

Steps to Take to Advocate for Your Child

Being on a waitlist to get your child help can be a fairly unnerving and stressful time. It's great that you're on a list to see someone, but waiting for the call to come in to know when the appointment is scheduled for AND/OR waiting for an appointment that is months away is difficult.

Waiting for help is hard.

Please know this: you are not alone and although the waitlists are long, the mental health sector is working tirelessly. They are overworked and understaffed currently - they're doing the best they can.

This being said, our number one piece of advice is BE KIND.

There are a few things you can do to potentially get you in to see someone sooner and to continue to educate yourself while you wait to speak with someone:

- Make sure you're on the cancellation list. This is your number one priority.
- Phone every other day to give updates on your child and ask about any new openings. Yes - it's a lot of phoning, but it does help get your child in to see someone sooner.
- Voice your genuine concern about your child but be honest about the urgency of getting your child in to see someone ASAP. There is a difference between having a child in crisis where you are truly worried about their health and safety and a concern that your child may have been having a difficult time and may require help eventually.
- Email your mental health clinic with updates on your child so that they have those emails on file and that you have a trail of information to provide to the caregiver once you make it to your appointment.
- Ask the school counsellor to phone on your child's behalf to try to get them in sooner rather than later.
- Ask your school counsellor to forward any assessments or paperwork they have to the mental health clinic and psychiatrist you are waiting to see.

- Ask your school counsellor to write a letter of support in advocating to get your child in to see a professional sooner rather than later and send it to the mental health clinic or psychiatrist you are waiting to see.

Waitlists can be painful to be on, but you *can* advocate for your child and try to get them in sooner. Don't worry about "being a bother" - your child is important and you have the power to advocate for them.

Again, do all of the above with kindness, respect and stick-to-it-iveness.

Good luck!