



School Psychology Putting Children First During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused sweeping changes across Alberta. Many health professionals and educators have transitioned to online services, restricting their face-to-face contact. During this time, school jurisdictions, health bodies, and other organizations have made significant cuts to maintain basic operations. Reducing essential service providers, like school psychologists, negatively impacts the psychological health and education of our children.

Impact on Our Children

Significant funding cuts have resulted in the layoff of many school psychologists at a time of increasing anxiety and uncertainty for Alberta children. Other personnel (e.g., family liaisons, behavioural support workers) provide mental health services but are not the psychological experts best trained to meet our children's complex needs. School psychologists are the most educated and skilled mental health professionals within educational organizations, often supervising and managing other allied mental health providers. Excluding school psychologists from mental health service delivery for children is akin to excluding physicians from their physical health service delivery. It is important that Albertans are aware of the diverse training and skills that can be offered by school psychologists who are regulated health professionals.

Who are School Psychologists?

School psychologists are registered psychologists regulated by Alberta's Health Professions Act. Psychologists provide psychotherapy, assessment, diagnosis, and research that promotes psychological health and wellness. They are trained in evidence-based practices and follow a code of ethics that promotes respect for dignity and fair treatment of clients. School psychologists spend 7 to 11 years of university education exploring and developing the science and evidence-based practice of psychology. They are trained as experts in the biological, cognitive, emotional, social, cultural, and environmental determinants of behaviour. Psychologists help people manage situational and chronic challenges, and never more important than in times like this.

Roles for Schools & Children

- One-on-one treatment for children's psychological health and learning needs.
- Collaboration with school teams to best serve children with complex needs.
- Consultation with educators to support inclusive environments and online learning.
- Development and evaluation of district-wide programs for educational excellence.
- Supervision and management of allied mental health professionals.
- Provision of essential professional development specific to child development.

For more information about school psychologists & the vital role they play:

PAA School Psychology Committee, Psychologists' Association of Alberta

<https://psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/about-paa/school-psychology-resources/>

National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/who-are-school-psychologists>