

# The Role of Mental Health Specialists in Schools

*In any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experience a mental illness.  
 Young people aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental  
 illness or substance abuse disorders than any other age group.*



Image Source: [Canadian Mental Health Association](https://www.cmha.ca/)

Mental Health, just like physical health, is necessary for our well-being and ability to function. Mental and physical health enables us to participate to our full potential in every activity as we learn, grow, play, work, and enjoy life on our own and with others.

Mental health becomes a problem when a person is overwhelmed by thoughts & feelings and start to lose the ability to function, even when performing simple and familiar tasks. This can include challenges with self-care, academics, relationships, sleep and more. The causes of mental health problems or mental illness can include genetics, physical illness, family-related challenges (e.g. finances), social stressors, traumatic life events and more.

Just like challenges with physical health, such as a broken bone, mental health problems are a common experience and those experiencing challenges benefit from support.

Edmonton Catholic Schools Mental Health Specialists include clinical social workers, counselling therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and mental health therapists (Recovery Alberta). Mental Health Specialists' primary role is to provide individual counselling to children/youth who are experiencing significant mental health problems or mental illness.

| Targeted Intervention<br>Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | School-Wide Mental Health Promotion<br>Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma-responsive care</li> <li>• 1:1 Counselling to support with grief, loss, self-harm or other significant life stressors</li> <li>• Crisis prevention and response</li> <li>• Targeted interventions for anxiety and other emotional disorders</li> <li>• Develop self-esteem and self-advocacy skills</li> <li>• Promote positive relationships &amp; problem-solving</li> <li>• Consider other aspects of well-being such as sleep, nutrition, and social media &amp; technology use</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychoeducation for staff &amp; students</li> <li>• Stigma reduction and normalizing mental health problems &amp; illness</li> <li>• Social-emotional learning approaches</li> <li>• School-wide bullying prevention</li> <li>• After-school leisure activities</li> <li>• Stress-management activities</li> <li>• Positive relationships</li> <li>• Social participation</li> <li>• Neurodiversity-affirming school environments</li> <li>• Adaptations to programming</li> <li>• Peer teaching and collaboration</li> </ul> |

## Mental Health Specialists in Edmonton Catholic Schools include:

Clinical Social Workers • Counselling Therapists • Occupational Therapists  
 Psychologists • Mental Health Therapists (*in partnership with Recovery Alberta*)

For more information, contact your child's school.