



ONE-CALL Desk Reference



School
Mental Health
Ontario

Santé mentale
en milieu scolaire
Ontario

YOU make a Difference



- **When educators spend time getting to know their students and are a supportive presence, they build trusting relationships that can enhance students' sense of wellness and belonging at school.**
- **Educators have a role to play in nurturing the social and emotional growth of students informally, through day to day interactions, and also explicitly through social emotional learning**
- **Social emotional learning is associated with skill development that benefits both mental health and academic performance.**
- **When students who demonstrate resilience are asked how they coped successfully with challenges, they often say "someone believed in me". Quite often, that someone, is an educator.**
- **As an educator, you have a powerful opportunity to help students to grow in knowledge and confidence each day. You make a difference, even though you may never know exactly how your efforts will help shape the life of a student. Although you may never know, in the future, our young people may share with others that it was you who changed their life.**

Educators

If you are concerned about a student, consider if there is a change in the way they have been thinking, feeling or acting. Although educators play an important role in identifying signs of potential mental health problems, they do not work alone. There are many people in a student’s circle of support who have a role to play (e.g. the student’s parent(s) and family, other school staff, and involved mental health professionals). A team approach helps to ensure that students and their families understand and access the right support at the right time.

Common signs of a mental health problem:*

Changes in Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying negative things about themselves or blaming themselves for things beyond their control• Trouble concentrating• Frequent negative thoughts• Changes in school performance
Changes in Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reactions or feelings that seem bigger than the situation• Seeming very unhappy, worried, guilty, fearful, irritable, sad, or angry• Feeling helpless, hopeless, lonely or rejected
Changes in Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often being alone• Crying easily• Withdrawing from sports or other activities that are normally enjoyed• Over-reacting, or sudden outbursts of anger or tears• Quieter than usual, less energetic• Trouble relaxing or sleeping• Daydreaming a lot• Engaging in developmentally-inappropriate behaviour• Trouble getting along with friends
Physical Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches, stomach aches, neck pain, or general aches and pains• Lacking energy or appearing tired all the time• Sleeping or eating difficulties• Too much energy or nervous habits such as nail biting, hair twisting or thumb-sucking

**This is not an exhaustive list*



Noticing one or more of these changes does not necessarily mean the student has a mental health problem. However, a first step in recognizing whether a student is having difficulty may simply begin by documenting the behaviour that is causing concern. School boards may have their own forms on which to record this information. Once several observations of the particular behaviour have been gathered, educators can share these with others who can help to develop a plan to manage the behaviour. Educators should look for three indicators when considering whether a student is struggling with a mental health and/or addiction problem:

Frequency: How often does the student exhibit the behaviour?

Duration: How long does the behaviour last? Does the duration of the behaviour appear to be excessive?

Intensity: To what extent does the behaviour interfere with the student's social and academic functioning?

Other general signs that a student may be struggling are when the student's emotions and behaviour are not age appropriate, and the behaviour seems different from that of the student's peers.

One-Call Desk Reference

The ONE-CALL approach to supporting students when they exhibit signs of an emotional or behavioural problem can be a helpful reminder of the steps educators can take in providing support.

O **Observe:** Know your students' typical behaviour and responses. When educators know their students, they are well positioned to observe changes in thoughts, feelings or actions.

N **Notice:** Notice changes in behaviour or mood of the student.

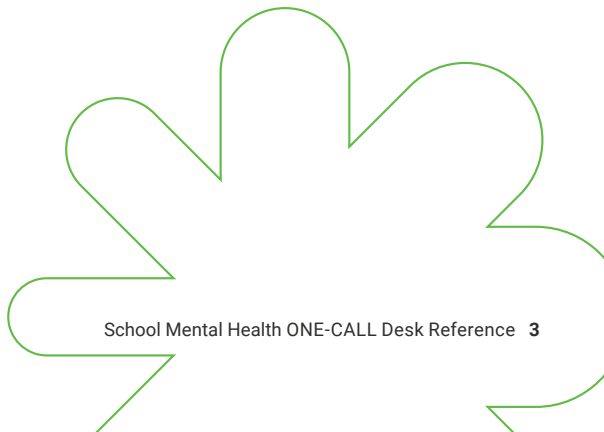
E **Explore:** Seek out information about the things you are observing (e.g., access School Mental Health Ontario courses, tutorials, and infosheets).

C **Connect:** Make a connection with the student to see if they are open to a conversation. Consider connecting to others in the circle of support (parents/caregivers, school administration, other teachers who may know the student).

A **Ask:** Ask the student how you can help.

L **Listen:** Actively listen to the student and validate their experience.

L **Link:** Link students to other supports in the school where appropriate.



Ask yourself:



- **Who in my school can provide support?**
- **How do I access the school services pathway?**
- **When should I reach out to parents/families with my observations?**
- **What should I consider when approaching parents and families?
(identity, culture, language)**
- **Who is/are the mental health professionals for my school?**
- **Who is my board's Mental Health Leader?**
- **Who can help to make a connection to community agencies?**
- **What is the process for making contact with each of the above?**

Starter statements

Here is an example of a targeted strategy to support students during difficult moments

<p>Notice, Respond and Prevent</p>	<p>Validate: Hear their concerns and put their feeling about the problem into words (name and describe it)</p> <p>Start with: Conveying an understanding of their experience with the problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">“It would make sense that...you wouldn’t want to come in from recess...”“When I put myself in your shoes, I could imagine that...you are feeling really frustrated that you lost your work on the computer...”“I could understand that...” <p>Then add: A few specific examples to let them know you “get it” (the problem). Give 2-3 reasons that demonstrate why you understand (refrain from using “but” at this stage. Instead, using the first example, try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">because (reason 1): “...you are having so much fun” andbecause (reason 2): “...school can be hard.” <p><i>* Be aware of non-verbal cues (such as body language and tone). Vary the language to match what you know will resonate with them.</i></p>
<p>Support and Bolster skills</p>	<p>Finish with: Words of Support and a Helping Hand</p> <p>Words of Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “We’re in this together” (Positive connection)• “I get it” (Feeling heard)• “Let’s see if we can figure this out” (Reassurance) <p>A Helping Hand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redirect, if appropriate• Work together to brainstorm a solution• Reminder to use their skills and coping strategies (be specific – deep breathing, distraction, work in the resource room, etc.)
<p>Bridge</p>	<p>As a key player in the circle of support, you can connect students to services or inform the student’s supports when changes are noticed. Please refer to your school’s service pathway.</p>

With acknowledgment to Adele LaFrance for use of the concepts from Emotion Focused Coaching.



**We work together with
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to support student
mental health**

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