



CASA Mental Health

# Welcome to CASA Classrooms



# CASA Classrooms Caregiver Handbook

This handbook provides you with information about your child’s experience in the CASA Classrooms program. We hope this information will reduce uncertainty and provide answers to common questions. If you have additional questions or require clarification of any of the information in this handbook, please reach out to your CASA Classroom team.

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## About CASA Mental Health

CASA Mental Health is an established non-profit organization delivering holistic, culturally safe wrap-around mental health services to Albertans aged three to 18 and their families. CASA provides mental health service to the 'missing middle' – mental health treatment for diagnosed children and youth, in between prevention and promotion in primary and community care, and acute treatment in hospital.

CASA's team of mental health professionals is committed to delivering service in collaboration with community partners. This includes assessment and treatment for thousands of children, youth and their families each year, from community outreach settings to intensive treatment programs.

### *Mission*

To build resilience through holistic, evidence-informed and compassionate care, and to advocate for children, youth and families with mental illness.

### *Vision*

A community where all children, youth and their families are provided with timely mental health care and empowered to thrive.

### *Values*

**Community:** We believe each person's community is unique, and is needed to support the mental health and well-being of those we serve.

**Child-centred and family-inclusive care:** As partners in care, we build services around the specific needs of each child and family.

**Collaboration:** We work together to better serve children, youth and families.

**Equity, diversity and inclusion:** We create a culturally safe environment that acknowledges and respects the lived experience of every person and community.

**Outcomes-based accountability:** We commit to and deliver effective outcomes as both a care provider and employer.



## About CASA Classrooms

CASA Classrooms provide tailored mental health treatment for students in grades four to 12, in collaboration with community school divisions. The students referred to the program are experiencing persistent mental health symptoms affecting their home, peer and school life.

Treatment and support includes:

- a treatment plan tailored to the student’s needs;
- education to help students manage their mental health conditions;
- medication support (when needed);
- individual and group therapy;
- education and support for caregivers;
- referrals to community and social supports; and
- support for the student to transition back to their home school and health team.

Students participate in a CASA Classroom for half the school year. After the half school year is completed, the team supports the student’s transition back to their usual school for another half of the school year. CASA Classrooms begin in September or February. A maximum of 12 students are in each classroom.

The program supports students with one or more suspected or confirmed mental health diagnoses (anxiety, depression, mood disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, Tourette syndrome, etc.) and who:

- have previously received mental health treatment but have not shown notable improvement;
- do not need care from a hospital or residential program;
- are able and willing to participate in programming;
- currently have a family doctor, nurse practitioner or psychiatrist providing care for them; and
- have a caregiver who is also willing to participate.

The classroom team works to develop treatment and programming tailored to the student’s mental health and learning needs. This includes collaborative goal setting with you and your child. Short-term program outcomes include a better understanding of your child’s diagnosis, a reduction in symptoms and an increase in your child’s mental health management skills.

## The CASA Classrooms Team

Team member	Role	What they can help with
<b>Therapy support assistant (TSA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports social-emotional learning within the classroom setting</li> <li>• Supports students’ mental health and executive functioning</li> </ul>	<b>Speak to the therapy support assistant about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social-emotional learning curriculum and how you can support your child at home to practice skills.</li> </ul>

Team member	Role	What they can help with
<b>Mental health therapist (MHT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducts comprehensive mental health assessments for children and adolescents</li> <li>• Develops treatment plan and formulates a diagnosis, when applicable, using various diagnostic tools</li> <li>• Provides therapy to support the student in achieving therapeutic goals, utilizing a variety of developmentally-appropriate treatment approaches</li> </ul>	<b>Speak to the mental health therapist about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual treatment goals</li> <li>• Family goals</li> <li>• Progress in therapy</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans academics for students while in classroom</li> <li>• Coordinates connections with students' home class or school</li> <li>• Utilizes academic outcome and assessment measures as-needed (per grade level)</li> </ul>	<b>Speak to the teacher about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic progress</li> </ul>
<b>Psychiatrist or CanREACH-trained physician, and mental health nurse</b>	<p><i>Physician:</i> The primary care physician or pediatrician holds further education in child and youth mental health. They support students by following their progress and providing medical expertise to the therapy team in implementing individualized treatment plans and attending case conferences. They also provide support to the student's attached primary care physician for current treatment while they are attending the classroom, and transition back to their home supports. This team member may also be called a "CanREACH-trained physician."</p> <p><i>Psychiatrist:</i> The CASA psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of thinking, feeling and/or behaviour affecting children, adolescents and their families. They provide consultation for patients and families through assessment and diagnostic/medication review as requested</p>	<b>Speak to the psychiatrist/physician or mental health nurse about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medication information</li> </ul>

Team member	Role	What they can help with
	by the classroom physician and therapy team.	
<b>Therapy support navigator (TSN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports application of skills within family and school settings</li> <li>• Conducts phone contact with families</li> <li>• Implements and coordinates transitional care and school reintegration</li> </ul>	<b>Speak to the therapy support navigator about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions regarding returning to your home school</li> <li>• Resources available in your community</li> <li>• Transition planning</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health nurse (MHN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports students by providing group education</li> <li>• Supports caregivers by providing parent groups</li> <li>• Supports your child’s medication journey</li> <li>• Takes vital signs and health history</li> <li>• Supports physicians within the CASA Classrooms program</li> </ul>	<b>Speak to the nurse about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions about medications or side effects</li> <li>• Your child’s health history and any changes</li> </ul>

Your child and their classroom team are supported by supplementary services such as Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Pathology, and Multicultural Family Resource Consultation as required.

### Treatment and Therapeutic Intervention

Each student receives an individualized treatment plan. The treatments and services your child receives are determined by their diagnosis and assessment. The services provided in the classroom are evidence-informed, patient-centered, developmentally appropriate and recovery-oriented.

When your child enters the program, and periodically during their time in the classroom, they will receive a comprehensive assessment that will inform their treatment plan. Teaching staff will support students to develop personal learning plans.

Your child’s treatment may include:

- **Psychoeducation:** mental health education.
- **Individual therapy:** one-on-one therapy with a mental health team member.
- **Group therapy:** therapy with a mental health team member in a group setting.
- **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT):** a form of psychological treatment that usually involves efforts to change thinking patterns. This is an evidence-based modality that is effective for a range of issues.



- **Pharmacotherapy:** the treatment of mental health conditions with the assistance of medications.
- **Therapeutic milieu:** a method for treating mental health conditions using a person's surroundings to encourage healthier ways of thinking and behaving.
- **Therapeutic crisis intervention:** a process to prevent and de-escalate potential crises.

Your child's treatment may also include family therapy, non-verbal therapies (play, art and music) and therapeutic activities (yoga, outdoor/adventure, movement). Group therapies may be activity or skills-based, or educational or process-oriented. Therapy may target areas of psychological and developmental need, and may occur on-site or in the community.

## Classroom Rules and Expectations

Classroom rules and expectations are the same as in any school classroom. Students are expected to follow the rules set out by the school in terms of proper dress, conduct, cell phones and technology, school property, etc. In addition, CASA Classrooms have the following expectations for students:

- Attend school consistently;
- Engage in classroom activities, conversations, therapeutic groups, behavior and emotion coaching, and participate in 1:1 therapy with the mental health therapist;
- Participate in academic learning with the teacher;
- Follow through on homework or learning assigned for outside of school time (coping skills, communication exercises, etc.);
- Refrain from beginning a dating or intimate relationship with other students in the program; and
- Respect and uphold the confidentiality of other students in the CASA Classrooms program, including any confidential information they may disclose during group therapy or within the CASA Classroom.

## School Supplies

Please refer to the host school and classroom teacher for a complete supply list.

## Caregiver Participation

The involvement of caregivers is integral to success in the CASA Classroom. Your engagement is incorporated into every component of the program. Your CASA Classroom ensures that you are able to access emotional or other support, to enable you to continue to support your child, while taking care of your own well-being.

Caregivers will participate in a weekly support group for approximately 10 weeks. This group addresses helpful topics for supporting a child with a mental health condition. It is offered either virtually or in-person, depending on distance and the availability of staff and/or facilities.



Once the weekly support group ends, caregivers will continue to receive support from the CASA Classrooms team as required, recognizing needs that may be met through connecting to supports available within your local community, agency or through receiving targeted services.

## Exit Criteria

There are a few reasons why we may determine a student is no longer benefiting from CASA Classrooms. If this occurs, the team will work with you, your child's home school and their primary care and/or mental health provider to transition the student back to their home classroom. Reasons for an early exit from the program include:

- Violence (physical contact leading to injury or potential injury);
- Frequent or unexcused absences;
- Not following the treatment plan;
- The behavioural or mental health needs of the patient/family are greater than the service is able to provide;
- Need for hospitalization;
- Suspension/expulsion; or
- Active addiction and/or substance use.

## Transition Back to Your Home Classroom

The work involved in successfully transitioning back to the student's home classroom begins when they enter into the CASA Classroom. Throughout their time in the classroom, students are learning, developing and practicing skills that will support them in returning to their home school. This may include connection experiences such as participating in events at the host school or home school to practice these new skills.

Upon completion of your child's treatment in the CASA Classroom, the team will provide up to five months of transition support. The intent of this transition process is to help ensure your child's successful return to their home school, and to help caregivers access resources and services in the community if needed. Depending on the needs of your child, tailored support ensures their success. Transition support may include the following:

- Connection to community mental health therapists;
- Consultation between the caregiver and the therapy support navigator about progress in the home;
- Assistance from the therapy support navigator in accessing services, information and resources in the community; and
- In-person or phone consultation between the therapy support navigator and home school to support skill generalization and strategies to help build success.

At the end of your child's time in the CASA Classroom, you will receive a Transition Report. This report will include a summary of the therapeutic interventions provided, progress, observations and recommendations moving forward. A transition meeting will also be arranged between the CASA Classrooms team, the caregiver(s) and the home school. This





meeting will ensure all parties are informed about the child's progress towards goals, ongoing needs or concerns, recommendations moving forward and plans for transition support.

## Communication with Home School and Health Professionals

While your child is participating in CASA Classrooms, and during transition planning, there will be ongoing consultation and communication with your child's home school and mental health and/or primary care provider. The classroom team will work with you to decide on the best frequency for this contact.

## Classroom Schedule

As part of your child's orientation and welcome into the CASA Classroom, they will receive their schedule during the first week of school. The schedule may be modified to meet the needs of the cohort.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Do I have to provide consent for my child to be in the CASA Classroom?*

Yes. When your child is accepted into the CASA Classroom, **the team will discuss consent to enter into the classroom for therapeutic treatment.** You will also need to provide consent for CASA to communicate with you via telephone and email for the caregiver group.

### *Will my child be able to transfer high school credits over to their community school?*

Yes. All credits earned in CASA Classrooms are processed and submitted to Alberta Education.

### *Is the CASA Classrooms program offered in French (or any second language)?*

CASA Classrooms are offered in English at this time.

### *Will there be a transition back to my child's home school?*

Yes. The CASA Classrooms team will **support the transition of your child back to their home classroom over a period of half the school year.** This transition support starts with helping both your child and the home classroom adjust, and will lessen as your child becomes more settled in their home classroom.

### *How many students are in a CASA Classroom?*

CASA Classrooms provide care and education to a maximum of **12 students** at a time.

### *Can high school students still take options?*

Students may be able to participate in specific options. This is determined by school capacity and scheduling requirements.

### *Are students completely segregated, or are they able to interact with non-CASA Classroom students?*



Students are part of the host school community. They are able to interact with other students during breaks and school events. While in the CASA Classroom, they will only be with their assigned cohort.

***What happens with our existing psychiatrist while my child is in the CASA Classroom?***

While your child is participating in CASA Classrooms, there will be ongoing consultation and communication with your child's home school and mental health and/or primary care provider. This occurs during your child's time in the CASA Classroom and during transition planning.

***If a child had to take an extended leave of multiple weeks, are they still able to attend?***

This will be determined on a **case-by-case basis**. As extended absences from the program impact both the child's treatment and the classroom dynamic, we may suggest the child wait until the next available cohort to benefit from treatment.

***If my child is successful in the CASA Classroom but their transition back to their home classroom does not go well, can they come back?***

The transition back to the home classroom could be challenging for many reasons. It is more beneficial to **plan for difficulties and setbacks ahead of time**, and use the transition supports to help build stability and success in the home classroom rather than returning to CASA Classrooms for a second term.

***Who should I contact if my child is sick and unable to attend school?***

Parents should contact the school office to ensure their child is marked as an excused absence. Additionally, if possible, please email or call the CASA Classrooms teacher to inform them of the absence.

***When will the parent group meetings be held and will they be in person?***

Parent group meetings will be held virtually. The group meets once a week for 9 sessions. To accommodate varying work schedules, two different times will be offered each week. The specific times and dates will be determined by the professional team in each region, and more information will be provided before the start of the term.

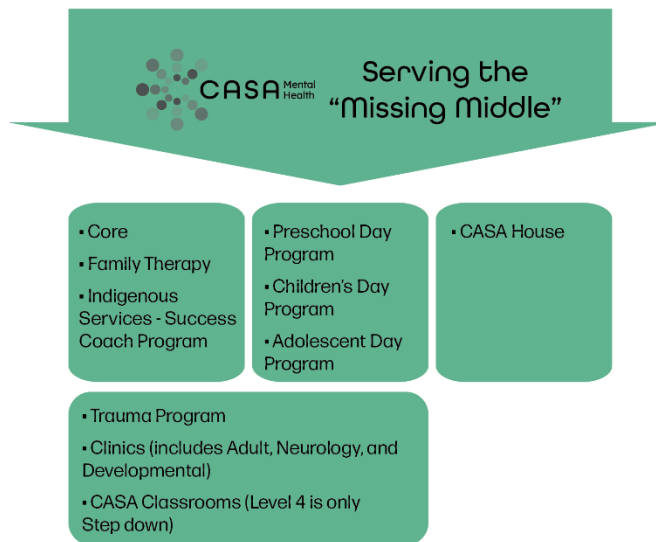
***What happens with the information from any questionnaire after my child or I complete them?***

As an organization that values outcomes based-accountability, CASA Mental Health regularly evaluates our programs and services. This includes gathering and using data from patients and their families or teachers. Questionnaires provide us with useful information needed to assess whether we have achieved program goals, and to identify areas for improvement. At the individual level, they also help clinical teams with planning treatment and monitoring progress by identifying areas of strength, need and change over time. **All personal information is confidential. Names and other identifying details will never be used in reports or summaries.**

### What is CALOCUS?

CASA Mental Health uses CALOCUS, a tool that uses a patient-centered approach to identify a child’s mental health service needs. CALOCUS categorizes services by level of intensity. CASA Mental Health provides services for children and adolescents who are assessed as levels **three to five**. CASA Classrooms are for students in levels **three and four**.

CALOCUS-CASII: Child and Adolescent Level of Care/Service Intensity Utilization System						
Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Prevention and Health Management	Recovery Maintenance and Health Management	Low-intensity Community-based Services	High-intensity Community-based Services	Medically Monitored Community-based Services: Intensive Integrated Services Without 24-hour Psychiatric Monitoring	Medically Monitored Intensive Integrated Services: Non-secure, 24-hour Service with Psychiatric Monitoring	Medically Managed Secure, Integrated Intensive Services: Non-Secure, 24-hour Service with Psychiatric Management
Community Partners and Primary Care Networks			Alberta Health Services			



### Caregiver Rights and Responsibilities

**All caregivers of a child coming to CASA Mental Health have a right to:**

- Be treated with **respect**.
- **Participate in decisions** concerning your child’s treatment.
- **Ask questions** and be informed about your child’s treatment.
- To the **privacy and confidentiality** of your personal information.
- **Advocate** for your child.
- Receive **safe and high-quality care**.

**All caregivers of a child coming to CASA Mental Health have a responsibility to:**

- Treat CASA staff with **respect**.

- **Participate in the care and treatment** of your child according to their treatment plan.
- **Treat yourself kindly** and practice self-care
- Help CASA provide timely care to your child.
- **Ensure you are able to care for your child and any siblings** on-site before and after scheduled program hours.

## Patient Rights and Responsibilities

### All CASA Mental Health patients have the right to:

- **Be treated with respect.** This means CASA staff should welcome your child as an individual with their own history, beliefs and values. All staff should treat them kindly and professionally in every encounter they have with the staff.
- **Be informed about and participate in their treatment.** Your child has the right to know about what their treatment plan is, what the timeline is and any possible risks to their treatment.
- **Feel safe in a non-judgemental environment.** If your child doesn't feel safe, please talk to your therapist.
- **Ask questions** and receive thoughtful, respectful answers.
- **Be heard and listened to** if they have concerns.
- **Receive safe and high-quality care.**

### All CASA Mental Health patients have the responsibility to:

- **Treat others with respect.** This means treating both CASA staff and other CASA patients kindly and with patience and understanding.
- **Work with their therapist as best they can,** and set goals together with their therapist and caregiver.
- **Keep themselves and others safe** by respecting CASA rules.

