

Professional Advisory – Supporting Students’ Mental Health

Backgrounder

Why is the College issuing the advisory?

By law, the College has a duty to provide for the ongoing education of Ontario Certified Teachers. By understanding the characteristics of mental health, OCTs can help to identify students who may be at risk, seek help, support them on the path to care, and create a learning environment that supports recovery and wellness. Learn more at oct.ca.

Did you know?

- One in five students experience a mental health illness or concern in any given year.
- An estimated 1.2 million children and youth are affected by mental illness, yet less than 20 per cent receive appropriate treatment.
- Seventy per cent of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.
- Suicide accounts for almost a quarter of all deaths among 15-24-year-olds in Canada. It is the second leading cause of death among teens.

To whom does this advisory apply?

This advisory applies to all 235,000 College members including teachers, vice-principals, principals, consultants, supervisory officers and directors of education. It also affects members working in private and independent schools and elsewhere.

By understanding the characteristics of mental health, Ontario Certified Teachers can help to identify students who may be at risk, seek help, support them on the path to care, and create a learning environment that supports recovery and wellness.

We want teachers to:

- create a supportive learning environment
- learn to recognize behaviours of concern
- be sensitive
- intervene appropriately
- act professionally.

We do not expect teachers to diagnose students’ mental health.

Who helped develop the advisory

The College consulted with individuals and groups representing Ontario’s education stakeholders, including teachers, school counsellors, employers, education faculties, professional associations, Ontario’s Ministry of Education, student trustees, and parent organizations as well as community mental health organizations such as the Centre for

Addiction and Mental Health, social workers, and Indigenous community members. Expert and critical readers were consulted prior to College Council's review and approval.

What does the advisory include?

The advisory provides Ontario Certified Teachers with an overview of mental health concerns, characteristics, legal and professional responsibilities and 30 self-reflective questions that practitioners across the province can use to help them become better informed and aid in their judgment as professionals. See the full advisory at oct.ca.

Where did the idea come from?

Teachers and parents across the province identified the need for consistent advice for Ontario teachers about Supporting Students' Mental Health.

Where can the advisory be found?

The advisory is available on the College website at oct.ca. It was also mailed to all 235,000 members in February.

Where can teachers go for additional information on this topic?

Teachers can consult their employers, teacher federations, professional associations, or visit the College [website](#). Ontario Certified Teachers can also refer to the list of community mental health organizations included in the advisory.