



Children's Charter Report 2009

Children's Mental Health and Addictions

“THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THINGS GET PRETTY HARD FOR OUR DAUGHTER AND FOR OUR FAMILY, BUT TOGETHER, WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR COMMUNITY, WE REMAIN STRONG. OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES AND OUR DAUGHTER CONTINUES TO FACE MANY CHALLENGES, BUT WE ARE HERE BESIDE HER—HELPING HER, ADVOCATING FOR HER AND OTHER CHILDREN LIKE HER.”

Children’s Mental Health & Addictions

IT’S EVERYBODY’S “BUSINESS”

One in 5 children have a mental health issue. Yet, of the children who need help, only 17% will actually receive it. The good news is that mental health and substance use issues can be recognized and treated. Regardless of age, race, or circumstance, every child in our community has a right to receive the support and services he or she needs in order to live a balanced, happy and healthy life. As parents, family members, friends, and professionals, we all belong to the great community of Thunder Bay. We are all concerned about the well-being of our children and the mental health and substance use issues they face. We are ready to help support the young people we know and care about.

IT’S SERIOUS “BUSINESS”

Two-thirds of students in Northwestern Ontario use alcohol and one-third use cannabis (marijuana). These rates are higher than the provincial average. You may be surprised to learn that mental health and substance use issues can happen to any child in our community and may include both emotional and behavioural problems. These may include mood, anxiety, anger, violence, and difficulties paying attention. Throughout their childhood, many children may experience brief problems with some or all of these issues; however, when these issues start to interfere with school and every day life, it may be time to seek help.

Mental health and substance use issues are very real, serious and painful. Just to give you an idea of how significant the problem is, here are a few more shocking facts:

- Northwestern Ontario students are 54% more likely to report binge drinking in the last four weeks, 76% more likely to report hazardous drinking, and 84% more likely to report drinking and driving than other students in the province.
- In North America suicide is the leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds, second only to fatal accidents. First Nations youth commit suicide about five to six times more often than non-Aboriginal youth.

THE COSTS OF TURNING A BLIND EYE

The annual loss to federal and provincial governments in failing to treat children with mental health issues is \$1.9 billion. Early intervention can help a child struggling with a mental health and/or substance use issue lead a happy, healthy life. Unfortunately, the widespread stigma attached to these struggles often prevents children from talking to their parents and family members about issues they are experiencing.

It isn’t just children who are affected by this stigma—In 2007, 38% of adults in Canada said they would be too embarrassed to say that their child or teen had a mental illness.

We are all responsible for the well-being of children in our community.

ISSUES

Parents and family members are usually the first to notice if a child has problems with emotions, behaviour or substance use. Your observations, along with those of teachers and other caregivers, can help determine whether you need to seek help for your child.

The following signs may indicate the need for professional help:

- Decline in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Constant worry or anxiety
- Repeated refusal to go to school or to take part in normal activities
- Hyperactivity or fidgeting
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Bullying
- Depression, sadness or irritability
- Changes in activities, friends or peer groups
- Legal issues
- Changes in physical health or hygiene
- Mood swings

Some of the main issues facing children and youth in our community include:

- Parent/child conflict
- Depression and suicide
- Substance abuse
- Body image/self esteem
- Stress & anxiety
- Family break-up
- Violence & bullying
- Stigma
- Access to timely help
- Lack of cultural identity



WHAT'S BEING DONE

"WHEN I WAS GOING TO THE HOSPITAL, I FELT EMPTY, LIKE I WAS THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD THAT FELT THIS DEPRESSED. NO ONE COULD FEEL THIS WAY. IT'S REALLY GOOD TO KNOW THAT I'M NOT ALONE."

You'll be happy to know that there is a lot happening in our community to help children facing mental health and substance use issues.

ORGANIZATIONS AND YOUTH FROM ALL ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO RAISE AWARENESS AND HELP.

- Thunder Bay is a provincial champion in speaking out against youth suicide. The Suicide Prevention Task Group is a large group of community organizations and youth working cooperatively to prevent, address and develop a service plan for tragic events such as youth suicide.
- Children's Centre Foundation is working on Project LEAD, an initiative bringing together community agencies and school boards to share information on child and youth mental health and addictions services. Project LEAD also has a youth group that teaches other young people in our community about mental health issues. Visit www.HeresTheDeal.ca: an interactive, youth friendly website with relevant mental health information.
- The Drug Awareness Committee operates out of the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. This active group is committed to educating the community and preventing drug use among our youth. It provides a wealth of information on different types of substance abuse and tips on how to talk about drugs with your child.
- The Thunder Bay Crown Ward Education Championship Team Project aims to improve educational outcomes for local Crown Wards through motivational strategies and community outreach, while helping Crown Wards develop self-esteem and confidence. This project also provides foster parents, educators, service providers and community members with the opportunity to learn about the issues facing Crown Wards and how they may be supported. For more information, contact Dilico Anishinabek Family Care.
- Do you have kids in high school? Chances are, they know about the Natural Helpers program. This peer to peer initiative is presently in most of our local secondary schools and has made a real difference in the lives of many students. Youth are selected by their peers and trained to direct other students on when and where to get help if they feel the need to talk to someone.
- Parenting is a tough job. The Triple P Positive Parenting Program® can help. This international parenting program was developed using years of research and testing, and has been adopted and led by a coalition of 9 local community agencies. Triple P supports parents and families to build a variety of skills and helps to develop a safe, healthy and nurturing home environment for children. For more information, contact wilmakleynendorst@Dilico.com.
- Dilico's Youth Outreach Services works with other community programs and agencies to facilitate contact and services for at-risk youth. Youth are supported to find opportunities, solutions and resources to address their own challenges and needs. The services are available to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth. Visit www.Yows.ca for more information.
- Do you have young children? Research indicates that over 75% of a child's brain actually develops after his/her birth, most predominantly in the first five years of life. These years are most critical in shaping each child's ability to think, love, trust and develop a strong and positive sense of self. Fair Start is a program in Thunder Bay that assesses children's motor, speech and language skills, as well as their social development. Contact the Thunder Bay District Health Unit for more information, or visit www.fairstart.ca.



Youth in Action!

The verdict is in. Youth say that mental health and substance use issues are the last “taboo” for parents. They aren’t afraid to talk about it. So let’s open up to the youth – you may be surprised how happy they’ll be to talk to you about these issues.

Thunder Bay is filled with youth groups and initiatives that address mental health and substance use. These are just a few:

- **Deal** is a youth group which meets regularly, and even planned a youth led mental health conference for high school students in the community. This group meets at Children’s Centre Thunder Bay. For more information, contact Laura at Imeisner@childrenscentre.ca
- **Youth Advisory Group** for the Eating Disorder Program at St. Joseph’s Care Group teaches others about the struggles of eating disorders, and ideas around how we can all change the stigma surrounding these issues. For information, contact Kerry at bourretk@tbh.net
- **Youth with an OPEN Mind** is a group of Thunder Bay teens that wants to reduce the myths and misconceptions about mental illness. For information, contact Brooke at latimerb@tbh.net

Are you a young person that wants to make a difference in our community? Here’s the challenge: get involved! Join a group. Volunteer. Help a friend. Set the record straight about mental health and addictions. Be a champion of the issue. We want everyone to know just how important this is - and it can all start with you!

...But that’s not all!

Many of our local mental health and addictions service agencies have wonderful – and often free – programs to support the mental health of our community’s children. Be sure to look at our “COMMUNITY RESOURCES” section for ideas on where you can go for help.

CALL TO ACTION

What YOU can do...

- Talk to your children. Straight talk is important. Initiate the conversation, ask questions.
- Get to know your children as they grow. Show interest and get involved in their lives as they change and try new things.
- Spend time with your children. Ask about school and their interests.
- Know their friends. Be aware of who they are hanging out with and where they are going.
- Learn what is available in your community for help and information.
- Be a role model for your children.
- Know the warning signs of substance use and mental health issues.
- Register for a parent group. It is time well spent for ALL parents. Don’t wait for a problem—be prepared.

What your COMMUNITY can do...

- Take responsibility for the care of children...“It takes a community to raise a child.”
- Recognize and speak out about the stigma related to mental health and substance use concerns.
- Promote services available to youth and their families.
- Participate in supporting the services provided for families and their children.
- Stand together with one voice to advocate for children and families.

What our LEADERS & GOVERNMENT can do ...

- Listen to the voice of your communities, understand the issue and TAKE ACTION!
- Be engaged with your community. Know what services are available.
- Know the gaps.
- Advocate for adequate finances, resources, and children’s rights to proper care.
- Make children’s mental health and substance use a priority.
- Strengthen families by investing in provincial “Positive Parenting Programs.”

“If mental health services generally are the orphan of the health care system, then children’s services are the ‘orphan of the orphan’.” Senator Michael Kirby

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

There are specialized services available in Thunder Bay for children, youth and families who need help. Here are some places to get help and information:

AGENCY	SERVICES	PHONE NUMBER	WEB ADDRESS
Canadian Mental Health Association	Assists children and youth, 18 yrs of age and under, who are experiencing a crisis or who are concerned about someone who is experiencing a crisis.	Thunder Bay Crisis Response: 346-8282 First Place Clinic & Resource Centre: 345-5564	cmha-tb.on.ca
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health	Provides child, youth and family resources in the prevention and management of problems related to alcohol or other drugs and mental health.	626-8111	camh.net
Children's Centre Thunder Bay	Provides mental health services & supports to children from birth to 18 years of age and their families.	343-5000	childrenscentre.ca
Dilico Anishinabek Family Care	Cares for the physical health, the mental health and the health of the communities where Anishinabek people live by promoting wellness, preventing illness and trauma, and providing diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.	623-8511	dilico.com
Kid's Help Phone	Available 24-hours a day, phone counselling, referral and Internet service for children and youth where professional counsellors provide immediate and caring support to young people.	1-800-688-6868	kidshelpphone.ca
Kidsncops.ca	This locally developed website is dedicated to providing an open forum and private chat with a Professional Police Officer or Detective to assist children and youth in dealing with drugs, alcohol, depression, suicide, bullying, cyberbullying and domestic violence.	n/a	kidsncops.ca
OPTIONS Northwest: Community Resource Team and Personal Support	Provides personal and residential supports to persons including children and youth who, because of a developmental challenge with concurrent physical disabilities or chronic behavioural or mental health problems, require support to reach their fullest potential and to remain in their community.	344-4994	optionsnorthwest.com
St Joseph's Care Group: Mental Health, Addictions and Problem Gambling Programs	Provides specialized assistance for children and youth with substance abuse, mental health and other types of addictions at the Sister Margaret Smith Centre Site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Addiction Programs: providing education, screening, and assessment as well as brief individual counselling for youth and their families needing support for substance use. Our five week residential program is available to youth from ages 13 to 18. Eating Disorders Programs Problem Gambling Programs 	684-5100	mha.sjcg.net

AGENCY	SERVICES	PHONE NUMBER	WEB ADDRESS
St. Joseph's Care Group: Sister Margaret Smith Centre Youth Addiction Programs	Provides education and screening, assessment and brief individual counselling for youth needing support for substance use. Our five week residential program is available to youth from the ages of 13 to 18.	684-5100 ext. 5065	mha.sjcg.net/as/youth
Thunder Bay Counselling Centre	Provides professional and confidential counselling for children and youth.	684-1880	tbaycounselling.com
Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre	Provides mental health services for children and youth on an in and out-patient basis.	684-6000	tbrhsc.net

If you are looking for more resources or information on mental health services available in Thunder Bay area, contact:

211 Ontario North: An up-to-date, accessible, searchable database provides comprehensive access to information about social, community, health and government services in the City of Thunder Bay and District. Phone: 211; website: 211ontarionorth.ca

Thunder Bay Public Library: The Thunder Bay Public Library strengthens our community by engaging people in the pursuit of local and global information and knowledge, and promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and leisure. Check out the Teen Health and Wellness database for up-to-the-minute information for real life, or to get answers from Dr. Jan's Corner. Phone: 345-8275; online catalogue and website: tbpl.ca

A MESSAGE FROM THE THUNDER BAY CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE & THE CHAIR OF THE THUNDER BAY CHILDREN'S CHARTER COALITION

The Children's Charter Coalition is very pleased to bring you the 2009 report on children's mental health and addictions. For the past 4 years, the coalition has produced a report for the community highlighting one of the rights in the Charter. This year the report highlights the charter rights that all children deserve to be protected from neglect and abuse, to be safe from exploitation, and to a quality of life that meets their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs. This quality of life includes their mental health.

Awareness about the importance of children's mental health and addiction issues is growing. We hope that this report will give you an insight into the needs of the children, youth and families in our community facing these issues and the resources we have available for them. We need to encourage families with children who have mental health or addiction problems to get information and help. We need to advocate for resources to deal with these issues. We are all responsible for the well-being of children in our community.

We would like to thank Children's Centre Thunder Bay, Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, Thunder Bay Counselling Centre, Sister Margaret Smith Centre and Thunder Bay Public Library for their contributions to the writing of the report.

The Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition is made up of people and organizations that care about children and want to put their needs first. The Charter was created in 2004 based on the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child and endorsed by the City of Thunder Bay. For more information about the Children's Charter Coalition please contact Laura at 625-5952 or laura.prodanym@tbdhu.com.

Laura Prodanym
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
Chair, Thunder Bay Children's Charter

Joe Virdiramo
City Councillor
Children's Advocate, City of Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay Children's Charter

ALL CHILDREN DESERVE BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. A FAIR SHARE OF SOCIETY'S RESOURCES MUST BE DEVOTED TO ENSURING THIS. FAMILIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR RAISING THEIR CHILDREN. THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD CLEARLY STATES THAT WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITIES, ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENTS HAVE A DUTY TO ASSIST FAMILIES TO FULFILL THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.*

All Thunder Bay children deserve:

- ✓ a quality of life that meets their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.
- ✓ to have enough nutritious food every day.
- ✓ to have a safe and comfortable place to live.
- ✓ quality child care and/or early education programs.
- ✓ to have safe places to play, and access to affordable recreational activities.
- ✓ quality primary, secondary, and affordable post secondary education.
- ✓ the resources to ensure life-long good health.
- ✓ to be served by governments that put the health and well-being of children first by ensuring enough funding for children's programs.
- ✓ to be protected from neglect and abuse.
- ✓ to be safe from exploitation.**

* For the purposes of this Charter, children are defined as being from birth to eighteen years of age.

** For the purposes of this Charter, being exploited means to be used unfairly by someone else to meet their own needs.

THUNDER BAY CHILDREN'S CHARTER COALITION

- Children's Aid Society
- Children's Advocate, City of Thunder Bay
- Children's Centre Thunder Bay
- City of Thunder Bay – Community Services Department
- Communities Together for Children – Best Start
- Dilico Anishnabek Family Care
- Fair Start
- Lakehead Elementary Teachers of Ontario
- NorWest Community Health Centres
- Our Kids Count
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation
- Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre
- Thunder Bay Public Library

To obtain a copy of this report go to:

TBDHU.COM

THUNDERBAY.CA