

# KEY MESSAGES: Mental health and substance use impacts of COVID-19

## CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES



### SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN AND YOUTH REPORT WORSENING MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

More research is needed to guide decision-making with respect to school closures/reopening, including the potential impact on the mental health of children and youth with pre-existing mental health concerns, special needs, or other vulnerabilities.



### SOME CHILDREN ARE MORE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED

Children who have generally been most negatively impacted by the pandemic have:

- pre-existing physical health; and/or
- mental health conditions; and/or
- other difficulties (e.g. social relationships, academic, development, illness)

Having a solid and diversified social net and support, and maintaining structure and routine, may contribute to improved outcomes.



### CAREGIVERS REQUIRE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Caregivers report depression, anxiety, poor sleep, stress, fear, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Evidence suggests women caregivers may report worse outcomes, like increased depression.

Parents of autistic children have experienced an increase in demands and family-related stressors and have a critical need for social support. Online communities may be helpful, but evidence is limited.

Caregivers of individuals with eating disorders require additional support and education.



### MORE EVIDENCE IS NEEDED TO GUIDE VIRTUAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND EMERGING ADULTS

There is a need for evidence-based practice guidelines to guide professionals in providing the most effective virtual mental health services for children and youth.

In some cases, there may be a need for in-person care to supplement virtual services.

It is important to consider virtual adaptations for school-based suicide risk assessments for children and youth, particularly those who may be at disproportionate risk.

Learn more at <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52001.html>