

# Admission Handbook

Your guide to an Alberta Health Services'  
Child and Youth  
Addiction and Mental Health  
Inpatient Unit

This Admission Handbook is for  
parents / caregivers of children or youth  
admitted to one of these units.

- Mental Health Patient Care Unit  
(Alberta Children's Hospital)
- Unit 23  
(Foothills Medical Centre)
- Unit 26  
(Foothills Medical Centre)
- Unit 56A  
(South Health Campus)

Unit staff will also share unit specific  
information upon admission.



# Welcome

We have heard from many parents and caregivers that a hospital stay can feel scary. You are not alone - we are here to help. Our job is to support the mental health needs of your child, keep them safe, foster their well-being, and partner with them, and you, to guide your next steps.

This handbook will help you understand what an Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Addiction and Mental Health (AMH) hospital stay looks like, the help we can offer you and your child, and what you can expect over the coming days. This is a stressful time, so this handbook focuses on what you need to know right away. More information will be given to you as you need it. As well, reach out to your mental health team with any questions or if there is something you don't understand.

This handbook answers these questions:

- What does a mental health inpatient unit do?
- What can I expect from a hospital stay?
- How and when can I contact the inpatient unit?
- What is expected of me?
- How can I help keep my child and the unit safe?
- What other resources or information are available to help me?

## What does a mental health unit do?

### A mental health unit:

Identifies your child's urgent mental health needs.

Works with your child to address those needs, particularly those that resulted in the need for a hospital stay.

Stabilizes your child's mental health and addresses their distress to keep them physically / emotionally safe.

Begins mental health treatment or adds to existing treatment plans.

Partners with your child, you and your healthcare team to help guide your next steps.

Provides a safe and secure space for your child to address their mental health needs.

## What can I expect from a hospital stay?

### You can expect:

A focus on stabilizing your child's mental health and addressing their distress or symptoms.

To work actively with the healthcare team, discussing your child's goals, your family's goals, and the steps needed to make them happen. Your experience and ideas are very important and will be built into the care plan.

This stay is one step in your child's mental health journey. Recovery can take time. We will work to address the concerns that resulted in this hospital stay; there will be additional steps afterwards that we will develop together.

The steps involved in your child's care are described more fully on the next page.

## Contact information

### You can call the unit any time.

We are here to answer your questions, receive feedback about your child's care and address any concerns you have.

Mental Health Patient Care Unit  
(Alberta Children's Hospital)

403-955-7289

Unit 23 (Foothills Medical Centre)  
Adolescent Mental Health

403-944-8298

Unit 26 (Foothills Medical Centre)  
Adolescent Mental Health

403-944-1282

Unit 56A (South Health Campus)  
Adolescent Mental Health

403-956-1500

For parking information visit:

[ahs.ca/parking](https://ahs.ca/parking)

# Your child's mental health care journey

Your child's hospital stay will include a number of steps - assessment, receiving and participating in treatment, and transitioning to ongoing supports. Each are described here.

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## STEP 1 Assessment

During an assessment, mental health professionals begin to explore your child's mental health concerns.

The team will:

- Speak with you and your child to better understand their concerns and yours.
- Review your child's past and current health information.

The team may:

- Ask you to fill out forms or questionnaires that will help better understand your child's specific needs.
  - Speak with others involved in your child's care such as school staff or other providers, if you provide consent.
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## STEP 2 Treatment

Treatment during a hospital stay involves:

- Understanding your child's mental health challenges and how they impact their day-to-day life or your family. This may include addiction concerns, mental health symptoms or both.
- Managing symptoms
- Learning and practicing new skills
- Building strengths and resilience
- Helping you get ready to transition to home and ongoing supports
- Connecting you to services that will support you after discharge.

AMH partners with the Calgary Board of Education to provide teaching and educational supports while on the unit and follows the regular school year schedule. Your child will attend school, when appropriate, to support their mental health assessment and learning needs.

The length of your child's stay will depend on your child and what they need to become stable.

Your child's treatment addresses the individual needs of your child and your family. You and your child may participate in some of the treatment options listed here:

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Family sessions
- Psychiatry consultations and treatment
- Medication management

Your child's plan may not need to include everything listed.

A care plan will be developed for your child's time on the unit and a discharge plan will also be started shortly after admission to guide their next steps.

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## STEP 3 Transition

Once your child's immediate mental health concerns have stabilized, you and your child's care team will develop a discharge plan. It will guide and support your child's recovery as you move to your next level of support. This is likely to include your family physician and community-based programs and supports.

Let your child's care team know if you don't have a family physician and need help finding one or visit [ahs.ca/findadoctor](https://ahs.ca/findadoctor).

# Your child's AMH care team



## Health Professionals

Within the first 48 to 72 hours after your child's admission they will be assigned a psychiatrist, family counsellor, teacher and a nursing care team.

Other professionals on the care team will depend on your child's specific needs. Other team members may include recreation therapists, occupational therapists, therapy assistants, pharmacy or addiction counsellors. Their involvement, if needed, will be described in your child's care plan.

You may also see protective services staff (security) on the unit from time to time. They are a part of the team and support health professionals in providing safety and supports.

Addressing your child's mental health needs will continue after this hospital stay. As such, your family physician continues to be an important member of your child's healthcare team. They are the central healthcare provider and are aware of all your child's healthcare needs and the programs they have been connected to or will be connected to. The physician will receive a discharge summary about your child's hospital care and recommended next steps.

## Family Members

Family members are a vital part of the care team. You, as parents/caregivers, know your child best.

Some ways you can participate in your child's care are:

- Review your child's patient white board for the most recent treatment information
- Communicate regularly with the care team in person or over the phone
- Attend family meetings

Attending family meetings is very important. Please let us know if there is anything that might prevent you from joining family meetings. We will help figure out ways to support you.

## Your Care Team

Family Counsellor

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Psychiatrist

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Nurses

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Others

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To learn more about how Family Members can partner in care visit:

<https://www.ahs.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-calz-together-we-are-better.pdf>

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# Unit Safety

Safety is our highest priority.

We create a safe space together. Please tell us about any safety concerns you see.

## Safe and Secure Spaces

Mental health units are secure and locked. There can be times of distress or escalation on the unit. Staff and security personnel work together to address these situations and keep everyone on the unit safe. Your child may be asked to remain in their rooms at these times.

## Emotional Safety

We want your child and your family to feel welcome and understood. To understand your child better and to customize their care, staff will ask about their cultural beliefs, family context, and for other information they think is important to consider. The same will be asked of family members.

Your child will also be asked about their preferred name and gender identity. Staff will make every reasonable effort to use these preferences in all interactions, in care plans or within medical records or other identifying information.

## Sharing a Room

Because of the unit design and space limitations your child will usually share a room with at least one other patient. Staff closely monitor patient rooms and address concerns between patients to make sure everyone is as comfortable as possible.

## Time off the Unit

The mental health care team will determine whether time off the unit can be provided safely.

Staff and/or guardians must accompany children and youth at all times off the unit. Important planning steps must be followed, such as making a Safety Plan and going over safety precautions.

## Safe Belongings

Your child's belongings will be checked for items that are not allowed. This will happen at admission and whenever new belongings are brought onto the unit. This is to help keep **all** patients safe. As well, staff perform routine checks of all patient rooms each shift, or as needed, to ensure safety precautions are followed.

### Bring:

- Enough clothing for 3 days (appropriate for the season)
- Personal hygiene items (e.g.: shampoo, deodorant, feminine products, toothbrush/toothpaste)
- Personal items (e.g.: journal, pillow, books, school work)

### Ask us about:

- Current medications
- Food from home
- Music
- Nail files/clippers

### Do not bring:

- Glass objects/containers (e.g.: vases, picture frames, bottles, mirrors including those in make-up containers)
- Personal electronics (e.g.: phones, gaming devices, laptops)
- Sharp objects (e.g.: pocket knives, razor blades, geometry bits, pencil sharpeners, coiled note books)
- Aluminum cans
- Items with long cords or strings that can't be removed (e.g.: clothing with strings; hoodies with strings; hair straighteners or electronics with long cords)
- Matches; lighters
- Caffeine; alcohol; cigarettes; non-prescribed or illegal drugs
- Body sprays and perfume

*In rare circumstances, staff may consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis.*

# Informed consent and confidentiality



Informed consent is about making sure you and your child understand and agree to receive healthcare services. It is guided by Alberta law and AHS policy. Informed consent will be discussed in more detail soon after arriving on the unit.

Confidentiality is very important in healthcare. AMH staff follow procedures and policies to ensure your child's confidentiality and that of other patients is respected.

AHS keeps everything you share as part of your child's hospital stay confidential with the following exceptions:

## Harm to Self or Others

- If your child shares a desire to, or a healthcare provider has reason to believe, that your child is likely to harm them self or others, then the necessary steps will be taken to ensure their safety and the safety of others.

## Suspected or Known Abuse

- If your child shares, or a healthcare provider has reason to believe, that a child has been abused or neglected this will be reported to Alberta Child and Family Services, as required by law.
- If your child shares that they are watching / viewing child pornography, this will be reported to the Calgary Police Service and Alberta Child and Family Services.

## Court Requests

- If your child's records are subpoenaed by the court, AHS must comply with the request.

## AMH Team Consultation

- If your child's mental health professional needs to consult any AHS AMH team member regarding your child's care or to collaborate in their care plan.

Your child's family physician will receive updated information regarding their care following their hospital stay. If you do not wish this to happen, you must let a member of your child's AMH care team know. If anyone outside of AHS requests information, it will only be released with a signed consent from you.

## Patients and Family's Providing Confidentiality While on the Unit

We expect that children and family members will respect the confidentiality of the unit staff and other patients.

Audio / visual recordings of any session (group, individual, etc.) without consent is a breach of confidentiality. It is taken very seriously. This includes recording using cellphones.



# Providing feedback



Your experience and opinions are important to us. Please let us know how things are going, or have gone, during your child's hospital stay. This helps us better understand what has gone well in treatment, and what we still need to work on. You can share your feedback at any point in your journey. This could include what is working well, what you appreciate about your care team

or specific treatment approaches, or what can be improved on.

You can provide feedback by speaking directly to staff, or using the patient and family experience questionnaires at discharge.

You can also share your feedback through our AHS Patient Relations department at [ahs.ca/patientfeedback](https://ahs.ca/patientfeedback) or 1-855-550-2555.

If you have a concern about your child's care you can take the following steps:

1

Talk to your child's care team member

We are here to help you and your child. We want to know your thoughts. Letting us know your concerns helps us all work together to solve them.

Please be open with your child's AMH care team about any issues.

2

Talk to a clinical leader

If you and your child's care team member aren't able to find a solution, ask to include a clinical leader. You can ask any staff member for the clinical leader's contact information

so you can contact them directly. You can also contact the AMH Unit Manager.

3

Contact Patient Relations

If the steps above have not resolved your concerns, you can contact Patient Relations at

[ahs.ca/patientfeedback](https://ahs.ca/patientfeedback)  
1-855-550-2555.

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## Conclusion

We hope this admission handbook has helped you understand what to expect from a hospital stay in a child and youth mental health unit. In addition to this resource, unit staff will share additional handouts with more detailed information. They include:

- Mutual Expectations
- Approaches to Care
- Unit Schedule
- Community Resources

If you have additional questions, ask any unit staff.



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### Supports available

#### Health Advice

Call Health Link at 811 (24/7)

#### Addiction Help Line

1-866-332-2322 (24/7)

#### Mental Health Help Line

1-877-303-2642 (24/7)

#### First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line

1-855-242-3310 (24/7)

#### Calgary Distress Centre

1-403-266-HELP (4357)

or chat / text at [distresscentre.com](https://distresscentre.com)



For additional addiction and mental health information or resources visit [ahs.ca/amh](https://ahs.ca/amh)



For help finding Calgary Zone AMH services visit [ahs.ca/accessmh](https://ahs.ca/accessmh)