

# Understanding Child and Youth Psychiatric Care in BC

## What child and youth psychiatrists do

A child and youth psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has additional education and training specific to mental health and substance use in children and youth.



ASSESSMENT

TREATMENT

REVIEW AND RECOMMEND

A child and youth psychiatrist conducts mental health assessments, develops treatment plans, gives medication recommendations, and provides treatment. They may also consult and provide advice to other medical professionals and mental health clinicians.

## Common Acronyms and Definitions

**BCCH:** BC Children's Hospital

**CYMH:** Child and Youth Mental Health

**EPI:** Early Psychosis Intervention

**MCFD:** Ministry of Child and Family Development

**MSP:** Medical Services Plan

**ASSESSMENT:** Detailed review of concerns and challenges in order to determine a diagnosis and recommendations for treatment.

**CONSULTATION:** Providing guidance to other mental health service providers

**TREATMENT PLAN:** A document outlining goals and strategies to support mental health treatment and recovery

## Where can child and youth psychiatrists be found?

- ✓ Community based psychiatry offices
- ✓ Outpatient programs offered through Health Authorities, such as EPI, crisis programs, day treatment programs and general child psychiatry clinics
- ✓ Child and Youth Mental Health offices, a service within MCFD  
While often co-located with other MCFD programs, Child and Youth Mental Health is a separate and distinct service
- ✓ Child and Youth Substance Use services are provided through Health Authorities and their contracted agencies
- ✓ Hospital or treatment facilities such as the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre and Sunnyhill Health Centre
- ✓ Provincial programs offered through BC Children's Hospital

Learn more at <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/mental-health-services>



## A psychiatrist may be helpful when ...

### Urgent/Crisis Care

- \* mental health challenges suddenly start getting worse
- \* there are concerns about immediate harm to self or others

### Consultation

- \* can provide support and guidance to family doctors, CYMH clinicians and pediatricians

### Specialized Services

- \* a specific background in a particular disorder such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Eating Disorders or Substance Use is required

### Medication

- \* there is a need for a specialized opinion on medications

For more information about the services provided by Child and Youth Psychiatrists, please read "A Family Guide to Understanding Child and Youth Psychiatric Care in BC"  
[www.collaborativetoolbox.ca](http://www.collaborativetoolbox.ca)

# Frequently Asked Questions about Child and Youth Psychiatric Care

What is the difference between a psychiatrist and psychologist?

- ⇒ **A psychiatrist** is a medical doctor who has a significant amount of education and training specific to child and youth mental health and substance use concerns. In addition to prescribing medications, psychiatrists may provide assessments, and treatment through individual, group and other modes of therapy. Sessions with psychiatrists are paid for by MSP.
- ⇒ **A psychologist** may provide assessments, counselling and/or therapy and requires payment for services. Extended health and benefit plans often include coverage for psychology services. Psychologists cannot prescribe medications.

An appointment with a psychiatrist can be helpful when:

- ⇒ A mental health concern suddenly gets worse
- ⇒ Symptoms do not change or improve even though they are being treated
- ⇒ When there is a question about a diagnosis, and a second opinion is necessary
- ⇒ To gain a better understanding of how life experiences and history can influence treatment

When should I ask for my child or youth to be seen by a psychiatrist?

I think my child or youth needs to see a psychiatrist. What can I do?

Starting points to access care from a psychiatrist include:

- ⇒ Referral from Family Doctor
- ⇒ CYMH Offices

## Urgent and Emergency Care

- ⇒ Call your local outreach crisis program (ask your doctor for more information) or crisis line (310-6789) to be linked to community resources
- ⇒ Go to your local emergency room if you believe your child or youth is at immediate risk of seriously harming themselves or someone else; or if your child or youth is seeing or hearing things others cannot, or appears to not be in touch with reality.

There are a few different options that can be explored with a Family Doctor:

- ⇒ A psychiatrist may travel to your community to see children and youth
- ⇒ Tele-health options, where video conferencing and other technology might be used for appointments
- ⇒ Ask for a referral to an adult psychiatrist in your community

I live in a rural community and it doesn't have a child and youth psychiatrist. What are my options?

For the answers to more frequently asked questions, please read "A Family Guide to Understanding Child and Youth Psychiatric Care in BC"  
[www.collaborativetoolbox.ca](http://www.collaborativetoolbox.ca)