

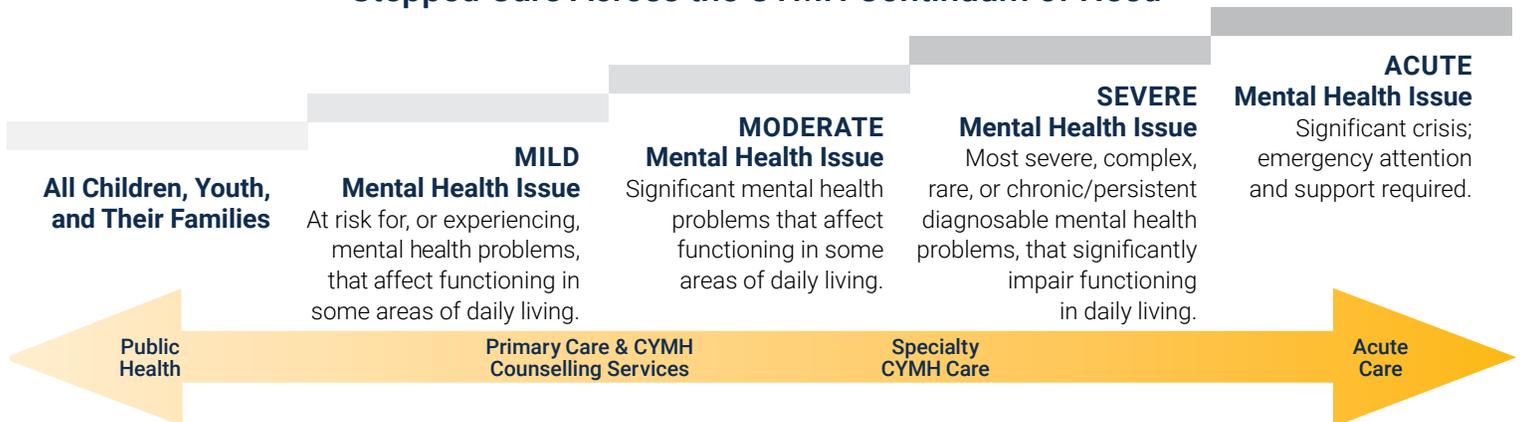
# Ontario's Child and Youth Mental Health Agencies

## What are CYMH Agencies?

Child and youth mental health (CYMH) agencies are community-based organizations that offer a wide range of CYMH services. They are publicly-funded, operate in every region of the province—including within or near schools—and serve over 120,000 young people annually.

CYMH agencies support children and youth across the continuum of need. For young people with mild-to-moderate mental health issues, this often includes brief counselling services, sometimes delivered in walk-in clinics. For young people with moderate-to-severe mental health issues who require specialized consultation, ongoing psychotherapeutic interventions, and various family supports, CYMH agencies offer specialty treatment.

## Stepped Care Across the CYMH Continuum of Need



## What Services do CYMH Agencies Provide?

CYMH agencies provide a range of government-defined core services and key processes, including:

- Service coordination;
- Brief services (often in walk-in clinics);
- Counselling and therapy;
- Family support;
- Specialized consultation and assessment;
- Crisis support services; and
- Intensive treatment services.

Intensive treatment services—including community-based/day treatment, in-home treatment, and out-of-home/residential treatment—are provided to young people with the most significant and complex mental illnesses. These services are often supported by the acute care, primary care, and education sectors. In some cases, CYMH intensive treatment services are provided by hospitals, though the vast majority are delivered by CYMH agencies.

## The Unique Value of CYMH Agencies

### Family-Focused

Child, youth, and family engagement is the foundation of CYMH agencies. Clients and their individual preferences are at the centre of care and the whole family is supported.

### Cost-Effective

CYMH agencies have a long history of being responsible stewards of public funding, delivering cost-effective services and leveraging community support and philanthropic funding wherever possible.

### Specialty Mental Health Expertise

Interprofessional teams, including psychologists, social workers, and child and youth care practitioners, work together to deliver treatment that is tailored to the unique needs of each family.

## What is the History of the CYMH Sector?

In most communities, CYMH agencies were established and developed organically to meet the local needs of families. For decades, CYMH agencies have been in the business of delivering mental health treatment and supports to young people across the continuum of need—and providing families with skills to support their children in maintaining the progress they have achieved. During this time, the clinical practices of CYMH agencies have been consistently updated to meet the standards of evolving science and evidence in the field.

CYMH agencies take a team-based approach to delivering treatment, employing interprofessional teams consisting of psychologists, social workers, psychotherapists, child and youth care practitioners, and other mental health professionals—all practicing to the full extent of their scopes of practice, to ensure cost-effective care. To treat clients with significant issues, CYMH agencies work closely with child and adolescent psychiatrists as well.

However, while inflation has grown by more than 55% over the last 25 years, increases in CYMH agency operating budgets have amounted to little more than 10%. Further, because the demand for mental health services has increased in recent years, CYMH agencies are effectively being asked to do more with less. As a result, CYMH agencies are challenged to provide timely access to care, and children, youth, and families often end up sitting on waiting lists.

## Where is the CYMH Sector Headed?

Since 2012, with strong regional leadership from CYMH agencies, Ontario's CYMH sector has been working hard to transform itself into a well-organized and high-quality system that meets the needs of children, youth, and families. This has included efforts to expand models of care that focus on rapid access and client choice. But, significant service gaps remain—and these gaps highlight the areas we must focus on going forward:

- 1. Service Expansion:** Long wait times for CYMH treatment indicate that we simply do not have enough services for Ontario's children and youth; this is particularly true in rural, remote, and northern parts of Ontario that are consistently underserved. Likewise, a lack of services for young people who are emerging into adulthood often leaves these individuals without any supports at a transitional and vulnerable time in their lives.
- 2. Intensive Treatment:** Too many young people with the most significant and complex mental health issues wait many months, travel far from home, or forgo the intensive treatment they desperately need, due to a lack of services. And many young people end up in hospital as a result.
- 3. System Integration:** There are opportunities for improvement in the way that primary care, acute care, the CYMH sector—and other key partners—share the care of young people, to ensure a straightforward, easy-to-understand, and truly client-centred experience.
- 4. Service Quality:** It is time for a renewed focus on data and measurement, quality standards, and ensuring CYMH agencies are consistently and comprehensively meeting the needs of children, youth, and families.

The CYMH sector is eager to work with government and system partners in continuing to transform the system into one that is there for children, youth, and families—whenever and wherever they need support.

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**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 close to 100 accredited child and youth mental health centres that provide treatment and support to children, youth and families across Ontario.

