

CASA Mental Health to Embed Services into More Central Alberta Schools

CASA Mental Health is bringing mental health services directly to kids where they live and learn.

CASA Classrooms are CASA's model of school-based mental health service, in conjunction with the Government of Alberta Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, Ministry of Education and Alberta K-12 school divisions.

This February, CASA Classrooms will launch within West Central High School in Rocky Mountain House and Daysland School in Daysland. These two schools will bring the total number of classrooms operating in central Alberta to five.

Seventeen CASA Classrooms are already serving kids and families in Bonnyville, Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan, High River, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Sherwood Park, Sturgeon County and Wetaskiwin. Once the new central Alberta classrooms are up and running, the program can provide up to 480 Alberta children and youth with much-needed services annually.

"We are thrilled to welcome a CASA Classroom to Daysland School in 2025. This initiative represents a vital step forward in providing students with the mental health supports they need to thrive. By bridging mental health care and education, Battle River School Division is proud to help create an environment where students can achieve success in all aspects of their lives. This partnership with CASA Mental Health reflects our commitment to supporting every student, every day. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this program will have on our students, families and community."

-Rhae-Ann Holoien, Superintendent of Schools, Battle River School Division

"We are very excited to host a CASA Classroom in Wild Rose School Division. The opportunity to access critical mental health supports within a classroom setting and located in their own school division will be a huge benefit to our students and their families. These new services will enhance our ability to provide powerful learning environments to students that focus both on their individual learning and wellness needs."

-Brad Volkman, Superintendent of Schools, Wild Rose School Division

CASA Classrooms serve children and teens with mental health challenges. These youth have not responded as expected to previous therapy, and experience symptoms that impact their home, social and school lives. The Rocky Mountain House classroom will serve students in Grades 8 through 10. The Daysland classroom will serve students in Grades 7 through 10.

CASA Classrooms address the need for services closer to students by bridging a child's mental health and school needs, through a coordinated approach by a mental health team and a teacher. By providing mental health services directly in the school, there is no need for caregivers to schedule appointments and take time off work. Youth receive the support they need in a location already built into their lives.

"In CASA Classrooms, students receive individual and group therapy, medical care and school programming to support their individual needs. We're also preparing parents to support them at home. Caregivers receive mental health education and connections to community supports. School staff receive similar support to ensure the child's success in the classroom after the program ends."

-Dena Pedersen, Director, Clinical Operations, CASA Mental Health

News Release CASA Mental Health

In the 2023-24 school year, 84 per cent of students agreed their experience in CASA Classrooms improved their mental health, and 95 per cent of caregivers agreed the program improved their child's mental health. Fifty-one per cent of students reported an increase in hope, and 59 per cent reported an increase in self-esteem.

"When our daughter needed help, CASA Classrooms were a healthy space for her to learn and grow in. She gained a multitude of skills and tools to cope with emotional distress, while being academically successful. The CASA Classroom has been a great success for our daughter, and I am thrilled to see more Albertans be able to access this program."

-CASA Classrooms parent

"I am excited to see more children and families able to access CASA Mental Health through CASA Classrooms. After many years as a principal, I saw firsthand the benefits of mental health classrooms. I also experienced the impact CASA makes on kids and families. CASA saves lives. School-based supports decrease the risk of treatment in hospitals by providing services in the setting where children and teens learn, grow and thrive."

-Janet Hancock, Board Chair, CASA Mental Health

"Services like this are important to the long-term success and well-being of children and youth who are right now facing some very difficult challenges with their mental health. Every kid deserves to know that help is available, and that they can recover and live fulfilling lives. Our government is going to continue with investments like this that change the lives of children, youth and their families."

-Dan Williams, Minister of Mental Health and Addiction

CASA plans to continue expanding the program throughout the province in the next two years as part of its five-year roadmap to improve the future of mental health service for children, youth and families in Alberta.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact:

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About CASA Mental Health

CASA Mental Health is a non-profit, accredited provider of clinical mental health services, delivering holistic, culturally-safe wrap-around services to Albertans aged three to 18 and their families. CASA provides mental health service to the "missing middle" - therapeutic and medical treatment for 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 are trauma experts committed to delivering service in collaboration with community partners. This includes assessment and treatment for thousands of children, youth and families each year, from community outreach settings to intensive treatment programs.

For more information about CASA Mental Health, including getting help or giving help, please visit www.casamentalhealth.org.

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