

Record-breaking expansion of mental health services

May 10, 2024

In partnership with CASA Mental Health, Alberta's government is investing \$148 million to support a record-breaking expansion of child and youth mental health services.

Alberta's government is committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of children and youth, including through an expanded partnership with CASA Mental Health. CASA is Alberta's second-largest provider of mental health services. It offers a range of supports for young Albertans and their families including professional in-school support, live-in treatment, family support, trauma support, and more.

Alberta's commitment to provide \$148 million over the next two years doubles the amount of funding for CASA Mental Health. This will significantly expand services across the province. Funding includes \$40 million to triple the number of CASA Mental Health Classrooms, \$98 million to build and operate three, brand new live-in treatment facilities known as CASA Houses and expand services at the existing CASA House, and \$10 million to expand specialty services delivered by CASA.

"In order to build a stronger future for our province, we need to help young people who are struggling with mental health and addiction challenges now, before these challenges escalate any further. As we do that, we also need to be sure we're meeting children and youth where they are and providing supports tailored for their age and situation. Expanding mental health services with CASA Mental Health will help us do just that."

Danielle Smith, Premier

"We are proud to follow through on our commitment to expand mental health services available to children and youth. In partnership with CASA Mental Health, we are giving young Albertans the support they need to pursue a path of recovery and live a fulfilling, hopeful life."

Dan Williams, Minister of Mental Health and Addiction

Alberta's government is committed to building a system of care that gives every person facing mental health challenges an opportunity to pursue recovery. This means helping people live a fulfilled and meaningful life even when mental health challenges or symptoms exist. Once all \$148 million from this announcement is implemented, about 2,000 more children and youth each year will benefit from services provided by CASA Mental Health.

CASA Mental Health is a proven partner focused on providing services to children and youth with mental health issues, with the goal of reducing the need for hospital stays.

“This partnership with the Government of Alberta will bring services closer to Albertan children and families. The goal is to provide mental health services earlier to more children and youth to prevent treatment in hospitals and empower them to thrive.”

Bonnie Blakley, chief executive officer, CASA Mental Health

CASA Mental Health Classrooms

CASA Mental Health Classrooms are an innovative program that supports students in grades 4 to 12 who face complex mental health challenges. Located within schools, these classrooms provide individual therapy, group therapy and psychiatric care to support a student’s recovery while continuing their education.

In addition to a full-time teacher, each classroom is staffed with a mental health therapist, mental health aide, and other support staff to ensure students can get the treatment they need to excel in their learning. Each mental health classroom can support up to 12 students per cohort from across the school district.

“Supporting the mental health and well-being of children and youth is a priority for our government. This historic announcement will make a difference in the lives of thousands of students while ensuring they have the support they need to succeed in the classroom. We look forward to seeing CASA Mental Health continue to make a positive impact in Alberta’s education system.”

Demetrios Nicolaidis, Minister of Education

“The CCSD Board of Trustees thanks the Government of Alberta and CASA Mental Health for prioritizing mental health care to support our growing number of students with complex needs. We look forward to continuing to work with the government on sustainable and adequate mental health care funding, which is integral to the continued success of many of our students.”

Shannon Cook, chair, board of trustees, Calgary Catholic School District

Of the total funding to expand mental health services, \$40 million will triple the number of CASA Mental Health Classrooms across the province, all of which are expected to be online by 2026, serving more than 140 communities.

Eight classrooms are currently operating, with eight more opening in September 2024 and four more coming in early 2025. Final decisions on locations for the 40 new mental health classrooms are still under consideration in partnership with CASA Mental Health, Alberta Mental Health and Addiction, Alberta Education, and school boards.

CASA House

CASA House provides a live-in program for youth in grades 7 to 12 that offers individual, group and family therapy, social and life skills training and on-site schooling. Parents and caregivers remain

active participants in treatment, but the participating youth lives at a CASA facility. Currently, Alberta's government funds the operation of one CASA House in Sherwood Park.

In addition to an in-patient program, CASA House incorporates a day program for youth who need mental health treatment and academic support, but do not require in-patient treatment. The goal is to strengthen and develop social and learning skills to increase overall wellness so the young person can successfully re-enter the school system.

“Supporting the mental wellbeing of children and youth is key to their growth and success. I'm pleased our government is expanding our partnership with CASA Mental Health so that more kids facing mental health challenges can get the care and support they need to thrive.”

Searle Turton, Minister of Children and Family Services

Over the next two years, a total of \$98 million of the funding announced will support the building and operation of new CASA Houses in Calgary and Fort McMurray, and one in the south zone. This funding will also help integrate and co-locate day programming into the CASA House currently located in Sherwood Park. Once the three new facilities are built, CASA Houses will provide mental health treatment for up to 324 children and youth every year.

In the coming months, CASA Mental Health will be engaging community and embarking on a fundraising campaign for any remaining funds needed to build these facilities with plans to open their doors in the next three years.

CASA specialty services

Provincial funding also supports several other programs offered by CASA Mental Health, such as the Trauma Program, Core Program, Family Therapy Program, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) program, and Indigenous Services.

The Trauma Program provides intensive community-based treatment for children and youth aged three to 18 who have complex developmental trauma or attachment issues. The program offers varying levels of support, depending on an individual's needs. This may include group or individual therapy, family and caregiver education, and therapeutic crisis intervention. While currently available in Edmonton, \$10 million of the funding announced will expand services to Calgary by December 2024.

Alberta's government is making record investments in mental health and addiction services to support Albertans of all ages in their pursuit of recovery. This includes investing in digital supports like Alberta 211 and Kids Help Phone, supporting youth mental health hubs, increasing access to eating disorder treatment for young Albertans, and investing in affordable virtual and in-person counselling.

Quick facts

- Eight CASA Mental Health Classrooms are currently operational:
 - Fort Saskatchewan Elementary in Fort Saskatchewan
 - Gibbons School in Gibbons
 - J.A. Fife School in Edmonton
 - St. Gabriel Catholic School in Edmonton
 - Sturgeon Composite High School in Sturgeon County
 - Escuela Vista Grande School in Red Deer
 - South View Community School in Medicine Hat
 - Wetaskiwin Outreach school (C.B. McMurdo) in Wetaskiwin
- Eight additional CASA Mental Health Classrooms will open in September 2024:
 - Bishop Carroll High School in Calgary
 - St. Cyril School in Calgary
 - St. Joseph Catholic High School in Edmonton
 - Rosslyn Junior High School in Edmonton
 - H.E. Bourgoin School in Bonnyville
 - Senator Riley School in High River
 - St. Gabriel School in Fort McMurray
 - Red Deer (school TBD)
- Albertans experiencing addiction or mental health challenges can call or text 211 for information on services in their community, including other virtual supports like Kids Help Phone and the Mental Health Helpline.

Related news

- [Building a future of mental wellness](#) (Jan. 16, 2024)
- [Minister of Mental Health and Addiction mandate letter](#) (Aug. 2, 2023)
- [Expanding mental health treatment for youth](#) (March 6, 2023)

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