



We help children and families  
be their healthiest

# Children and youth in crisis

## What to expect in the Emergency Department: Information for parents

A visit to the Emergency Department (ED) for help with a mental health crisis can be a stressful experience. Knowing what to expect can make it a little easier.

### When should you come to the Emergency Department?

In general, children and youth should come to the ED when:

- Their feelings or behaviour put them at risk for serious harm;
- They need help right away.

#### Please remember:

- The ED is best for dealing with new, urgent problems.
- Staff and physicians focus on immediate concerns. They will work with your current care team to modify treatment as needed.
- We do not usually start medications in the ED.
- CHEO refers to community partners to provide treatment for substance abuse.
- Some crises are best handled by a community mental health service, like a Crisis Line or mental health walk-in clinic (see page 2 for a list of resources).



#### We'll need you to tell us about:

- Professionals involved in your child or teen's care (for example family physician, pediatrician, psychologist or counsellor);
- Medical conditions and diagnoses;
- Medications, dosages and the last time medications were taken.

### What will happen when we arrive?

When you arrive, you will meet a triage nurse, who will ask about the reason for your visit. The nurse will assess how urgent the situation is, and decide if your child or teen needs medical treatment right away.

### How long before my child or teen sees an ED physician or staff member?

The ED is often a very busy place. We do our best to see all children and youth as quickly as possible. We always see children and youth who need urgent care first, no matter when they arrive. If your child or teen's condition changes while waiting, please let the nurse know.

### Keeping your child or teen safe

We will work with you to make sure your child or teen stays safe while waiting. We may place your child or teen in an observation room. Please stay with your child or teen and let a staff member know if you need help. While you wait, please use the space on the other side of this handout to write down any questions you have for us.



## Who will assess my child or teen?

The next available health care provider will see your child or teen. A Crisis Intervention Worker will see most young people with a mental health concern. Crisis Intervention Workers are non-medical mental health professionals who are experts in assessing and supporting children and youth with mental health problems.

Your child or teen may also see:

- An Emergency Physician. A resident (a doctor completing medical training) may see you first. The resident will review the case with the supervising ED physician.
- A Child & Youth Counsellor (CYC). CYCs are professionals who support children, youth and their families to use mental health treatments in the most effective ways possible.

The Crisis Intervention Worker or Emergency Physician can consult with the Psychiatrist on-call if needed.

## What will ED health care providers do?

**The Crisis Intervention Worker or Emergency Physician will:**

- Meet with your child or teen, as well as you and others. This will help us understand the situation, and everyone's concerns. We may speak with your child or teen separately, as needed.
- Assess your child or teen for safety and mental health issues.
- Provide medical treatments if needed.

**The Child & Youth Counsellor can:**

- Get information from you and your child or teen to help the team with the assessment;
- Help keep your child or teen safe and informed while being treated;
- Work with you and your child or teen to make sure you have support after your ED visit is over (for example, helping you with discharge resources).

## What happens after the assessment?

Most children and youth go home after their assessment in the Emergency Department. The Crisis Intervention Worker, Emergency Physician or Child & Youth Counsellor will discuss safety concerns and a follow-up plan with you before you leave. If your child or teen will be admitted to hospital, we will provide information on next steps.

## Questions for ED Staff



## Helpful resources

24 hour Crisis line for Children, Youth and Families in Eastern Ontario: 613-260-2360 or 1-877-377-7775

Parent Support: Parents' Lifelines of Eastern Ontario (PLEO) 613-321-3211 | [info@pleo.on.ca](mailto:info@pleo.on.ca) | [www.pleo.on.ca](http://www.pleo.on.ca)

Check out [www.cheo.on.ca](http://www.cheo.on.ca) and [www.eMentalHealth.ca](http://www.eMentalHealth.ca) for a range of handouts on mental health topics like depression, sleep problems, drug treatment/detox, psychosis, suicide and self-injury.

### Mental health walk in clinics

Please see <http://walkincounselling.com/> for general walk-in clinic information.

Youth Services Bureau offers a specialized walk-in clinic for youth 12 and up [www.ysb.on.ca](http://www.ysb.on.ca)

Crossroads Children's Centre offers a walk-in clinic for children under 12 and their families.

<http://www.crossroadschildren.ca/>

