, Executive Director, Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health

"I commend the Ontario Government for investing in early identification and access to children's mental health services, which will significantly improve health outcomes for Ontario's children."

- Mary Jo Haddad, President and CEO, Hospital for Sick Children

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