

Key messages and support as we return to remote learning following the winter break.

We understand how challenging the school year has been so far. We know that the shift to remote learning only further escalates the challenges. We want to remind you that we are here for you, to support you as you move forward in these uncertain times. Please contact your SMH Implementation Coach for help as needed, and don't hesitate to suggest ideas for additional resources and services that could be helpful to you as pandemic realities evolve.

Key messages for parents and caregivers

To help, we have created some key messages to support you in your communications to parents and families during these trying times.

1. **We understand how difficult the transition to remote learning can be for students, parents/ caregivers and staff. We are here to help.**
2. **We continue to prioritize mental health and well-being through a range of classroom supports and board professional services.**
3. **We will continue to make our way together, schools are a part of a circle of support for students, both in-person and virtually. You are not alone.**
4. **If you become concerned about your child's mental health, it is good to seek help. Your child's teacher or principal can help direct you to services in the school, board, or community. You may also wish to consult with your family physician or can connect directly with a [community mental health agency](#) near you. When more immediate help is needed, the helplines below can offer help.**
5. **One of the most important things you can do is prioritize and protect your own mental health. Caring for your own wellness, and seeking support when you need to, is one way to help your child to stay mentally healthy.**



How to access immediate help for mental health concerns:

If you feel you need urgent assistance with your child's mental health, the following helplines are available, and/or you can seek help from your local hospital emergency room or acute care site.

Ontario Help Lines for Mental Health:

- Children and teens can speak with a counsellor 24/7 by calling **Kids Help Phone** at 1-800-668-6868 or texting CONNECT to 686868.
- The [Black Youth Helpline](#) offers support for all youth and specifically responds to the need for a Black youth specific service, positioned and resourced to promote access to professional, culturally appropriate support for youth, families and schools. Please call: 1-833-294-8650
- [The Hope for Wellness Help Line](#) offers mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Please call 1-855-242-3310
- The **Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)** offers a [24-hour Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line](#) with culturally specific mental health and addiction supports for adults, youth, and families in Ontario in both English and French, please call: 1-877-767-7572.
- Use [Ontario 211](#) to look up the services available in your area.

Try the [Kids' Help Phone Resources Around Me](#). Sometimes it is hard to know if your child is experiencing a mental health problem, or a typical reaction to pandemic hardships. These two resources may be helpful in guiding your approach:

- [WITH CARE](#) – Tip sheet for parents and caregivers related to recognizing signs of a mental health problem
- [Prepare, Prevent, Respond](#) - Info Sheet for parents and caregivers related to suicide prevention (quick reference available in many languages)

Note for Mental Health Leadership Teams: These are just general listings. Consider adding direct links and contact details for local service providers.

Resources for school staff

The following resources are available to support the mental health of students. These resources can be used for both in-person or virtual learning.

- [Mentally Healthy Return to School Following Winter Break and Beyond](#) – Educator tip sheet on ways to enhance mental health after the holidays, with classroom resources that can be used in person or on-line (note. created prior to the break, is being adapted in light of recent public health guidance)



- [ONE-CALL Desktop Reference for Remote Learners](#) - Educator resource to help with recognizing signs of a mental health problem during on-line learning, and how to respond.
- [Student MH LIT](#) – Educator lesson plans for secondary students to help with understanding mental health, supporting self-care, and asking for help
- [Student Circle of Support Pocket Guide](#) – Tool students can use to identify their sources of support, designed to encourage help-seeking when mental health problems arise.
- [Grounding techniques](#) – Simple ways to help students to stay grounded when they are feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

As well, we want to remind you of the many resources that have been developed throughout the pandemic as part of the [COVID-19 Student Mental Health Action Kit](#). And more recently this summer through the [Mentally Healthy School Support Package](#).

Remember to take care of yourself.

We know that once again, you are doing all you can to support your students. We hope that you can also prioritize your wellness as well. Remember to pace yourself, to try to distribute leadership where you can, and to recognize that your best is all you can give, and that is more than enough.

