

Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway (0-6 Years of Age)

For York Region Practitioners/Professionals

Supplementary Document

The Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway helps professionals support families with young children (aged birth to six) when there are concerns about a child’s social or emotional development.

The Pathway ensures that every child has the chance to be screened and connected to the right supports as early as possible, leading to better outcomes for children and families.

This supplementary document goes with the [Pathway map](#) and offers more background information and guidance to help professionals use it effectively.

Did you know?

- There is no other period of brain development that is as critical to setting the stage for human growth, development and positive or negative mental health outcomes as the first six years of a child’s life.
- When infants and young children do not meet expected developmental milestones, this could indicate potential mental health concerns.
- When early mental health difficulties are not identified and treated, they can become more serious and complex, impacting childhood and lifelong physical and mental health.
- Screening and early identification of infant mental health concerns is necessary in reducing family distress.

*Source: Clinton, J., 2014. *Supporting Ontario’s youngest minds: Investing in the mental health of children and youth under 6*, Canadian Electronic Library. Ottawa, Ontario. Retrieved from <https://coillink.org/20.500.12592/44xtzb> on 10 Feb 2025. COI: 20.500.12592/44xtzb.

If you are a practitioner or community provider and have a concern about a child’s social or emotional development:

Use the *Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway (0-6 Years of Age) for York Region Practitioners/Professionals* to direct families with children, from birth to 6 years of age, to the appropriate agencies.

The agencies’ first step in supporting a child is to complete a developmental screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs). These screenings can be completed at any of the organizations listed in the table below. Several agencies across York Region are designated ASQ screening sites to help reduce wait times, increase accessibility for families, and ensure families receive support as soon as possible. Upon completion of the ASQs, a developmental support plan (DSP) and/or appropriate referrals to a community agency for additional services and supports can be made.

Organization Name	Location	Contact Information
Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)	Multiple locations: yorkchild.ca/capc/family-support	905-806-1895 capcyorkregion@yorkchild.ca
EarlyON / ON y va Child and Family Centres <i>Multiple language services available at certain locations</i>	Multiple locations: Early Years Program Finder	Newmarket, East Gwillimbury & Georgina: Website Vaughan, King and Aurora: Website Markham: Website On y va Markham: Website Richmond Hill and Stouffville: Website

To access the Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathway for York Region, please visit: york.ca/EarlyYears
For additional support or information, please call York Region at 1-877-464-9675.

Public Health (HBHC/Health Connection)	Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) services are typically provided in client's home	Health Connection: 1-800-361-5653 york.ca/health/parenting/healthybabies-healthy-children-program Referral Form: Child and Family Health Referral Form York Region
York Hills Centre for Infants, Children, Youth, and Families	Multiple locations: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health – Birth to Six - York Hills Centre for Children, Youth and Families	General Phone Calls: 905-503-9560 Intake: 905-503-5406 Online Referral Forms yorkhills.ca/contact/ For Parents: EMHware: York Hills Centre For Children, Youth And Families For Community Partners: EMHware: York Hills Centre For Children, Youth And Families
<i>The Family Intervention Team (FIT) at York Region Children's Aid Society has the capacity to implement and support the completion of the ASQs and DSPs for families who are currently receiving child welfare services.</i> <i>The Family Intervention Team is a specialized, collaborative service within the Child, Youth and Family Well-being Department at the York Region Children's Aid Society (YRCAS). The team provides intensive, short-to-medium term support to families experiencing identified risks. The team focuses on strengthening caregiver capacity; enhancing parenting behaviours and skills; and improving family functioning through assessment, in-home intervention, therapeutic access and structured programming.</i> <i>The team works collaboratively with YRCAS child protection teams, children's services and community providers to strengthen caregiver capacity, enhance parenting skills and promote child safety, stability, and overall family well-being.</i> <i>For additional information about York Region Children's Aid Society services visit yorkcas.org/, or if you are concerned about a child or youth, call 905-895-2318 or 1-800-718-3850.</i>		

Practitioners and professionals making referrals for specialized support services can use the [Early Years Support Services Registry](#) to access information on available programs, eligibility criteria and referral requirements.

Terminology

- **Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQs):** A reliable and valid developmental (ASQ-3) and social-emotional (ASQ:SE-2) screening tool developed by Brookes Publishing for children between birth to 6 years of age. The tool is used to track children's development, identify risks for developmental delays and help identify next steps for support and/or follow-up actions. Caregivers respond to the questions and trained practitioners score the responses to identify areas of developmental and/or social emotional need. ASQs are not diagnostic tools.
- **Developmental Support Plans (DSPs):** A strength-based resource developed by Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion, a program of The Hospital for Sick Children, that identifies a developmental goal for the child according to the five developmental domains identified in the ASQ-3. The DSP provides multiple tailored strategies caregivers can implement in their day-to-day life with their child and an explanation as to the significance of achieving the developmental goal. DSPs can only be created by individuals who are trained in DSP development and administration; it is not a treatment plan or a replacement for intensive services or supports.
- **Promotion:** Universally accessible services, supports, and resources that encourage optimal early mental health and well-being during prenatal, infancy, toddlerhood, and early childhood periods through positive and culturally safe environments, experiences and relationships.
- **Prevention:** Services, supports and resources which mitigate risks and build protective factors, improve determinants of health and relational adversity that can influence a child's mental health and development.
- **Early Intervention:** Timely services, supports and resources for children showing signs of developmental, emotional, or behavioral challenges by strengthening capacity within the child, caregiver relationship.
- **Treatment:** Delivers specialized, intensive services and supports for an identified challenge or diagnosed condition that aims to reduce the intensity and improve developmental, mental health and/or behavioural outcomes.