

How to Find Counseling, Psychotherapy or Mental Health Help in Toronto By: Brenda Ponc, TC FHT Lead Social Worker

Reaching out for help when you're down, overwhelmed or coping with personal troubles is hard. What is even harder is finding out that mental health services are tough to find and difficult to access. We are trying to help make it easier for you to find mental health resources - see page 7 for a list of these resources.

Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TCFHT) has three full-time social workers and one consulting psychiatrist (who works at our offices one day a week). These four individuals are here to serve our 18,000+ patients. We receive far more requests for our services than we can provide for. Therefore, we have waiting lists.

There are many mental health services that are covered by OHIP or paid for from an organizations' general budget. Most "free" mental health services are offered by social services or health care agencies specializing in different issues or populations. For example, if you or your family are struggling with cancer you could receive counseling from a social worker in the hospital where you receive treatment, or you could access a self-help organization like Canadian Cancer Society, Wellspring or Willow Cancer support network.

Doctors do not provide the majority of mental health services in Ontario. Those who do specialize in mental health and who are also OHIP funded are often hard to find.

- **Psychiatrists** typically clarify diagnosis and manage medications for patients with *major and complex mental health problems*. Few provide general psychotherapy and tend to be difficult to access.
- **GP Psychotherapists** are family doctors specializing in psychotherapy, which means that it is covered by OHIP. These family doctors have a special interest and/or training in psychotherapy.

Your current place of employment may have workplace benefits that you can access. For example, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are external companies hired by your employer to provide crisis management, individual counseling, telephone support, referrals, work/life balance services, wellness services, etc. These services usually provide individuals with 6 to 10 sessions, or a referral out for other services. They do not report back to your employer the content of what you talk about. The only information that can be reported is your attendance, in the rare case where it is mandated by a formal workplace discipline process. Spouses or children of employees are often eligible for EAP services as well. Your workplace may also offer financial reimbursement plans, which often provide coverage for psychological or social work psychotherapy services. Your plan will specify the training of the therapist you can access with this coverage. Reimbursement amount varies greatly by company, ranging from \$500-\$3000+ per year. Social work trained psychotherapists typically charge approximately \$100 per hour, psychologists typically charge about \$180 per hour.

Taddle Creek FHT wants you to access all available services first, before you ask your primary care provider for a referral to TCFHT's mental health team.

Other options:

Single session drop-in clinics may be all you need to help you talk through your problem and offer ideas about resources.

If you are in College or University, there is usually a student services counseling program that provides psychotherapy.

Some schools that train psychotherapists offer psychotherapy at reduced rates.

Your primary care provider may have some names to share with you of therapists who can help. Ask around - approach friends and family who are in therapy to see if they like their therapist and find out what it is they like about them. See if they can get a list of referrals for you from their own therapist. It is important that your therapist is a good match for you and is someone with whom you feel comfortable.

Lastly, private psychotherapy is available almost immediately and is generally offered by very experienced clinicians who have high levels of expertise. Prices range from \$100-\$200 per hour depending on the training of the therapist. There are very few sliding scale spots offered by private psychotherapists. Most people who access this therapy feel that it is money very well spent as it can make a significant impact on your mental and physical health.

Options at Taddle Creek:

TCFHT offers a variety of assistance to our patients:

- Individual psychotherapy – up to 12 sessions
- Case management – to help individuals connect and access services
- A wide variety of group programs – anxiety, depression, stress, emotional overeating, insomnia, mental health self-management, and assertiveness.
- Friday morning single session drop-in clinics (no referral required)

Individual psychotherapy is our most requested mental health service. Because of the high demand, TCFHT tries to refer to our in-house individual therapy services only if patients cannot receive these services elsewhere. *Our focus is on serving those who cannot afford to pay for private psychotherapy.* Your primary care provider will have an open discussion with you about your financial ability to pay privately for counseling, even at a sliding scale rate. *All TCFHT patients are able to access all of our group services, Friday morning single session drop-in clinics, and brief services if you are in a crisis.*