

**camh**

## When a family member chooses not to seek help

People with mental health or addiction problems are not always willing to seek treatment. They may not believe there is a problem. Or they may feel that they can address the issue on their own, without treatment. The person may also have fears about the mental health system or concerns about the stigma of a mental health or addiction diagnosis. This is a difficult situation for families. While your family member may not see the need for treatment, you are witnessing the situation and feel they need support.

### **How should I talk with my family member?**

You may be tempted to repeatedly urge, plead or even threaten your family member into seeking treatment. Unfortunately, this often results in a breakdown of communication and the person shutting you out.

Try to use “I” statements rather than “you” statements to express your concerns about the importance of treatment. “I” statements focus on your own feelings or beliefs rather than criticizing or directing the other person. This approach may allow you to get your point across without making your family member feel defensive.

For example, instead of saying “*You need to get help!*” say “*When I hear you talking about how unhappy you are, I feel worried. I think it would be really helpful for you to talk with someone about how you’re feeling.*”

### **What can I do?**

#### **Learn about mental illness and addiction**

It can be easier to cope when you feel informed about what your family member is experiencing. Many resources are available, but sometimes it is difficult to know what information is accurate. The “Resources” section in this pamphlet is a good place to start. There may also be education sessions that you can attend.

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## Talk with your family member about your concerns, and encourage them to seek support

Let your family member know you are concerned. Consider how best to express your concerns. See the “How should I talk with my family member?” section for suggestions.

Suggest that the person see their family doctor or make an appointment at a treatment centre. Ask about the referral process and eligibility criteria and about culture-specific or specialized services (e.g., LGBTQ2S+, spiritually focused) to best meet your needs.

## Get support for yourself and your family

It is helpful to get connected with family support. This could include attending an education session, meeting with a therapist or joining a support group. There are also peer family supports in the community. See the “Resources” section for suggestions on where you can find support.

## Take care of yourself

Supporting a family member with a mental illness or addiction can be overwhelming. It can be a challenge to balance your own needs with being there for them. Take time for yourself and ensure that your own needs are being met—you cannot support your family member effectively if you are not also taking care of yourself.

- Make time for activities that help you cope with stress.
- Make time to see other family members and friends.
- Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for help.
- Be aware of your boundaries and set limits to make sure they are respected.
- Look after your own physical and mental health, and seek support if necessary.

## Support other family members

Mental illness and addiction affect the whole family, as well as the person's friends. It is important that everyone receives the support they need. Give what support you can, without overwhelming yourself, and direct others to the resources listed at the end of this pamphlet.

Children in particular may need help to understand what is happening. If you are concerned about how a child is coping, you could speak to their family doctor. Support may also be available from a school social worker or through a community organization.

## How do I prepare for a crisis?

Try to predict possible crises and plan what you would do. A crisis plan should include contact information for:

- the nearest hospital
- crisis lines
- the local police department
- a treatment provider
- a child care provider, if relevant
- family members or supportive friends.

The CAMH pamphlet *When a Family Member Is Thinking about Suicide* lists crisis lines and other supports.

## What if I think my family member may harm themselves or someone else?

- If there are immediate concerns for your family member's safety, take them to the nearest hospital emergency department if you can do so safely.
- If they are unwilling to go to the hospital, call 911. Calling 911 can feel hard. You can explain to the 911 operator that you think your family member is experiencing mental health symptoms, in case a mental health crisis response team is available.
- After calling 911, you might want to access support to help feel connected and know that you are not alone.
- If your family member is agitated, threatening or aggressive, call 911 and make sure you and others are safe.

## Can I force my family member into treatment?

Everyone has the legally protected right to decide if they want treatment. Treatment is usually most effective when the person has agreed to it. However, in some situations, the Mental Health Act provides ways for people to receive an emergency assessment without their consent.

### Form 1

If a physician believes a person is a risk to themselves or others, they can write a Form 1. The person may remain in hospital for up to 72 hours while they receive an emergency assessment.

If the person is not found to be a risk to themselves or others, they can leave the hospital if they wish, even if it is against medical advice. If the psychiatric team finds that the person is a risk to themselves or others, they may be held in hospital under other forms in the Mental Health Act until they are found to be safe to leave.

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## Form 2

If you are concerned that a family member is a risk to themselves or others, you can request a Form 2 from a justice of the peace ([www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj](http://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj)). This form allows the police to take the person to a hospital for assessment. At the hospital, a physician will assess the person to see if they should be put on a Form 1.

Using a Form 2 can negatively affect the relationship you have with your family member. However, the safety of your family member and those around them is the most important consideration.

The police may also take a person to hospital if they, or someone else, have seen the person behaving dangerously as a result of a mental health concern, or if they have a Form 1 or Form 2.

## Resources

### ConnexOntario

Tel.: 1 866 531-2600  
[www.connexontario.ca](http://www.connexontario.ca)

### Mood Disorders Association of Ontario

[www.moooddisorders.ca](http://www.moooddisorders.ca)

### Canadian Mental Health Association

[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

## Family resources

### CAMH

Access CAMH family line  
Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 2

### Family Resource Centre

Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 33202  
Email: [family.engagement@camh.ca](mailto:family.engagement@camh.ca)  
[www.camh.ca/families](http://www.camh.ca/families)

### FAME Reconnect Family and Caregiver Support Services

Tel.: 416 248-2050  
[www.reconnect.on.ca](http://www.reconnect.on.ca)

### Mood Disorders Association of Ontario

<https://moooddisorders.ca>

### Ontario Caregiver Organization

24/7 helpline: 1 833 416-2273  
<https://ontariocaregiver.ca>

## Supports for children and youth

### Reconnect FAMEkids

Tel.: 416 248-2050  
[www.reconnect.on.ca](http://www.reconnect.on.ca)

### What Kids Want to Know series (CAMH)

*(When a Parent Drinks Too Much Alcohol, When a Parent Has Bipolar Disorder, When a Parent Is Depressed, When a Parent Has Experienced Psychosis)*  
<http://store.camh.ca>

### Youthdale Psychiatric Crisis Services

Tel.: 416 363-9990  
[www.youthdale.ca](http://www.youthdale.ca)

### LGBT YouthLine

Tel.: 1 800 268-9688 or text line: 647 694-4275  
[www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca)

### Black Youth Helpline

Tel.: 416 285-9944 (Toronto)  
or 1 833 294-8650 (national)  
<https://blackyouth.ca>

## Crisis resources

### Canada Suicide Prevention Service

Tel.: 1 833 456-4566

### Toronto Distress Centre

Tel.: 416 408-HELP (4357)

### Gerstein Centre (Toronto)

Tel.: 416 929-5200

### Kids Help Phone

Tel.: 1 800 668-6868  
or text CONNECT to 686868

### Hope for Wellness (for Indigenous people)

Tel.: 1 855 242-3310

### Assaulted Women's Helpline

Tel.: 416 863-0511 or 1 866-863-0511 (toll free)

### Talk 4 Healing (for Indigenous women)

Helpline: 1 855 554-4325  
Crisis line: 1 888 200-9997  
Live chat: [www.talk4healing.com](http://www.talk4healing.com)

For more information on mental health issues, including addiction, or to download a copy of this resource, please visit our website:  
[www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

This publication may be available in other formats. For information about alternative formats, to order multiple copies, or to order other CAMH publications, contact CAMH Publications:

Toll-free: 1 800 661-1111  
Toronto: 416 595-6059  
Email: [publications@camh.ca](mailto:publications@camh.ca)  
Online store: <http://store.camh.ca>

To make a donation, please contact the CAMH Foundation:  
Tel.: 416 979-6909  
Email: [foundation@camh.ca](mailto:foundation@camh.ca)

If you have questions, concerns or compliments about services at CAMH, please contact the Client Relations Office:  
Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 32027  
Email: [client.relations@camh.ca](mailto:client.relations@camh.ca)

Family members are welcome to contact the Family Resource Centre in the RBC Patient and Family Learning Space for information and help getting connected:  
1025 Queen St. W. (McCain Complex Care and Recovery Building), ground floor, room B1.1309  
Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 33202  
Email: [family.engagement@camh.ca](mailto:family.engagement@camh.ca)  
Website: [www.camh.ca/families](http://www.camh.ca/families)

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