

What is Strongest Families BC?

Strongest Families is an effective, accessible educational service for families of children with mild to moderate behaviour problems (ages 3 to 12) offered through the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division. Strongest Families was developed by Dr. Patrick McGrath at the IWK Centre, Nova Scotia.

Strongest Families is delivered to parents and/or caregivers via telephone in the comfort and privacy of their own homes at times that are best for the family, and at no cost. Trained coaches give weekly guidance and telephone support to families as they work their way through the program. Coaches and parents work together to solve problems as parents apply new skills in their daily lives.

The program offers flexibility to accommodate the reality of busy work and school schedules for most families. Strongest Families staff work day, evening and weekend hours to accommodate families' needs.



What types of childhood problems does the program address?

Strongest Families addresses disruptive behaviour and attention deficit difficulties in pre-school and school age children which often present challenges at home, school and in social or recreational settings. While these challenges have a higher rate of occurrence in boys, a proportion of girls also exhibit persistent problem behaviours. Without help, these conditions may lead to academic difficulties, problems with peers, aggression and, in the extreme, youth justice system involvement.

What does the program offer?

The Strongest Families *Parenting the Active Child* program includes:

- ✓ An established, evidence-based program presented in handbook format with video clips to demonstrate specific skills
- ✓ Step-by-step instruction with practice exercises
- ✓ Highly trained and supervised coaches providing regular telephone contact who:
 - Work with families to solve problems
 - Encourage families through difficult times
 - Customize the sessions to meet families unique needs
 - Develop a supportive relationship with families
 - Schedule appointments at times convenient for the family
 - Are supported by regular consultation with licensed health care professionals

How do I know if Strongest Families is the best option for my child?

It is important that you, as a parent or caregiver, discuss the child's symptoms with your family doctor. He or she may want to conduct further tests to rule out conditions that can contribute to disruptive behaviour and/or attention deficits. Your doctor will also be able to outline the different interventions available.



Does my child need a specialist?

For children with severe behaviour or attention problems, your family doctor will consider referral to a mental health specialist. When symptoms are in the mild to moderate range, research has shown children achieve good outcomes with the Strongest Families program. Through early intervention, the program helps prevent escalation of problems and the need for entry into the formal mental health service system.

In addition, in many communities, there is a shortage of mental health specialists resulting in long wait times or the need to travel outside one's own community to access services. Strongest Families fills the gap between primary care from your family practitioner and mental health services available in your community. Strongest Families provides timely, effective care to families who need help.



Canadian Mental
Health Association
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Mental health for all

What others say

Parents and caregivers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the program:

"I learned so many techniques of dealing with problems and it gave me a new outlook on being a parent."

"I liked the convenience. I could review the material on my own time and do it from my home, and my child did not have to go to a mental health centre."

"I enjoyed the whole thing, recognizing the positive, having a coach ready anytime for questions, scheduled appointments and knowing how my child is progressing"

How do we access the program?

Access to Strongest Families BC requires a doctor's referral. Speak to your family doctor who will work with you to determine if the program is appropriate for your child and make the necessary referral.

Once referred, what can we expect?

Strongest Families will:

- Contact you within 3 to 5 days of your family doctor's referral
- Schedule an appointment to conduct a telephone screening questionnaire
- Obtain your consent to begin the program
- Send an educational package of user-friendly materials
- Begin to work through 12 weekly telephone coaching sessions with you
- Complete an end of program assessment

About CMHA

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), BC Division exists to promote the mental health of British Columbians and support the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness.

We do this through information resources, educational events, direct services, research and advocacy, as well as the support we provide to the 19 CMHA branches throughout BC.

We're part of one of the oldest voluntary organizations in Canada, which provides direct service to more than 100,000 Canadians through the combined efforts of more than 10,000 volunteers and staff across Canada.

Together, CMHA shares a national vision of **"mentally healthy people in a healthy society."**



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

**Strongest Families BC
CMHA BC Division**

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Strongest Families BC

Helping Families Manage
Behaviour Problems

**Strongest
Families**
INSTITUTE

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