



Coalition for Children  
AND Youth Mental Health  
Let's put our heads together.

# CHILDREN AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

## Starting with the Facts

### DID YOU KNOW:

- 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 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
- 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.  
Source: **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, if at all



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  
Source: **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  
Source: **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
- **Scanning the Practice Landscape in School-based Mental Health**, a 2009 Ontario study, 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”**



## 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](http://www.youthnet.on.ca/main_english.php?section=viewarticle&article=10)

### CMHA MH Week Fact Sheet

[www.mentalhealthweek.ca/data/MentalHealthisEveryonesConcern-FactSheet.pdf](http://www.mentalhealthweek.ca/data/MentalHealthisEveryonesConcern-FactSheet.pdf)

### Here to Help (BC)

[www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/images/ChildrenYouth\\_MentalHealth.pdf](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/images/ChildrenYouth_MentalHealth.pdf)

### CPA Fact Sheet

[publications.cpa-apc.org/browse/documents/20](http://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](http://www.cheo.on.ca/uploads/Mental%20Health/Mental%20Health%20and%20Illness%20Overview.pdf)

### Fact Sheet for Youth on Psychotropic meds

[www.excellenceforchildand youth.ca/sites/default/files/docs/psychotropics\\_focus\\_on\\_the\\_facts.pdf](http://www.excellenceforchildand youth.ca/sites/default/files/docs/psychotropics_focus_on_the_facts.pdf)

### Joint Consortium on School Health and PHAC

[eng.jcsh-cces.ca/upload/Emo\\_health\\_ENG.pdf](http://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.excellenceforchildand youth.ca/sites/default/files/position\\_sbmh\\_practice\\_scan.pdf](http://www.excellenceforchildand youth.ca/sites/default/files/position_sbmh_practice_scan.pdf)