



Welcome to  
Core

## Welcome to Core

**Core is the first stop for most families who come to CASA.** The program serves children ages three to 17 and provides short-term, goal-directed therapy lasting about six to eight sessions. From Core, the therapist is able to step families up or down into more appropriate levels of service if needed.

The Core team includes mental health therapists, nurses, therapy support navigators and psychiatrists. Therapists in Core have different educational backgrounds, including psychology, social work, mental health nursing and occupational therapy. Core is offered at CASA Centre, CASA West and Fort Road.



## Frequently Asked Questions

Does coming to CASA mean that something is wrong with my child, or that I'm a bad parent?

**No. Most families we serve are ordinary people struggling with everyday human problems**, such as depression, anxiety, trauma and relationship issues.

CASA Mental Health is for families who have already tried other community services. Most have already gone to groups or seen a medical doctor before they come to us. Many youth already have individualized learning plans or special classrooms placements. **CASA's programs may seem intense in comparison.**

CASA staff work closely with community partners. The goal is to return all families to a less intensive level of service. For example, CASA encourages all families to find a family doctor.

What is therapy?

Therapy is a partnership between the family and therapist – **we make a plan together and work together.** The therapist is an expert on mental health problems people have, but you



are the expert on your family. Therapists are there to listen, support, give helpful feedback, model healthy relationships and follow ethical standards for good practice.

Core therapists assess and treat using the latest and best methods, including:

- six to eight sessions of goal-directed therapy
- family sharing in treatment and planning activities;
- strengths-based therapies created for your child's age group;
- team meetings with many types of professionals working together; and
- links with other key supports (such as schools).

### What should I know if my child attends individual therapy?

Following their initial assessment, your child or family might receive one-to-one therapy, which is a meeting with a therapist (psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist or psychiatric nurse) who helps young people think, feel or live in healthy ways. One-to-one therapy is an active partnership. It can fix a lot of different problems, but results can depend on how severe the problem is and how committed people are to change (see below).

Families and CASA therapists work together on a treatment plan. This may include therapy (child/youth, family or group) or medication. Most times, these work best together.

- We review progress every four sessions. For good results, you must help your child practice change meaningfully at home between every few sessions, as your therapist outlines.
- You may cancel your consent to some or all of CASA's services at any time. If you have questions about or disagree with your family's plan, we ask that you talk to us about it so we can work together on an agreement.
- Sometimes, unpleasant parts of daily life or parenting come up. You may feel sad, guilty, angry, frustrated, lonely or helpless. Children may be irritable or show more problem behaviours before they improve. Your therapist is here to guide you through these stages so we meet your goals, reduce distress, or improve relationships.

Once in a while, families and therapists do not fit together well. Please discuss this with your therapist.

### What should I know about change?

Change is hard, especially when problems are big. Not all families feel ready for change. Some don't have the time or energy. Some wish things were different but don't know what to do or can't get to appointments. If this is the case, feel free to tell us. We will help you get ready or suggest resources to help until then.

Please think about how ready you feel. Which of these stages fits you best?

Stage	What you might think or feel	How we can help
<b>Not ready yet</b> (Pre-contemplation)	<i>"I have other things on my mind."</i> <i>"I am stuck with this problem."</i> <i>"I have no control over this."</i> <i>"I am afraid to admit this is a problem."</i> <i>"This is really no big deal."</i> <i>"It's not <u>my</u> fault."</i>	It's okay if you're not ready. The decision is yours. Take some time to think about what your family is doing. Think about what you're good at, and what you like about your family.
<b>Thinking about it</b> (Contemplation)	<i>"I see a problem, but what do I do?"</i> <i>"I would really like to fix this problem, but I don't know if I can."</i> <i>"I need to figure out what to do."</i> <i>"This problem is costing my family a lot."</i>	It's still okay if you're not ready. The decision is still yours. Think of reasons <i>not</i> to change. Think about how change would help. You and your family deserve better.
<b>Trying it out</b> (Preparation)	<i>"Let's see if this makes any difference."</i> <i>"How about I make a phone call and just see what happens."</i> <i>"It wouldn't hurt to just talk."</i>	What stands in the way of change? Let's talk about how to fix that. Who can help you make change? What has worked in the past? Take time to think about the old way. You can do it!
<b>Doing</b> (Action)	<i>"That's it – I'm doing it."</i> <i>"I'll do something small now, but it will add up to something big."</i> <i>"I think differently about my life so I do things differently."</i>	Look at how well you are doing. Lean on your supports. It may be hard, but you deserve help.
<b>Keeping it going</b> (Maintenance)	<i>"I can do it."</i> <i>"A little work every day keeps us going."</i> <i>"Things are so much better now."</i>	Remember how far you've come. How will you celebrate the good days? Who will you lean on moving forward? Bad



*"Oh crud, this is a bad day."*

days are still normal once in a while. How will you take care of you and your family on a bad day?

### Does coming to CASA mean my child has to be on medication?

**No. Many children who come to CASA do not need to meet with a psychiatrist (a medical doctor who specializes in child and youth mental health).** However, sometimes, your child's problems may stay the same or get worse without this method of treatment. If important symptoms are not treated with medicine, therapy may not work as well or at all.

Ultimately, it is your decision whether to use medication. We want you to know the facts, and how they relate to your child before you decide. Unfortunately, much of the information on the internet is misleading or false. If your therapist thinks that medication might help, he or she will connect you with a caring psychiatrist who will explain the risks and benefits. They will likely measure your child's vital signs and size, and order tests (for example, blood work).

If your child is put on medication, we ask that families keep the dose and timing the same unless the prescribing psychiatrist or medication asks otherwise.

### Is my information private?

At CASA Mental Health, we work with teams of professionals to provide the best service possible. We frequently consult with each other. We will protect your family's information, unless the law says we must share it. All information is private ("confidential" except when there may be harm to someone, especially a child, or a court asks for our records). We will get your written permission to share information with others (e.g., community agencies, professionals or schools). If someone referred you (e.g., family doctor), we let them know that you came. If we happen to run into you in public, we will not acknowledge you unless you approach us first.

We also collect information to help us plan or learn more about community needs. We keep this separately and cannot trace it back to you. We present it in groups so no one can be identified.



Older youth may wish for their therapy to be kept from their parents. Caregivers are generally asked to respect this privacy while retaining their right to request a written copy of the file.

### Do all legal guardians need to consent to services for my child?

**Yes, if legal guardians live in separate homes.** If one guardian claims to be the child's sole guardian, the law says we must ask for a copy of those court papers. If you share joint guardianship, we require that you have the co-parent sign and return the informed consent form before we start service.

### What does CASA Mental Health expect from families?

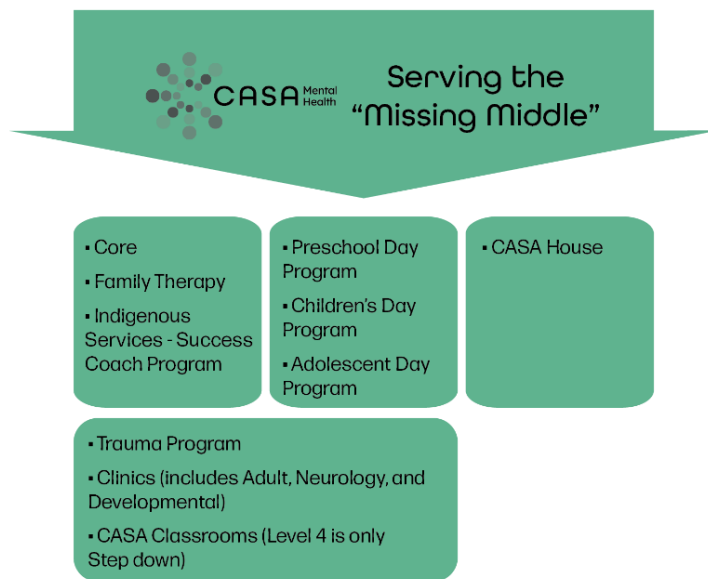
Because our services are an active process and many families are waiting for service, we remind families:

- Most of the time, we meet every week or two so your child does not 'forget' new skills, but **appointments should occur at least monthly**. If behaviour or life events are unstable, or if medications are started or changed, we may ask to meet more often.
- Sessions are 30–50 minutes long, depending on your child's age or developmental stage. Those more than 20 minutes late are re-booked.
- Please wait in the building if we need you in session or an emergency arises. We may want to share information or ask you to help "coach" to your child to use the new skills.
- **Please only bring the child who is booked to be seen.** We appreciate that finding childcare for your other children can be difficult. However, unless they can wait quietly and independently if you are called into session, please leave them with another caregiver or bring a second caregiver with you.
- **If you need to cancel or move an appointment**, please do so no later than two business days (48 hours) before the original time. Out of respect for the many families waiting for CASA services, we may close files of families who cancel twice with less than 48 hours' notice or do not show up. For more details, please see "Important Information about Appointment Changes/Cancellations" below.
- CASA may discharge your child or family if the expectations in this letter are not followed. If this happens, CASA will send a letter explaining why and list other community resources.
- We offer daytime, weekday hours from 8:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please refer to "crisis Information" for help during evenings and weekends.

## 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**. Core is for children and youth in level **three**.

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			



## What else should I know?

CASA has a **zero tolerance policy** for abuse or hostility. This means you and your child are always treated with respect and we expect the same from you.

## Concerns and Feedback

We want to hear what you have to say. This helps us better understand what we're doing right, and what we can improve on. If you have concerns about the care your family is receiving, please follow the below steps.

1

**Talk with your care provider directly.** Because your care team knows you best, discussing your questions or concerns with them might help resolve the issue right away.

2

If you were not able to come to a solution with your care provider, please ask to speak with the **Core program manager**.

3

If the issue still needs to be escalated, you have a right to contact a **clinical director**.

4

If the issue still needs to be escalated, you have a right to contact the **CASA CEO, Bonnie Blakley**.

5

Issues that are not resolved via the above channels will be escalated to the **CASA Board chair**.

CASA Mental Health is committed to working with you to resolve any issues as soon as possible. Please know that submitting a concern or complaint will have no impact on your service.

If you'd like to share general feedback about your experiences at CASA, you are also welcome to share this with your care provider.





## Important Information About Appointment Changes and Cancellations

Due to the heavy demand for CASA's services, it is important that you attend all scheduled appointments. If you cannot make an appointment, please follow the below steps.

### Cancelled Appointments

**We require a minimum of two business days (48 hours) of notice for appointment changes, including cancellations and rebooking.** Two business days is the minimum amount of time required for us to reassign the appointment time. Please note that not keeping an appointment ("no-showing") is considered a cancellation without notice.

If you fail to provide proper notice twice in a row, we will contact you to discuss if Core is the best fit for your family, or if services within community may be a better fit. If there is no contact from the patient or guardian for three months, we will close the file. In order to resume services, you must re-refer via the steps outlined on **[casamentalhealth.org](http://casamentalhealth.org)**.

If you believe you have been treated unfairly and wish to appeal a decision regarding access to CASA's services, we encourage you to speak with your care provider.

### What is considered a missed appointment?

Missed appointments include the failure to provide adequate notice and/or not attending your scheduled appointment. We believe that missed appointments interfere with the progress of your child's treatment as well as our ability to address new patients in a timely manner. We will take unforeseeable circumstances into consideration.

If the file is closed, referrals to other CASA programs are also withdrawn at that time. Your therapist will send you a letter confirming the closure of the file. If a CASA physician is involved in your child's care, a discussion will occur regarding their continued involvement.

Thank you for your understanding and willingness to help CASA provide timely services to as many families as possible.

## Group Therapy

CASA's Core program offers a number of therapeutic and educational groups. These are available to families currently in Core, and to families on the waitlist.

Group therapy can be used to effectively treat a variety of conditions, including trauma, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), just to name a few.

Groups have a unique advantage: they provide camaraderie and learnings from others going through similar struggles. Often times, your group becomes an extended support network. Instead of having just one shoulder to lean on, you have many – all while still receiving the effective treatment you'd get in traditional one-on-one therapy.



Children and caregivers are also able to practice their skills with other group members, which provides an in-the-moment learning environment that can't be replicated in individual therapy. In many cases, group therapy creates better outcomes than one-on-one therapy, depending on the individual and their concerns.

Group therapy **is** therapy.

## Patient Rights and Responsibilities

All CASA Mental Health patients have the right to:

- **Be treated with respect.** This means CASA staff should welcome you as an individual with your own history, beliefs and values. All staff should treat you kindly and professionally in every encounter you have with them.
- **Be informed about and participate in your treatment.** You have the right to know about what your treatment plan is, what the timeline is and any possible risks to your treatment.
- **Feel safe in a non-judgemental environment.** If you don't feel safe, please talk to your therapist.
- **Ask questions** and receive thoughtful, respectful answers.
- **Be heard and listened to** if you 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 your therapist as best you can,** and set goals together with your therapist and caregiver.
- **Keep yourself and others safe** by respecting CASA rules.



## 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.
- The **privacy and confidentiality** of your personal information.
- **Advocate for your child.**
- **Receive safe and high-quality care.**

All caregivers of a child or youth 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 all of our patients by **providing two days of notice if you can't make your appointment.**
- **Ensure you are able to care for your child and any siblings** on-site before and after scheduled appointment or program hours.



## S.M.A.R.T Goals

In Core, you'll work with your care team to develop a therapeutic goal. The most successful goals are S.M.A.R.T. goals: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Your goal should clearly and specifically state what you are trying to achieve. It should also be a goal that you can quantify to track your progress with a deadline of when you want to reach it.

### Specific

Goals that are specific have a significantly greater chance of being accomplished. To make a goal specific, the five "W" questions must be considered:

*Who: Who is involved in this goal?*

*What: What do I want to accomplish?*

*Where: Where is this goal to be achieved?*

*When: When do I want to achieve this goal?*

*Why: Why do I want to achieve this goal?*

### Measurable

A SMART goal must have criteria for measuring progress. If there are no criteria, you will not be able to determine your progress and if you are on track to reach your goal. To make a goal measurable, ask yourself:

*How many/much?*

*How do I know if I have reached my goal?*

*What is my indicator of progress?*

### Attainable

A SMART goal must be achievable and attainable. This will help you figure out ways you can realize that goal and work towards it. The achievability of the goal should be stretched to make you feel challenged, but defined well enough that you can actually achieve it. Ask yourself:

*Do I have the resources and capabilities to achieve the goal? If not, what am I missing?*

*Have others done it successfully before?*

### Realistic

A SMART goal must be realistic in that it can be realistically achieved given the available resources and time. A SMART goal is likely realistic if you believe that it can be accomplished. Ask yourself:



*Is the goal realistic and within reach?*

*Is the goal reachable given the time and resources?*

*Are you able to commit to achieving the goal?*

### Time-Bound

A SMART goal must be time-bound in that it has a start and finish date. If the goal is not time constrained, there will be no sense of urgency and motivation to achieve the goal. Ask yourself:

*Does my goal have a deadline?*

*By when do you want to achieve your goal?*

### Crisis Resources

If your child is in physical danger or is at risk of harming themselves or someone else, **call 911** or go to the nearest emergency department.

If your child is in crisis, dial the Edmonton crisis lines at **780-482-4357** or **780-342-7777** for immediate assistance.