

Child and Youth Mental Health

what you need to know



CHILD AND ADOLESCENT ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
WWW.ONLINEORIENTATION.HMHC.CA/

July 2020

SLIDE 1

Welcome to the online orientation for child and adolescent addiction and mental health with Alberta Health Services. I know that is a mouthful but rest assured, the purpose of this orientation is to simplify things for you.

You've been asked to watch this orientation because your child has been referred to a mental health or substance use service within Alberta Health Services, or AHS for short.

Watching this is an important step in your child and family's mental health journey.

To keep things simple, we will refer to mental health throughout, but when we say "mental health" we are including services for problematic substance use, too.

This 18-minute orientation has been designed for parents and caregivers and it also provides important information that adolescents may find helpful.

Feel free to watch this together or separately.

You can view it as many times as you'd like or pause at any time and return later.

A handout of this orientation is available on the website.

We hope the information shared here is useful and will help guide your child's next steps.

SLIDE 2

This orientation will provide you with information that will help you to successfully take part in mental health treatment or decide if treatment is right for your child and family at this time.

What is presented here applies across a wide range of AHS mental health services.

After watching this, you will have a better understanding of:

- who we are
- what we do
- what treatment looks like
- and roles and expectations within our services

You may have received other information about the service you were referred to.

This is also important material for you to review.

SLIDE 3

Before we start describing what we do, we want to begin by sharing the perspective of those who have been where you are.

Take a moment to read these reflections from those who have travelled this road before you.

(Pause)

Young people and their family members often tell us that their first experiences with mental health services can feel a bit overwhelming.

It is natural to feel this way when navigating new things.

However, they also tell us that it is important to have hope and to recognize the strength that you, your child, and your support system can offer.

SLIDE 4

Let's begin. Here is an overview of what we do and what treatment typically involves.

There are usually five steps in what we do:

- assessment

- setting goals

- treatment

- connecting you with referrals and resources

- and working with you to plan for when you leave our service

Each step will be described in more detail.

SLIDE 5

The first step, assessment, is when we collect information to better understand your child and plan for treatment.

This may include conversations with you and your child, completing questionnaires, and reviewing past reports or assessments.

If you have copies of any previous assessments or testing, these are helpful to share with us.

Assessment will be the focus of your first appointment and will be built upon throughout your treatment.

SLIDE 6

We provide goal-oriented therapy.

Having clear and realistic goals helps to provide a focus for treatment and ensures everyone working with your child is on the same page.

Your team will work with you and your child to develop specific goals.

They may be focused on things like improving mood, relationships or school experiences.

Goals are regularly reviewed and updated to address your child's and your family's needs.

It can be really helpful to think about what you and your child are hoping to get from treatment before your first appointment.

SLIDE 7

Treatment is often called therapy.

It will vary from one service to another and may include: one-to-one therapy, family therapy, group therapy, connections to resources and medication management.

Treatment is focused on managing symptoms and practicing skills to move your child and family toward the goals you have decided on.

Treatment involves doing the work in real-life circumstances.

You can expect that your child and perhaps you, too, will practice new skills in between appointments.

It is important to note that treatment may involve medication, but doesn't always.

SLIDE 8

There are many supports available to you and your family.

Your therapist will work with you to identify your child's needs and what supports may be helpful during and after treatment.

SLIDE 9

Involvement with us will be time-limited and will vary depending on the service.

You can expect to start talking about next steps right from the start.

Every service has processes to support your child and you at the time of discharge.

You can expect to leave our services with a clear plan to support your child's ongoing recovery.

SLIDE 10

All mental health programs within AHS use the same approach to the development of treatment plans.

WORKING TOGETHER

You know your child and family best.

We offer specialized knowledge and skills to your child and you.

Put those two things together and we make a great team.

FOCUSING ON GOALS

as already highlighted...

Setting goals helps to get your child and your family to where you want to be.

Treatment will be time-limited. The amount of time will vary by service and will take into account your goals.

Having specific and measurable goals keeps us moving ahead together to reach the goals you have set.

STAYING CONNECTED WITH YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR

While you are involved with our services, your family doctor is still your primary care provider.

We will be in contact with them and encourage you to maintain your connection with them, too.

Care will be transferred back to your family doctor after treatment is complete.

SLIDE 11

Now that you better understand the mental health treatment journey, let me explain how we provide care.

At AHS, we continually strive to apply new research and evidence to the development of programs and treatment plans to ensure we provide the best care possible.

In all steps of the treatment journey, we aim to provide high-quality care that is patient-centred, family-centred, professional, innovative, safe, effective, informed by research and best practice and compassionate.

SLIDE 12

You and your child are the real experts when it comes to understanding your situation.

You know what has been tried before, what has worked, and what hasn't.

When a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, the parent or caregiver is essential to their care.

This is no different for mental health concerns.

For example, when a child is diagnosed with diabetes, they need to learn to do many things to help to manage their blood sugar.

But they also need the support of their family to do things like provide healthy food options, and support the new skills they are learning.

Both the child and their family make changes to respond to the new diagnosis.

It's no one's fault they have diabetes and everyone becomes a part of the solution.

Likewise, in our services, family participation is crucial to meet the child's needs.

SLIDE 13

So, what does family support look like? It can include things like:

- sharing important observations about symptoms or the impacts of medication

- learning about your child's condition and effective strategies to address concerns or behaviours

- working to provide the best environment possible to manage symptoms and practice new skills

- participating in ongoing assessment and the treatment that is offered to your family

- and supporting your child generally in their journey, showing them that their health and well-being matters to you

An active role is key.

Surrounding you and your child is a team that includes healthcare professionals and other people who support you in your life. The members of your team will depend on the service you are a part of and your child's care plan. I'll briefly describe some of these roles.

Your Child Your child will be a key player in their care. They'll be a part of setting their treatment goals, tracking their progress, and looking at what things they'll need to do to keep themselves healthy after treatment.

Your Family Change in young people is most successful when families are actively involved. We cannot do the work without you.

Mental Health Clinicians and Addiction Counsellors, referred to here as Therapists or Counsellors AHS therapists are experts in child and adolescent mental health and are the main healthcare provider. They will be involved in all stages of your child's care.

Family Doctor Your child's family doctor will be kept up-to-date about their progress.

Support System Supports can come in many forms. It may be people you are already connected to. This might include family, trusted friends, your faith community, school or community providers you are working with.

Administrative Staff Administrative staff assist with scheduling, managing records, and providing you with information when needed.

Psychiatrist A psychiatrist is a medically-trained doctor who has additional years of training in mental health. They provide diagnoses and medication management on a short-term basis. A psychiatrist may or may not be needed for your child.

Community Partners There are many community-based services that can help your child and family.

There may be other professionals involved in your child's care. Some are listed here and may also include students as AHS is a teaching organization.

SLIDE 15

Sometimes, even when enrolled in treatment, crises emerge.

Given the nature of having scheduled appointments, most clinics do not offer crisis supports.

There are a number of community and AHS crisis services should you need them.

This information is also on the Resources page of the Orientation website.

You can also call HealthLink at 811 for more information.

SLIDE 16

Sometimes we hear that families feel alone in their experience.

But mental health concerns are far more common than most people realize.

In fact, 1 in 5 people will experience a mental health challenge in their lifetime.

75% of mental health concerns start before the age of 24.

You are doing the right thing in seeking out supports for your child.

Getting help early on is important.

We are here to help, as are the many community-based supports available to your child and family.

Professionals at the service you have been referred to will work with you to make a plan that will support your child and your family's needs.

SLIDE 17

AHS is here for you.

We can help you find the path that is best for your child and you.

Sometimes that is an AHS service and sometimes that is another service.

There are things that may impact your choice such as what treatment you have participated in recently, the time and resources that you and your family have available to you, and your readiness for change.

We will speak about some of these elements here in more detail.

You can phone the service you have been referred to at any point to discuss your options and what is the best fit for you.

SLIDE 18

Learning new things and making change are a part of treatment.

Think about a time when you decided to make a change in your life.

Sometimes there is a gap between knowing something should change, wanting to change, and actually taking the steps to change.

There are several stages of change and this is not a linear process.

In other words, it isn't likely that your child and you will move from thinking about change to making the change and then being done.

People move back and forth, and between stages as they are working towards lasting change.

This is to be expected.

It can take time and it will require patience from you, your child, and family.

You and your child might be at different stages of readiness and that is okay.

Our services are designed to meet you both where you are at.

SLIDE 19

It is important to think about the pros and cons of therapy.

What works for one family may not work for another.

There is always hope for better mental health and the path to getting there varies.

Take the time to talk about what the benefits and considerations are for your child and family.

If you still need more information, please contact your service.

We are here to help.

SLIDE 20

Active participation in treatment is really important.

We have already highlighted how we work with you as partners in your child's care and some of the stages of change to think about.

In addition, when participating in treatment there are responsibilities as well.

For example:

- giving us at least 24 hours' notice if you need to cancel an appointment so we can give that time to another child and family

- understanding that we will connect, should you miss 2 appointments without letting us know

If this happens, we will discuss any challenges you may be experiencing, what options may be available to you or whether working with you at a future date is needed

You can discuss this further with the service you have been referred to.

SLIDE 21

AHS staff also have responsibilities, such as receiving your Informed Consent to Treatment and to ensure that your health records stay confidential.

Informed Consent involves understanding what treatment will be like.

Alberta law requires that at least one parent or legal guardian agree that a young person can participate in therapy. Your clinic will work with you to figure out how this applies to your family.

The privacy of your healthcare information is very important to us and is protected by law.

Part of treatment is sharing information with the clinical staff directly involved in your child's care.

Information is kept in a Confidential Health Record.

There are times when your therapist has to share information with others.

Examples might include abuse or if there are risks of harm to self or others or if subpoenaed by a court.

Privacy and confidentiality will be discussed in greater detail with your care team.

SLIDE 22

Before we complete this orientation, there are some extra pieces of information that you may find helpful.

SLIDE 23

When talking about mental health and mental illness, we need to use the right words.

Understanding mental states can be complex.

The language out there can be confusing and even misleading.

Just like when you go to the doctor, you may see a sign explaining the difference between a cold vs the flu. We need clear language to help us understand, for example, the difference between a stress response and an anxiety disorder.

We ALL have mental health. We don't lose our mental health if we have a mental problem or disorder, just like we still have physical health if we have an infection.

Everyone falls on the pyramid, and moves between levels depending what is going on in their lives.

You can even be in several states at the same time and you don't have to go through the states in any order.

To learn more about mental health literacy, please watch the video that explains this pyramid, found on the Resources page of the Orientation website.

SLIDE 24

Eating a healthy breakfast, going for a walk, and socializing with friends are some ways to support your mental health.

Sometimes it is helpful, but we know it may be difficult, to keep these in mind during stressful times.

We encourage you to think about ways you can start to include these, and other healthy habits, into your family's routines.

SLIDE 25

We want to help you find high-quality information that is unbiased and clear.

There are a number of credible sites listed on the Resources page of the Orientation website.

We encourage you to look to your community resources for additional support.

You can discuss this further with your doctor or care team.

SLIDE 26

You've taken an important step to support your child and yourself.

We leave you with this poem written by a youth engaged in an AHS service.

SLIDE 27

This orientation has covered a lot of information.

Come back to review these slides as often as you wish.

You can also print the handout found on the Orientation website.

Hopefully, some of your questions have been answered.

Before we finish, we want to acknowledge that AHS staff have created this orientation in consultation with parents, caregivers and young people who have used mental health services.

If you have additional questions after completing this orientation, please contact the service you have been referred to.

SLIDE 28

We would appreciate if you could take 3 extra minutes to provide your feedback by completing the survey found on the Orientation website.

Thank you.