

Facilitator's Guide

WE ALL HAVE MENTAL HEALTH

for Parents with Children Ages 6-12

A resource to strengthen parents' knowledge
and skills to improve their child's social and
emotional wellbeing

Parents Matter Project

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD MATTERS
—COALITION TORONTO—

Ontario
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Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMCT)

The Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMCT) is a group of 20 social service, child welfare, education, recreation, health organizations and parent leaders promoting and influencing a system that prioritizes children ages 6-12 (middle childhood), and their families. MCMCT envisions a city where children ages 6-12 and their families have equitable opportunities and resources to thrive.

The Coalition believes, and research states, that this is an important time in a child's life. To support children's healthy development during this stage, MCMCT promotes high quality, affordable, accessible and culturally appropriate out-of-school time programs (before and after school time, summertime and holidays). The Coalition was one of the driving forces behind the development of the City of Toronto's first Middle Childhood Strategy, which prioritizes programming for this age group.

Our member organizations work with thousands of parents and children across Toronto. MCMCT recognizes the vital need to educate and support parents, caregivers and adult allies living, working and caring for these children across Toronto.

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www.middlechildhoodmatters.ca

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Thank you to all the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto parent leaders and coalition members, who gave their time and insights into making this guide possible. As well, to all the Toronto service providers who promote the unique developmental needs of children ages 6-12 years, we are grateful to you all.

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We extend our appreciation to Heather Johnson and Joelle Therriault for sharing their expertise, developing and delivering parent learning session on children's mental health and wellness in diverse communities across Toronto.

Content contributors: Heather Johnson, MSW, RSW.

Joelle Therriault, MSW, RSW.

Compiled by: Diana Grimaldos

Designed by: www.visaodesign.com

INTRODUCTION

The Parents Matter Project endeavors to support and educate newcomer, low-income and racialized parents in Toronto with children ages 6-12 (middle childhood) on how to best improve developmental and social outcomes for their children. This includes the creation and implementation of topic-specific parent learning sessions. Parenting and family relationships provide the foundation from which children ages 6-12 can develop the skills to overcome challenges and thrive to adulthood. These parent learning sessions aim to build upon the assets, capabilities and strengths of parents to help increase their knowledge on a number of topic areas relevant to their child's social and emotional development.

This facilitator's guide provides practical learning sessions to increase familial relationships, including resources that can be utilized and accessed beyond the life of the session. This is grounded in the knowledge that families crave more meaningful time together and the need to have access to materials, tools and skill building knowledge on an ongoing basis that is accessible at all times. By attending a learning session, a parent will leave with more knowledge, awareness and confidence in their ability to parent throughout this developmental stage. The interactive activities and supplementary resources will help parents to solidify their learnings.

In addition to We All Have Mental Health, 15 evidence-based learning sessions have been developed in collaboration with experts in the fields such as:

- Sleep and Bedtime Routines
- Body Image and Self-esteem
- Healthy Eating and Nutrition
- Physical Activity
- Growing Healthy Minds
- Children's Mental Health Challenges and Seeking Support
- Counting on Math
- Reading is Everywhere
- Keeping Children Safe Online
- More than Just Video Games
- Raising Responsible Digital Children
- Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence
- Emotional Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence
- Social Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

FLOW OF THE LEARNING SESSION

LEARNING SESSION STRUCTURE	DESCRIPTION
Learning Objectives	What parent participants can expect to learn by attending each learning session.
Warm-up/ Check-in	An activity to introduce and ground parent participants. The purpose is to begin getting to know each other by creating an inclusive and welcoming environment where all voices are heard and valued.
Group Agreements	An opportunity to collectively co-create the conditions of how learning will unfold. Creating a group agreement demonstrates that the space is shared by all.
Reflection Moment	Guiding questions are used to prompt reflection on current knowledge of the topic presented.
Content Development	How the information will be delivered and resourced (learning discussions) how learning happens- what do we need to know.
Action Moment	Each learning session will motivate concrete actions for parent participants to go from “reflection to action-now what?” with tips, tools and hands-on experience.
Evaluation and Check-out	Reinforce new learnings, takeaways and evaluate the learning.

FACILITATION TIPS

- Prepare your session in advance; read content carefully and resources needed.
- Be clear and concise in your interactions.
- Listen to what is said.
- Remember to integrate important points that have not been raised by parent participants.
- Validate questions outside of the lesson plan raised by parent participants and direct them to their service provider.
- Be ready to accommodate changes and respond to your audience. Flexibility will be required from time to time and you may need to adapt the agenda in some situations.
- When appropriate, share your own lived experience as a parent or caregiver. However, be conscious not to dominate the conversation.



Useful Tips to Successfully Facilitate a Group Discussion

1. Adults learn better when:

- They are personally motivated and engaged.
- They have the opportunity to reflect on what they are learning.
- They can exchange knowledge and experiences with others.
- They can have better understanding of what they learn and the implementation of that learning at home.

2. Adapting for inclusion:

- Know the diversity within the group: who are the participants? What experiences do they bring?
- Integrate cultural experiences: consider how both the facilitator and parent participants can bring their cultural experiences into the session.
- Be sensitive to emotional responses: depending on parent participants lived experiences, sometimes exercises can trigger participants’ emotions.

WE ALL HAVE MENTAL HEALTH

Overview

Each of us, young and old, have mental health. As parents we want our children to be physically and mentally well in order to fully engage in all that life has to offer and truly flourish. Parents play an essential role in creating foundational relationships that promote mental health and wellbeing in children. A nurturing parent-child relationship is a protective factor in the trajectory of childhood. This session will explore the attitudes and knowledge that support parenting practices in children ages 6-12.

Learning Objectives

- Recognize that we all have mental health just as we have physical health
- Develop a common language around mental health and wellbeing
- Understand that mental health and mental illness are different things
- Parenting practices are foundational in supporting the mental health and wellness of children as they grow and develop



Materials and Supplies

FLIP CHART 	MARKERS 	POST-IT NOTES 	PENS 
VISUAL AIDS 	SPEAKERS 	INTERNET ACCESS 	LEARNING TOOLS 
FLIP CHART PAPER 	ATTENDANCE FORM 	EVALUATIONS 	

LEARNING SESSION OUTLINE

Agenda

Length of the learning session (1 hour)

1. Welcome and Introduction	(5 minutes)
2. Check-in	(10 minutes)
3. Reflection Moment	(10 minutes)
4. Content Development	(25 minutes)
5. Action Moment	(5 minutes)
6. Evaluation and Check-out	(5 minutes)

1. Welcome and Introduction

(5 minutes)

Facilitator(s) will welcome parent participants and organization(s) supporting the learning session. Housekeeping items should be introduced: washroom facilities, fire exit and additional information needed for the learning session.

Materials needed: Pens

Appendix 1 - Tool 1.1 Agenda

Tool 1.2 Attendance and Photo Release Form

Tool 1.4 Evaluation (Pre)

2. Check-in

(5 minutes)

Getting to know each other: Introductions of parent participants

Facilitator asks parent participants to sit/stand in a circle and invites them to state their names, their children's names and ages. Along with this introduction parent participants are asked to answer the following question:

How are you feeling at this moment?



Facilitator Tip

A great way to get participants comfortable moving their bodies, is for the facilitator to take the lead and introduce themselves first so parent participants can follow.

2.a Group Agreements

(5 minutes)

Materials needed: post-it notes, markers, flip chart paper, pens.

Facilitator asks parent participants any of the following

? Guiding Questions

- What do we need from each other and ourselves to create a safe learning space?
- How are we going to learn together in this space?

Parent participants are asked to write their answers on a post-it note and place it on the flip chart. Facilitator will read them out loud for parents' consensus.

The list should be posted visibly for the length of the learning session.

Building a group agreement with parent participants is an important step to take when working with groups. It invites members to co-create a safe space for sharing where all voices are heard and valued.

3. Reflection Moment

(10 minutes)

Materials needed: Post-it notes and pens

Facilitator asks parent participants to write on post it notes their answer to the following question:

What do you picture or what comes to mind when you hear the words mental health?



Examples of Answers May Include

Crazy, violent, alone, angry, silence, recovery, shame, stigma, community, hopeless, hope, happens to certain kinds of people, weakness, depression, not something you talk about.

Facilitator invites parent participants to post their answers on the wall for all participants to view.



Discussion Points

- How we think about mental health and wellbeing is influenced by our lived experience.
- Culture, family, religion, socioeconomic status, race, gender, sexuality shape our views and perspectives.
- Wellbeing encompasses both our physical and mental health.
- While 1 in 5 Canadians have a mental health challenge, 5 in 5 Canadians have mental health. (Jack.org)
- The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) notes that: Good mental and emotional health helps us navigate change, risk and challenges.
- School Mental Health Assist (SMH-ASSIST), a provincial team that supports school boards in promoting children and youth mental health notes that: Mental health is a positive state of flourishing – and it belongs to everyone. When children are mentally healthy, they feel healthy, safe and cared for.

4. Content Development

(25 minutes)

Materials needed: Projector, computer, speakers and internet access/connection.

4.a Promoting Mental Health

(15 minutes)

Facilitator invites parent participants to watch and discuss the following video:

CAMH Video - Promoting Mental Health: Finding a Shared Language

Video duration: (6 minutes)



Visit link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIswi_4yRaE

? Guiding Question

What stands out for you as you watched the video?

Discussion Points

- There is a difference between mental health and mental illness.
- We all have mental health just as we have physical health.
- Just as there are things we do to prevent catching a cold or flu (hand washing, sneeze into the elbow, rest, healthy food etc) there are things we do to promote our mental health and wellbeing (sleep, active living, connecting with others, laughter, being outdoors etc).
- It is possible to have a mental health diagnosis and be healthy.



Current Thinking about Mental Health

- All children benefit when they develop skills that help them navigate life's challenges and foster resilience or the ability to "bounce back". These skills can be taught by parents, coaches, faith leaders, peers and schools (we are all in this together) and include: how to solve problems, resolve conflict, make decisions, find help and cope with stress.
- Some children need more support. 1 in 5 children in Canada suffer from problems that interfere with daily living – socially, behaviourally, emotionally, and academically.
- Genetics and ongoing or traumatic stressors can influence mental health.
- The social determinants of health – the things that make us healthy or not – such as poverty, discrimination and education can also impact mental health.
- Some mental health problems are life threatening. Death by suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people 15-19 years, the number one cause of death in this age group is unintentional injury or accidents (Children's Hospital Eastern Ontario).
- Some children and families benefit from more intensive intervention from schools, community mental health programs and/or hospital services.
- Statistics suggest that just 1 in 6 children and youth get the help they need. Just imagine if only 1 in 6 people with broken bones got treatment (Children's Hospital Eastern Ontario).

4.b. Stigma

(10 minutes)

After reflecting on the difference between mental health and wellbeing, facilitator invites 3 parent participant volunteers to read out loud examples of lived experiences faced by community members with mental health illness. See **Appendix 2. Learning Tool 2.1.**

Learning Tool 2.1 Examples of Mental Illness

SHAMING NO ONE SHOULD GO THROUGH

Each parent participant volunteer reads out loud one of the following shared examples.

1. "I was diagnosed with **bipolar disorder** my senior year of high school. And some of the kids I've been in school with since kindergarten avoided me. Later I found out they thought they could 'catch' bipolar disorder from me like you 'catch' a cold." – Lorissa J.
2. "I was called a 'coward' by a teacher when I told her I had **panic attacks**." – Sil E.
3. "Anytime you disagree with someone who knows about your **mental illness**, the first thing out of their mouth is, "Oh my God, are you off your meds?" or "I think you need new meds." It's infuriating. I already feel so out of place as it is; someone who supposedly loves you should never ever react this way!" – Jennifer L.

? Guiding Questions

After listening to the previous shared experiences, what is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of stigma?

Discussion Points

- Stigma means thinking less of a person because of their challenges or condition.
- Stigma can make a person feel unwanted and shamed. Many say that living with stigma is worse than living with the illness itself.
- Stigma can interfere with children, youth and families accessing support.
- In the context of child and youth mental health, stigma can be understood as negative stereotypes about mental illness and as devaluation of and discrimination towards those affected by mental health problems – including children, youth, their families, and even those who provide services to them.

STIGMA
BRINGS EXPERIENCE OF
SHAME
BLAME
HOPELESSNESS
DISTRESS
RELUCTANCE TO
SEEK HELP



- Ways to fight stigma include treating everyone with respect, being warm, caring and non-judgmental, challenging stigma when you see it, choosing your words carefully and avoiding stigmatizing language e.g. "crazy", and learning the facts about mental health and illness.
- Education to dispel myths about mental illness is one of the best efforts to reduce stigma.
- Parents model for children attitudes and beliefs about mental health and wellbeing.
- 68% of people say they don't seek help for mental Health challenges because of the stigma (School Mental Health ASSIST).



5. Action Moment

(5 minutes)

Turn and Talk: Facilitator invites parent participants to turn to an elbow partner and share the following:

One (1) new learning from the workshop and how it might be applied in their children's life.

6. Evaluation and Check-out

(5 minutes)

Materials needed: Pens, **Learning Tool 1.5** Evaluation Form (post).

Evaluation: Facilitator hands out **Learning Tool 1.5** and invite parent participants to give their feedback. Provide participants with pens and evaluation forms to be filled out. Encourage them to be honest. Their responses are anonymous and they don't have to answer any questions they don't feel comfortable answering.

Check-out: Thank parent participants for their participation and time. Facilitator provides further reading to take home for parent participants. See **Appendix 3**.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Tool 1.1 Agenda - We All Have Mental Health

Tool 1.2 Attendance and Photo Release Form

Tool 1.3 Facilitator's Check List

Tool 1.4 Evaluation (Pre)

Tool 1.5 Evaluation (Post)

APPENDIX 2

Learning Tool 2.1 Examples of Mental Illness Stigma

APPENDIX 3

Mental Health Services for Children and Youth Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers

APPENDIX 4

Resources

APPENDIX 5

References

APPENDIX 1.1 - AGENDA

Tool 1.1 Agenda - We All Have Mental Health

1. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
2. Check-in (10 minutes)
3. Reflection Moment (10 minutes)
4. Content Development (25 minutes)
5. Action Moment (5 minutes)
6. Evaluation and Check-out (5 minutes)

APPENDIX 1.2 - ATTENDANCE AND PHOTO RELEASE FORM

Tool 1.2 Attendance and Photo Release Form

FULL NAME	EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER	DO YOU CONSENT TO HAVE YOUR PHOTO TAKEN?	SIGNATURE REQUIRED
1.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
2.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
3.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
4.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
5.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
6.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
7.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
8.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
9.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
10.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
11.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
12.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
13.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
14.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
15.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
16.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
17.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
18.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
19.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
20.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	

APPENDIX 1.3 - FACILITATOR'S CHECK LIST

Tool 1.3 Facilitator's Check List

Materials and Supplies:

- Markers
- Flip Chart (if needed)
- Flip Chart Paper
- Post-it Notes
- Pens
- Internet Access/Connection
- Projector
- Computer
- Speakers
- Learning Tools
- Attendance Form
- Evaluation Forms (Pre & Post)

PARENT EVENT: ___ / ___ / 201__

Do at START of Event

Please answer the questions below.

PART 1: About You

1. **Your gender:** Female Male Trans I describe my gender in a different way
2. **Your children's age(s):** 0-5 6-12 13+
3. **Parenting status:** I'm a single parent I'm **not** a single parent
4. **What country were you born in:** _____
5. **What is your postal code:** _____
6. **Do you have any relatives living with you at home?** Yes No
If YES how many? _____

PART 2: About the Event

7. **How did you hear about this event?** Friend/Family Another Organization
 Internet Flyers Other (please specify): _____
8. **Please rate your knowledge on:** (Circle ONE answer per question)

		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
a	Mental Health	H	M	L	DK
b	Wellbeing	H	M	L	DK
c	The difference between mental health and mental illness	H	M	L	DK
d	The stigma around mental illness	H	M	L	DK
e	How to parent with a positive mental health lens	H	M	L	DK

PART 3: About your Learning

9. **What do you hope to learn today?**

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX 1.5 - EVALUATION (POST)

PARENT EVENT: ___ / ___ / 201__

Do at END of Event

Please answer the questions below.

PART 1: About the Event

1. Please rate your knowledge on: (Circle ONE answer per question)

		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
a	Mental Health	H	M	L	DK
b	Wellbeing	H	M	L	DK
c	The difference between mental health and mental illness	H	M	L	DK
d	The stigma around mental illness	H	M	L	DK
e	How to parent with a positive mental health lens	H	M	L	DK

It is possible to have a mental health diagnosis and be healthy	YES	NO
I can identify one (1) resource to learn more about children's mental health	YES	NO

PART 2: About your Learning

2. What did you learn today?

PART 3: About your Satisfaction

1	How often will you use what you learned today about mental health with your child(ren)? (Circle ONE answer)	Never	Sometimes	Always
If never, please tell us why not?				
2	How informative was the facilitator? (Circle ONE answer)	Not Informative	A little Informative	Very Informative
3	How satisfied are you with this event overall? (Circle ONE answer)	Not Satisfied	A little Satisfied	Very Satisfied
4	If we could improve ONE THING – what would it be?			

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX 2

Learning Tool 2.1 Examples of Mental Illness and Stigma

SHAMING NO ONE SHOULD GO THROUGH

Each parent participant volunteer reads out loud one of the following shared examples.

1. "I was diagnosed with **bipolar disorder** my senior year of high school. And some of the kids I've been in school with since kindergarten avoided me. Later I found out they thought they could 'catch' bipolar disorder from me like you 'catch' a cold." – Lorissa J.
2. "I was called a 'coward' by a teacher when I told her I had **panic attacks**." – Sil E.
3. "Anytime you disagree with someone who knows about your **mental illness**, the first thing out of their mouth is, "Oh my God, are you off your meds?" or "I think you need new meds." It's infuriating. I already feel so out of place as it is; someone who supposedly loves you should never ever react this way!" – Jennifer L.



Resource: Information taken from CHEO.ca³

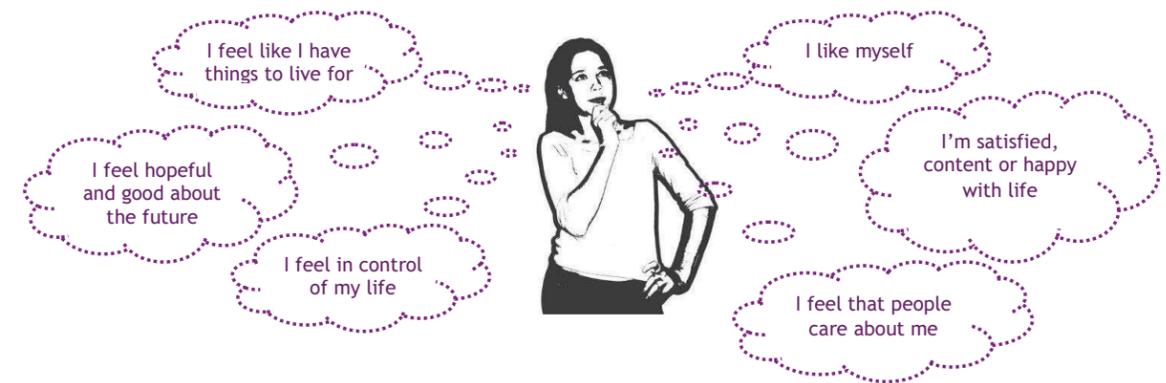
what you **NEED TO KNOW** about...

Mental Health Services for Children and Youth Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers

What is Mental Health?

Mental health (like our physical health) is a resource for living. It allows us to learn, work, play and find enjoyment in life. It helps us through tough times.

From a child or teen's point of view, mental health means...



What is Mental Illness?

People have mental health problems or mental illnesses when problems with thoughts, feelings or behaviours get in the way of functioning at home, school or work.

Everyone feels sad or upset from time to time. But when these feelings are so strong that it's hard to carry on at school or home, then there may be a mental health problem.

From a child or teen's point of view, mental health problems (or mental illnesses) can mean some or all of the following:



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P P5622E September 2012

Mental health professionals can help children and youth deal with problems with thoughts, feelings or behaviours like:

- Mood problems (anger, anxiety, depression)
- Eating disorders
- Psychosis, schizophrenia
- Addictions (including problems with drugs, alcohol, gaming or gambling)
- Coping with stresses with relationships, school, work and home

Stigma: Negative Attitudes about Mental Illness

People often feel ashamed, guilty or embarrassed about having a mental health problem (or having a child with a mental health problem). People may believe that the illness is a sign of weakness or that they really have no good reason to feel the way they do. Parents may feel guilty, that they've done something to cause a child's mental illness. And others may blame or judge people who have a mental health problem. This kind of 'stigma' makes things even more difficult for children, youth and families coping with mental health problems. And it's one reason why people don't get the help they need.

It's probably a lot healthier if we all started looking at mental health the way we look at physical health. If our child or teen has stomach pain that makes it hard to go to school, we go to our doctor. And if our child or teen is having emotional pain that makes it hard to carry on at home or school, we should get help too.

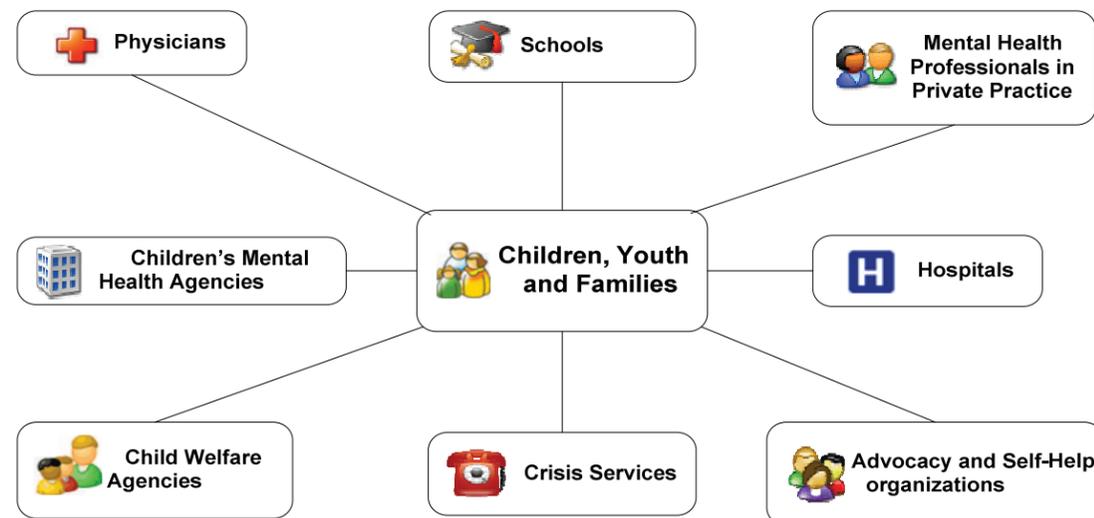
Parents are the key

A close relationship between parents and children is very important to children's physical and emotional health. But sometimes a close relationship is not enough. Children and youth can still develop mental health problems, even when they have the most caring parents in the world.

The other key role parents play is in being the first to notice that there is a problem, and making sure children and youth get the help they need. Supporting a child with a mental health problem can be overwhelming, so it is essential to take care of your own mental health. Reach out for support from your own network of family, friends and professionals.



Ways to Get Help for Your Child/Youth Include...



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APPENDIX 4

Resources

CHEO Mental Health and Mental Illness in Children and Youth Fact Sheet for Parents and Caregivers

www.cheo.on.ca/uploads/Mental%20Health%20Services.pdf

Aboutkidshealth.ca

www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/HealthandWellness/MentalHealth/Pages/default.aspx

What is Mental Health Video

<https://youtu.be/ArOTqcMH2G0>

Themighty.com

<https://themighty.com/2017/06/mental-illness-shaming-stigma-discrimination/>

