



NEW REPORT REVEALS WAIT LISTS, HOSPITALIZATIONS AND EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS INCREASING FOR ONTARIO CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Toronto, ON, May 2, 2016: Children's Mental Health Ontario (CHMO) and the Canadian Institute for Health Information have released new data through the [2016 Children's Mental Health Ontario Report Card](#) which shows that emergency room visits, hospitalizations and treatment wait lists are on the rise for children and youth with potentially life-threatening mental illness. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, since 2006-07, there has been a **54% increase in emergency department visits and a 60% increase in hospitalizations for children and youth seeking treatment for mental health issues in Ontario.**

This year alone, the province could **prevent up to 40,000 Ontario children and youth with often life-threatening mental illness from seeking treatment in hospitals**, where long-term help is usually not available, through strategic investments in effective community-based children's mental health centres. Counselling and therapy is the first line response for children and youth with mental health issues. There isn't access to community-based treatment available for children and youth with mental health disorders when they need it due to a \$65 million shortfall in funding for Children's Mental Health Centres.

Kim Moran, CEO of Children's Mental Health Ontario explains, "thousands of children, youth and parents go to Ontario hospitals desperately trying to save the lives of children and youth in a mental health crisis because they can't get the treatment they need when and where they need it – in community-based children's mental health centres.

Previous data shows that 38 per cent of youth seeking help at hospitals for mental illness have three or more trips to the hospital. "While hospitals provide children and youth with a safe place and short-term treatment, when they return home, many still don't receive the treatment and counselling that is usually needed. Often, after a few days or a few weeks, they going into crisis again and end up back in hospital."

Some improvements were made in the community-based children's mental health sector including the Government of Ontario's investment of \$6M to hire 80 more youth mental health workers, but more is needed. "We are calling on the Ontario Government to support community-based mental health centres, which, if properly funded this year with a \$65 million investment, could save the province up to \$145 million in hospital costs. And, more importantly may also save the lives of children and youth battling mental illness," said Moran.

The report provides a system evaluation and is based on information provided to Children's Mental Health Ontario by Canadian Institute for Health Information and its more than 90 Children's Mental Health Centres. The report measures achievements and improvements needed in four areas; access, accountability, system coordination and quality. It also makes recommendations on how to improve the community-based children's mental health system. In addition to the findings noted above, other key report findings and recommendations include:

- Demand for treatment increases by 10 per cent per year as mental health stigma falls. Wait lists for treatment in the community continue to grow – over 6,500 children and youth are waiting over a year for treatment. Many youth drop off wait lists and turn to hospitals, pay for private care or end up in the youth justice system.



- The government's *Moving on Mental Health* strategy enters its 4th year – more Lead Agencies are identified and Community Mental Health Plans are developed.
- Quality improvement efforts happen only in individual agencies; there needs to be a comprehensive provincial plan for quality improvement.
- At the service level, clinicians are not able to access provincial data and benchmarks to assess and improve performance. However, the province identifies and collects 13 “Key Performance Indicators” to measure how well agencies and the system are doing their jobs.
- It is recommended that there be meaningful engagement with youth and families by embedding permanent structures across the province to ensure their voices are heard.
- The development of a consensus around a vision of “one big system” by engaging youth, families and service providers across the children’s mental health system including, physicians, hospitals, children’s mental health treatment centres, addiction specialists and schools is needed.
- Fund a program in partnership with Health Quality Ontario to strengthen the sector’s ability to improve service and system quality.

View or download the Report Card online in [English](#) or [French](#)
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About Us: *Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) works to identify and develop solutions to important policy issues affecting the child and youth mental health sector. We represent more than 90 accredited children’s mental health agencies that provide treatment and support to infants, children, youth and families. This includes targeted prevention, early intervention, short- and long-term counselling and therapy, and intensive services for those with complex and/or persistent mental health issues.*