

## **Ontario Expands Mental Health Services for Children and Youth**

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The new One Stop Talk program connects youth to mental health counselling by phone call, video call, text, and chat ([source](#)). Click [here](#) to read the press release that announced it for more details.

This article will outline some key parts of the program, including ways that adults can access mental health support. But before that, I want to share that...

### **Black Mental Health Week is Next Week!**

As we move out of Black History Month, the City of Toronto is excited to continue its Black liberation work by facilitating Black Mental Health Week (BMHW).

BMHW provides more opportunities to facilitate and cultivate greater awareness of the impacts of anti-Black racism on Toronto's Black communities. BMHW takes place every year during the first full week of March. This year's BMHW is from Monday, March 6, 2023 to Sunday, March 12, 2023. This year's theme is "Be You, Be Well".

As Black communities continue to manage the impacts of anti-Black racism and repair from the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's campaign reminds Torontonians of African Descent that recovery is about embracing a holistic view of self. The week will be used to raise self-awareness and help reaffirm cultural connections and social identities for a healthy self. Accepting wellness is an ongoing journey. During Black Mental Health Week, individuals and communities will be equipped with knowledge, skills, and resources to do that.

The week will consist of various in-person and/or virtual discussions, activities, and events organized and hosted by various Black-serving community organizations. Inspired by this year's theme, these activities will work to include and target various groups within Toronto's Black communities, including but not limited to, Black Youth, and Black formerly incarcerated communities, and Black communities living with HIV / AIDS.

Click [here](#) for more details and to register for its events.

### **The One Stop Talk Program for Children, Youth, and Families**

Earlier this year, the Ontario government invested \$4.75 million to expand the One Stop Talk virtual "walk-in" counselling program to connect children, youth and their families with more

convenient and timely ways to access mental health counselling no matter where they live in the province ([source](#)).

A test run of this program started in November 2022 ([source](#)). Back then, the program was offered at six mental health organizations ([source](#)). Due to its success, it's now being expanded to additional organizations and their patients who are on the waitlist for mental health services ([source](#)).

The program will eventually be available to all children, youth and their families ([source](#)). Once fully implemented, the One Stop Talk service will provide immediate, low barrier access to brief counselling services through a single virtual access point from anywhere in the province ([source](#)).

## **More Youth Wellness Hubs are On the Way!**

The provincial government is also increasing the number of Youth Wellness Hubs across the province ([source](#)). This will make it faster and easier for young people to connect to mental health and substance use support, primary care, social services, and more ([source](#)).

The government is adding eight new youth wellness hubs to the 14 that have been created since 2020 ([source](#)). In total, that's 22 Youth Wellnus Hubs across the province.

These hubs help fill the gap in youth addictions services and also provide children and youth aged 12 to 25 a range of other services, including education and housing support ([source](#)).

The eight new Youth Wellness Hubs will be in Algoma Region, Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington, London-Middlesex, Sagamok Anishnabek First Nation, Sarnia-Lambton, Sudbury, Thorncliffe Park, and West Toronto ([source](#)).

One of these new Youth Wellness Hubs will be located at Sagamok Anishnabek First Nation and will offer culturally safe and appropriate primary care, mental health and addictions services to Indigenous youth in and around that community ([source](#)). Click [here](#) to learn more about a variety of mental health and wellness supports for Indigenous children and youth, including traditional healing and culture-based services.

“The walk in, low-barrier services offered through Youth Wellness Hubs are critical in improving Ontario’s mental health and addiction services for youth and their families. These additional sites will ensure more young people across the province receive the help and support they need,” according to Camille Quenneville, the CEO of Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division ([source](#)).

## **Where Can Adults Find Mental Health Support?**

The Ontario government has a webpage where you can learn more about multiple programs. Click [here](#) to check it out! If you prefer to read in this format, the same links from that page are listed below.

Note: These programs are not for emergencies. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest hospital or emergency department.

## **Mental Health Services**

### 1. ConnexOntario Helpline.

If you feel overwhelmed by the number of resources, call ConnexOntario, and they can help you navigate the system and provide information about counselling services and support services in your community. Click [here](#) to check it out!

You can also click [here](#) to call toll-free (1-866-531-2600), click [here](#) for live web chat, or click [here](#) to email them.

### 2. 211 Ontario.

This service offers information and referral for community, government, social and health services, including mental health resources across Ontario.

Just dial 2-1-1 on your phone like you would for 9-1-1. You can also click [here](#) to call toll-free (1-877-330-3213). Click [here](#) for live web chat or click [here](#) to email them.

### 3. BounceBack®

This is a free cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) program that offers self-guided mental health self-help supports for adults and youth ages 15 and older.

Click [here](#) to check it out and click [here](#) to call toll-free (1-866-345-0224).

### 4. Breaking Free Online

This is a free online therapy tool designed to help Ontarians ages 16 and older reduce or stop using over 70 substances, such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs, including opioids. Click [here](#) to check it out.

## **Mental Health Services for Indigenous Peoples**

### 1. Hope for Wellness Helpline

This service provides immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention for all Indigenous peoples across Canada. It is available in some Indigenous languages.

Click [here](#) to call toll-free (1-855-242-3310). Click [here](#) for live web chat.

### 2. Talk 4 Healing

This service is for Indigenous women to get help, support and resources. It is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day, with services in 14 languages.

Click [here](#) to call toll-free (1-855-554-4325). Click [here](#) to text (or you can text them on your phone at 1-855-554-4325). Click [here](#) for live web chat.

### **Check These Links for Resources in Your Community**

- Click [here](#) to find mental health and addiction services in your community. Get free, confidential support for depression, anxiety, addiction or problem gambling.
- Click [here](#) to get help for victims of crime, and survivors of sexual abuse, sexual assault or partner violence.
- Click [here](#) for resources for immigrants. Learn about dealing with stress, understanding mental illness and asking for help. This service is available in multiple languages.
- Click [here](#) to find distress and crisis support in your region.
- Click [here](#) to learn about Aboriginal Health Access Centres in your region.
- Click [here](#) to learn about outpatient groups and individual counselling that is available to Aboriginal people experiencing substance use and other mental health challenges. This service is provided by The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).
- Click [here](#) for resources about mental health in the workplace.
- Click [here](#) to explore mental health resources for serving and retired first responders and public safety personnel, and their families.
- Click [here](#) to find resources to help reduce stress and improve well-being for farmers and their families.
- Click [here](#) to find support if you are a health care worker impacted by stress related to COVID-19.

### **Final Thoughts**

It's normal to be feeling more stress and anxiety due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic ([source](#)). We've been coping with a lot over the years, and our usual ways of coping may not be working as well as they used to ([source](#)). If you've been getting by but don't feel like things are getting better, please consider using the resources mentioned above.

I know it can be hard to ask for help, especially when you aren't feeling well and if you haven't gotten the support you needed in the past. Don't be discouraged from trying now! Everyone needs help sometimes, and the painful chapters of life are easier when you get the support you need. Taking steps to improve your mental health is a brave and responsible thing to do – it's nothing to be ashamed of.

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If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus). Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit at the following phone numbers:

Health Connect Ontario: 811

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675