



Caring for the mental health of kids in crisis

When families are in crisis, the emergency department at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton is often the first place they go. Whether it's a physical or mental health crisis, the need and urgency are the same.

The reality is that navigating this complex health system can be a challenge for parents and families. The stress and worry that comes from seeing a child in pain from extreme psychological distress—ranging from depression, extreme anxiety and trauma, to extreme aggression, self-harm and thoughts of suicide—can be frightening and overwhelming. Especially when you consider that:

- 70 per cent of mental health problems begin in childhood and adolescence
- Mental health affects one in two Canadians by age 40
- Half of those with chronic disorders show symptoms by age 14

To help close some of the gaps that exist when it comes to accessing vital child and adolescent mental health care, we have launched a **five year, \$6.5 million fundraising campaign to bring integrated, clinical mental health services to the Stollery Emergency department**. This expanded care model will eventually deliver round-the-clock, expert pediatric mental health services in the moment of crisis, and will include specialized bedside support for kids and adolescents who present with mental health concerns.

In order for mental health service providers to get a firm understanding of the type of care required, they must meet directly with children and youth, and their family members. The emergency room is not an ideal location. Hospital emergency teams want to provide quieter, calmer and more private alternatives for those patients and families that don't require immediate medical attention: comprehensive assessments, potential treatment and connections to various community services.

Increased access

The Stollery Emergency currently responds to as many as 2,300 adolescent mental health concerns a year. To further address this need and to help reduce current wait times, therapists and nurses will provide patients and families with:

- 24/7 access to clinical emergency mental health services at the Stollery Emergency and through a crisis phone line service
- On-site walk-in clinic at the Walter C. Mackenzie Stollery site for kids and youth who present as low risk as an alternative to waiting for an emergency department assessment

Specialized teams

Unique to northern Alberta, the Stollery Emergency will have:

- Highly-trained child psychiatrists, therapists, nurses and social workers working alongside emergency physicians and clinical support staff to provide mental health examinations and risk assessments



CASE FOR SUPPORT: Stollery emergency mental health services

- A specialized team who works with patients and families after a suicide attempt to make sure children and youth have access to available community supports before being discharged
- The ability to attract and retain future generations of skilled child and adolescent psychiatrists and mental health experts

Giving parents choices

Providing families with options will make sure children and youth are getting the right types of emergency mental health services at the right time. When a parent walks through the doors of the Stollery Emergency, pediatric mental health experts will provide a range of options based on how that child is presenting resulting in:

- Shorter wait times;
- Proper assessment;
- Improved access; and
- Upward connections to additional pediatric mental health care services

Addressing the mental health emergency

Our community donors and our partners at Alberta Health Services tell us that child and youth mental health remains a top priority at the Stollery Children's Hospital. Donor investments are vital in expanding round-the-clock mental health support to children, youth, and families.

In response to the growing need and increased urgency—and through the support of our generous donors—we are committed to completing this important project within five years as part of the Stollery Children's Hospital approved list of urgent funding priorities.

To learn more about current intake services, contact central intake/assessment services at 780.342.2701 which provides a single intake service for child and adolescent community mental health clinics across the Edmonton Zone.

To learn more about our investments in mental health programs and services at the Stollery, to donate or to make a major gift donation, please contact Nafisa Bowen at nafisa.bowen@stollerykids.com.