



Children's Mental Health Ontario
Santé mentale pour enfants Ontario

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR ONTARIO'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH

2016 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

With strategic, multi-year investments in children's mental health centres, Ontario has an opportunity to:

- ▶ Save money by significantly reducing hospital admissions/stays
- ▶ Improve outcomes for children and youth by:
 - Increasing the capacity of children's mental health centres
 - Dramatically reducing hospital admissions
 - Scaling up existing specialized treatment programs
 - Attracting and retaining qualified, specialized staff
 - Improving service quality

Ontario has the opportunity to reduce hospital emergency and in-patient admissions and **save an estimated \$700M in hospital costs over the next five years by investing \$65M each year** in community-based children's mental health centres.
That's a total savings of \$375M to the province.

“The number of adolescents accessing our emergency room for psychiatric help has skyrocketed in the past few years. In large part this reflects a limited access to community resources: this is a direct result of lack of understanding by families and health care providers of what is out there, long wait lists and, frankly, lack of services in common and disabling conditions.”
Dr. Anthony Levitt, Chief, Brain Sciences Program, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Save Money by Reducing Hospital Admissions/Stays

Ontario has not allocated the resources required to meet the needs of all children and youth seeking treatment for mental illness in the community-based sector. **An investment of \$65M/year to increase capacity in children's mental health centres will reduce wait times for services, decrease hospital admissions, improve access to care, increase service quality, and enhance care pathways and coordination.**

If action is not taken, an additional \$345M in-patient and emergency department costs in hospitals could be incurred over the next five years.

The facts are clear – in Ontario, more than **6,000 children and youth** with significant mental health issues are currently **waiting for more than a year to access treatment**. If these children and youth do not get the treatment they need, they risk becoming more ill or suicidal, resulting in long and expensive hospital stays. The Canadian Institute of Health Information reports, since 2006-2007, children and youth with mental health disorders have experienced:

- **58%** increase in in-patient admissions; and
- **45%** increase in emergency department usage.

This signals a **lack in capacity to treat children and youth in the community**. Some families must even seek care in specialized US treatment centres – at great cost to the province.

The government's **Patients First** initiative commits to an annual 5% increase in-home and community care over the next three years. To improve access to quality treatment, children's mental health centres must be included in this increase.

The recent funding commitment of \$6M to hire 80 new community-based child and youth mental health workers is an important step. But with demand for services growing by 10% per year, this investment will not alleviate growing wait lists. Without additional investments, **12,000 kids** could be waiting to access services by the end of this year.

Improve Outcomes by Investing in Staffing

Attracting and retaining qualified and passionate staff in the community mental health sector is critical to improving outcomes for children and youth. Without specific allocations for compensation and professional development, **many qualified and professional staff are leaving the sector** for higher wages in the hospital and education sectors.

“Increases in emergency department visits and hospital admissions signal insufficient access to timely assessment and treatment in the community sector.”
Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, The Mental Health of Children and Youth in Ontario: Baseline Scorecard

Investments in the recruitment and retention of child and youth mental health service providers will ensure the sector can meet the growing demands for treatment and services.

To ensure the sector is equipped to treat children and youth with severe and/or complex mental health needs, there is a need for more **clinical expertise in children's mental health centres**. Specialized clinical support (such as social work, psychology and psychiatry) will improve outcomes for children and youth with complex mental illness. Investments to provide access to clinical expertise will enhance service quality and treatment and save lives. The funding envelope for mental health nurses within CCACs, for example, could be transferred to children's mental health centres to provide specialized clinical support where it is most needed, while improving coordination and integration of services.

Improve Outcomes by Investing in Quality

The government has expressed its commitment to creating a high quality health care system that puts patients first. For the child and youth mental health sector, **it is crucial that investments are made in quality improvement initiatives**. In addition to improving outcomes for children and youth, investments in quality improvement initiatives will:

- Develop valid, comparable, and consistent data to measure performance
- Build tools and processes to assess and accelerate quality improvement practices
- Build governance capacity

“Making the leap to a system that puts quality first will require fundamental changes in how services are delivered and funded.”

Health Quality Ontario, Quality Matters: Realizing Excellent Care for All

“Children and young people deserve a mental health system that delivers services and supports that respond quickly and comprehensively to their needs, as close to home as possible.”
Ontario's Moving On Mental Health: A system that makes sense for children and youth



Please visit kidsmentalhealth.ca to download CMHO's complete pre-budget submission.

Quick Facts on Child and Youth Mental Health

- 1 in 4 youth in Canada are living with a mental illness and 12% have a severe impairment. With proper diagnosis and treatment, these illnesses can be effectively managed.
- 70% of adult mental health disorders begin in adolescence.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth 10-24.
- Research shows that the most effective mental health and addiction services for children and youth are those delivered at home and in their community.

Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) works to identify and develop solutions to important policy issues affecting the child and youth mental health sector. We represent close to 100 accredited children's mental health agencies that provide treatment and support to infants, children, youth and families. This includes targeted prevention, early intervention, short- and long-term counselling and therapy, and intensive services such as residential care.