

# Mental Health and Well-Being



OTTAWA-CARLETON  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



## THE ISSUE

More students are experiencing mental health challenges. Schools need more support to respond to urgent situations while promoting long-term preventative measures.

Research has demonstrated a marked increase in mental health needs amongst children and youth in recent years. Further, the pandemic has magnified existing inequalities and disparities related to mental health both inside and outside of education. Families are feeling heightened levels of strain which further impacts parent-child relationships and well-being. Schools play an important role in promoting positive mental health, identifying students at risk, and helping students get the support that they need.

The partnership between schools and community mental health service providers is more important than ever. Community agencies are struggling to meet the needs resulting in long waitlists and gaps in services for children and families.

Complex funding structures, restrictive rules and red tape do not always reflect the fact that supporting child and youth mental health relies on a partnership between schools and community partner organizations.

The impact is felt by the entire school community - individual students, classmates and staff. Ultimately, mental health teams must focus their efforts on meeting urgent needs, which limits their ability to support longer term measures to promote positive mental health and well-being.

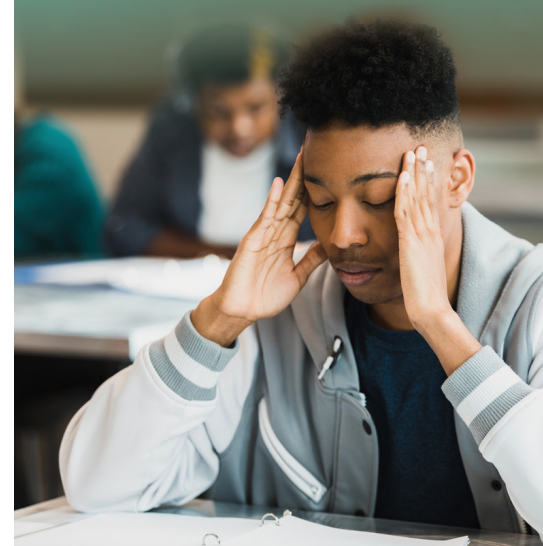
# 58%

*of OCDSB educators reported in 2023 they do not feel well-equipped to support the mental health needs of students in the classroom.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

While increased awareness and funding directed towards mental health supports have been beneficial, better access to care is needed to meet increasing demand. To address mental health and well-being needs, schools are increasingly bridging front line services. The OCDSB recommends:

- 1 Increase funding:** Funding guidelines should provide increased flexibility and creativity to allow school teams to partner with community agencies in order to deliver services to students and families. Further, summer funding should stretch into the school calendar year as required.
- 2 Training and professional development:** Increase opportunities for all educators to receive training to support student mental health. Incentives should be available for staff to pursue in-depth training. In addition, training in the area of mental health should be embedded in new teacher learning and certification programs.





## MORE INFORMATION

School Mental Health Ontario is the primary source of evidence-informed resources and professional learning for Ontario school boards. Working in partnership, school boards use these resources to develop mental health strategies and establish school-based supports.

Mental health professionals' caseloads have continually increased and are required to support increasingly complex mental health challenges for a longer period of time as students wait for service through community agencies. Since the pandemic we are seeing heightened levels of students who are disconnected from school. It is essential to have staff resources to support these young people as they are often our most underserved students.

As a result of the work being focused largely on urgent responses (such as violent incidents, suicide risk assessments, and supporting students with complex mental health needs), the OCDSB struggles to provide ongoing implementation support and coaching for mental health promotion and prevention efforts. This results in missed opportunities for proactive measures which may prevent students from requiring more intensive supports and services down the road.

School Mental Health Ontario is producing incredible resources which help to support this work. However, additional staffing is required to ensure this information and programming is shared so more students can benefit.

[OCDSB Mental Health and Wellness Resources](#)



# 83%

*Increase in the number of interventions of OCDSB mental health staff to support students at risk of suicide between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.*

*"Yes, I may be struggling, but I just need the resources to thrive."*

*OCDSB student*