



PARticipating in
My Youth's
Mental Health
Care

Introduction

PARTicipating in My Youth's Mental Health Care toolkit is an informative, empowering, and actionable resource that was co-designed by **mindyourmind** and a group of youth and caregivers in Ontario. The concept and contents of this toolkit were based on a research project led by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Research Institute and Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The project focused on understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic changed how young people learn about supports for mental health and addictions and how they access those supports. For more information, see [An Overview of the PAR Research Project](#).

The project used a participatory action research (PAR) approach, which involved people whom the research was about as important leaders and "PAR-tners" in the project team. Thank you Alisha, Ellen, Elora, Erin, Raissa, Sara, and other PAR-tners for your valuable contributions to the project and the toolkit you see here.

PARTicipating in My Mental Health Care was designed to help young people and their families in Ontario and across Canada find and access mental health and addiction services and support best suited for them. This toolkit includes a variety of information, reflective activities, and fillable worksheets that can be personalized to support young people, as unique and active participants, along their mental health or addiction care journey.

Terms used in this toolkit: We use the term caregiver to describe people who care for or support children, youth, or young people (the exact relationship can vary). Related terms include parents, guardians, or trusted adults.

The toolkit includes:

What Type of Support Are We Looking For?	3
Creating a Support Network	5
Is This _____ Good for My Youth?	8
Pause, Reflect and Act	12

What Type of Support Are We Looking For?

First, write down the current challenges, questions or worries you have when it comes to the mental health and/or substance use of the youth in your care (e.g. medication questions, getting a therapist):



Now that you've thought about some of the current challenges your youth is having or the questions either of you have about their mental health and/or substance use, you might be wondering where or who to turn to for support.

There are many ways to categorize the types of support that exist for mental health and substance use issues; throughout PARTicipating in My Youth's Mental Health Care, we use three categories that are each represented by a colour: **urgent support**, **coping support**, and **informational support**. Learn more about these categories below, so that you can get a better idea of the type of support you might be looking for:

Urgent Support:

You may notice big and sudden changes in the young person's mood or behaviour, which may include being in a state of crisis. They may also have urges and/or plans to hurt themselves or someone else. They may see or hear things that others do not. They may have had either an accidental or deliberate overdose with substances. They may feel like their current way of managing stress and challenges is no longer working.

In this case, you may consider getting help from a healthcare provider or service that specializes in mental health or addictions, such as someone who is available urgently to guide you through the first steps needed for the young person's health and safety and plan for what to do next.



Coping Support:

Either of you may notice that parts of their daily life, including relationships, are strongly affected by their thoughts, feelings and mood. They may be going through, or have gone through, a major life change or event or feel smaller stresses piling up. They may feel like it is getting harder to manage challenges.

In this case, you may consider getting help from a professional, such as someone who may or may not specialize in mental health or addictions. You could also look to people and places in your community for support, including clinics, groups, or people who have gone through something similar. Support could involve talking about feelings and experiences to better understand them and learn strategies to help.

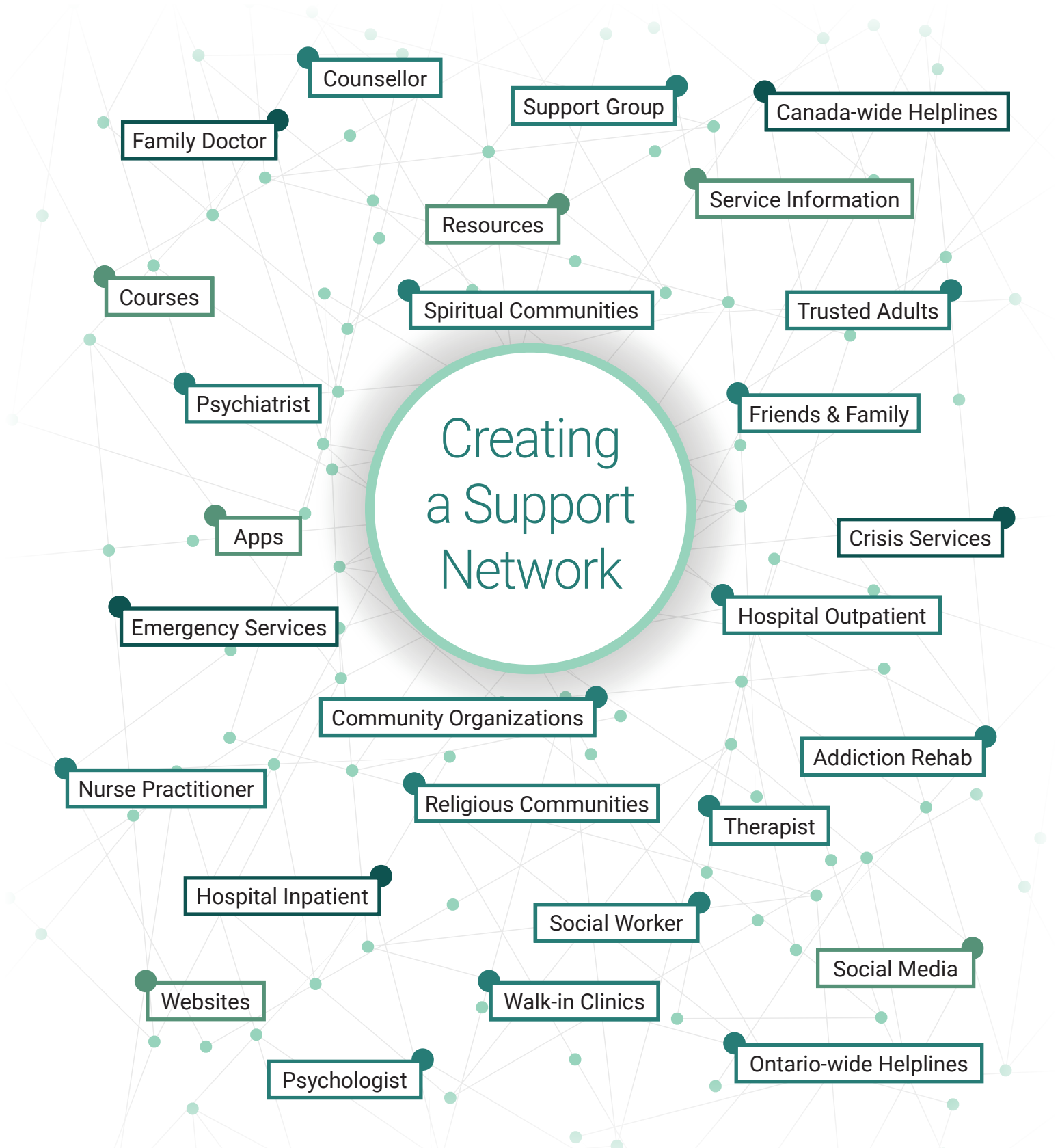
Informational Support:

Either of you may consider their overall well-being to be good but they could use some help managing stress, would like to build healthier relationships, or want to learn more about mental health.

In this case, you may consider encouraging them to talk to someone they are comfortable with who will listen and not judge. Maybe a person you trust could also provide ideas or suggestions of where to go for help. You could also find information about available resources, such as services or professionals in your community or online, learn more about a particular issue that either of you are struggling with, or tips that both of you can use for taking care of yourselves.



*Remember
to
breathe.*



Taking care of a young person who is struggling with mental health or substance use can be lonely and challenging, especially when it feels like one or both of you do not have many people, services, or tools to turn to. Taking care of your own well-being is an important part of this journey too. You and your young person do not have to go through this alone!

These supports are specifically for parents or caregivers: [Drug Free Kids Canada](#), [Families for Addiction Recovery](#), [Ontario Caregiver Helpline](#)^o, [Parents for Children's Mental Health](#)^o, and [Pleo](#)^o.

Creating a Support Network

We all need help at some point, whether it's needed urgently, for coping, or for information. Some supports might specialize in mental health and addictions, and others might be alternative or non-professional. Having variety can help to meet your young person's different needs. It can also be helpful to talk with the people you see as part of this network to learn what ways they feel able to support you.

Here are some options of services or supports you might like to include in your youth's support network, depending on the type of support you and your young person are looking for. Many services are not accessible 24/7, and some may not be available in where you live, or require a referral, usually from a family doctor, before they can be accessed. Some options may be helpful for specific concerns (e.g. anxiety, alcohol use), and groups or communities (e.g. 2SLGBTQI+, People of Color, Newcomers), so explore what's available or ask if a service can meet your preferences or needs.

There may be other options for you or your young person's support network that are not listed here. To learn more about your options, try asking a credible person in your life who is informed on local health and social services or try a resource like [211](#), or [ConnexOntario](#)^o that can give you this information.

Note: The options below are listed alphabetically. Links to options available only in Ontario have a superscript "o". Links to options available across Canada do not have a superscript. Many of the options provide support for, not only young people, but parents and caregivers too. Options that are designed primarily for youth are marked with an asterisk ().*

Urgent Supports:

- Emergency services (e.g. 911, emergency department, [Ontario Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team](#)^o)
- Helplines and crisis support across Canada (e.g. [Black Youth Helpline](#), [Hope for Wellness](#), [Kids Help Phone](#)^{*}, [Naseeha](#)^{*}, [Talk Suicide Canada](#), [Trans Lifeline](#))
- Helplines and crisis support across Ontario (e.g. [Crisis Line](#)^o, [Good2Talk](#)^{*o}, [LGBT Youthline](#)^{*o}, [Ontario Distress and Crisis Services](#)^o)
- Family doctor ([find a doctor in Canada, in Ontario](#)^o)
- Inpatient hospital programs

Coping Supports:

- Addiction rehabilitation services
- Community organizations (e.g. [Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#), [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)^o, [Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario](#)^{*o})
- Counsellor
- Family, friends or loved ones

- Helplines and crisis support across Canada (e.g. [Black Youth Helpline](#), [Hope for Wellness](#), [Kids Help Phone*](#), [Naseeha*](#), [Talk Suicide Canada](#), [Trans Lifeline](#),
- Helplines and crisis support across Ontario (e.g. [Crisis Line](#)^o, [Good2Talk*](#)^o, [LGBT Youthline*](#)^o, [Ontario Distress and Crisis Services](#)^o)
- Mental health centres (e.g. [Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#), [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)^o, [Children's Mental Health Ontario \(CMHO\)](#)^o)
- Mobile apps (e.g. [Be Safe by mindyourmind](#), MindShift CBT, PocketWell)
- Nurse practitioner
- Outpatient hospital programs
- Peer support and community groups (e.g. [One Stop Talk](#)^o, [Peer-to-Peer Community by Kids Help Phone*](#), [Togetherall](#))
- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist (e.g. [find a psychologist in Canada, in Ontario](#)^o)
- Religious and spiritual communities
- School (e.g. club, guidance counsellor, teacher)
- Social worker
- Therapist (e.g. [find a therapist in Canada, in Ontario](#)^o)
- Trusted adults or community members (e.g. coaches, elders, mentors)
- Walk-in clinics (e.g. Integrated Youth Services, [One Stop Talk](#)^o, [Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario \(YWHO\)](#)^o)

Informational Supports:

- Mental health websites and resources (e.g. [mindyourmind.ca*](#), [YouthSpeak*](#), [Youth Mental Health Canada*](#))
- Miscellaneous resources (e.g. books, magazines, podcasts)
- Service information websites (e.g. [eMentalHealth.ca](#), [Mental health support-Canada.ca](#), [Settlement Service Providers across Canada](#))
- Service information and navigation supports (e.g. [211](#), [ConnexOntario](#)^o, [1Call1Click.ca](#)^o)
- Social media accounts (e.g. [mindyourmind](#), [Kids Help Phone*](#), [Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario \(YWHO\)](#)^o)
- Webinars or skill-building courses (e.g. [BounceBack*](#), [Kids Help Phone*](#))

Your support matters.



Is This _____ Good for My Youth?

Service or Support

It can be hard to know where to start when evaluating whether a service or support is a good match for your youth's or family's needs. When asked what details were helpful for them to know, the youth and caregivers involved in this study shared the points listed throughout this section. We hope it can help you gather important information to figure out if a service or support is good for your young person.

Everyone is different, so there may be points on the checklist that don't apply or some you think are missing. While you might not be able to get answers to everything listed or have control of the services available to your youth, this tool can be a way to take a more active role in their care. You and your youth deserve to have your preferences and needs heard, so we hope this tool can help empower you to speak up (and you never know when it could inspire change)!

Details

Do we know their basic service information?

- Contact information
- Location
- Hours of operation
- Wait times
- Costs (including if they do a free consultations)
- Privacy and confidentiality policies
- Eligibility criteria (i.e. requirements for using the service)

Is this service a realistic option for my young person? Do we have the information we need to access this service?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

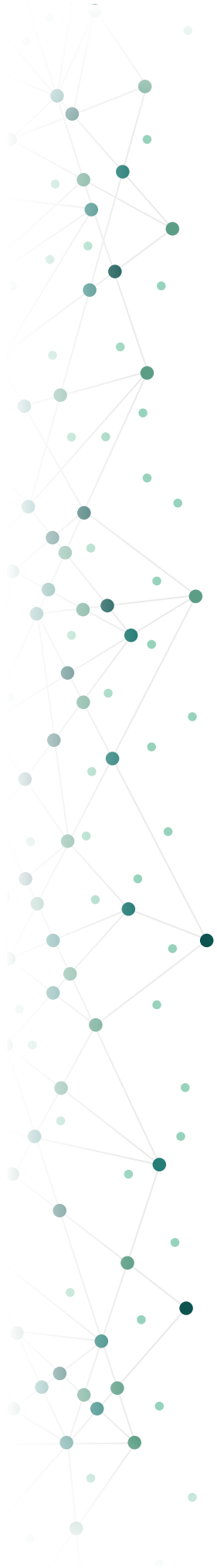
.....

.....

.....

.....

Self-care is a form of child care.



Possible expectations of me

- What happens during the first appointment
- Type of therapy (e.g. Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Exposure Therapy)
- Duration of service (e.g. single visit, short term, or long term)
- Format of service (e.g. individual, group or family therapy)
- Would anything be expected of me or my young person (e.g. weekly diary card, occasional worksheets, no substance use)
- Communication outside of appointments
- Who can be present for the services (e.g. just my young person, my young person and I, other family members, a support person)
- Possible risks and benefits

Are we clear on what to expect from this service and what might be expected from my young person or I? How are service decisions made and who can be involved?

Options

What type of service(s) are offered?

- Information or resources
- Screening, assessment, or diagnosis
- Crisis support
- Counselling or therapy
- Indigenous forms of healing or medicine
- Alternative therapies (e.g. herbal remedies, acupuncture, light therapy)
- Referrals to other services or providers
- Medication prescriptions
- Other

Does my young person need another type of support while they wait or get help from this service (e.g. help safety planning, digital resources, someone else to talk with)? How might each service play a unique role in my young person's care?



What ways are services offered?

- In person
- Online
- Phone
- App
- Other (e.g. text, email)

Is this form of communication doable for my young person? What do they need in order to feel more comfortable with this type of communication?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Needs and Preferences

Does the service or provider have qualities that are important to my youth and I?

- Specializes in children and/or adolescents
- Other area(s) of focus or expertise (e.g. 2SLGBTQI+, trauma, autism)
- Qualifications or training (e.g. degree, member of a professional college, certifications)
- Background, personal characteristics or lived experience they identify with (e.g. language, gender, race, cultural-sensitivity, 2SLGBTQI+ friendly)
- Online reviews of the provider or service to learn about others' experiences

If my youth has met the service provider, do they feel safe and accepted by them? If they haven't met them, do they feel comfortable based on qualities we've learned about them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Is this service accessible for us?

- Options for scheduling an appointment
- Referral is/not required; Possibility of getting a referral
- Options for transportation or parking
- Payment options (e.g. insurance coverage, credit card, e-transfer)
- Communication outside of appointments
- Physically accessible
- Safe and inclusive environment
- Language translation services available

Does this service fit with my young person's needs or circumstances? How convenient is this service for my young person or me?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

*It's okay to
hurt when you see
them hurt.*

Pause, Reflect and Act

Thinking about the mental health or substance use of a young person in your care, and the help they might need, can be difficult and overwhelming. Try to pause for a moment and show yourself some compassion. It's key that you take time to reflect on your own wellness, too. You're important, and it can put you in a better position to support your young person.

The prompts in this section can be used either for your youth or yourself and are meant to help you think about the supports and tools that you already have, and the steps you can take to add more. Sometimes it helps to write out the people, places and things that can support us because it can be hard to remember them in a crisis.

Look at the [Creating a Support Network](#) tool to help you think about which options you can currently reach out to and when (e.g. when you need supportive listening, validation or help with household tasks).

I or we can reach out to _____ for support when _____

I or we can reach out to _____ for support when _____

I or we can reach out to _____ for support when _____

My current supports provide me or us with _____

What I or we still need help with is _____

I or we can ask _____ or go to _____ for more information or support.

Coping strategies I or we can use when feeling:

Anxious
(e.g. deep breathing)

Sad
(e.g. create art)

Numb
(e.g. hold an ice cube)

Angry
(e.g. write it and rip it)

What I can do to help me or my youth stay safe: (e.g. call a helpline)

The following is meant to help you to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the service(s) or support(s) that you're currently accessing or thinking about accessing after using the [Is This Good for Me?](#) tool..

Service or Support:	
Pros:	Cons:
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
Next steps (e.g. talk to a trusted peer or relatives about your concerns with this service or support):	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

Service or Support:	
Pros:	Cons:
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
Next steps	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

Service or Support:	
Pros:	Cons:
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
Next steps	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

After some important reflecting, let's put the next steps into action.

How ready am I/are we to seek support or make a decision around current support(s)?



What would help me or us feel more ready?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What actions can I or we take in the short term (e.g. today, tomorrow or this week):

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What actions can I or we take in the long term (e.g. next week, this month or semester):

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Some self-care activities I like to do or want to try (e.g. watch something that makes me smile, dance, guided meditation, take a social media break, time in nature):

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

One that I will do now:

