

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Alberta Blue Cross® encourages parents to mind children’s mental health as students return to school

As the new school year approaches and more than 700,000 Alberta children and youth prepare to return to class, the continued uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased levels of stress and anxiety among children and parents alike.

“Socialization and school are formative for young people and the pandemic has drastically changed how they experience both,” says Brian Geislinger, Vice-President of Corporate Relations at Alberta Blue Cross. “During this time, it’s critical that we pay extra attention to our children’s mental health needs.”

The University of Calgary recently published a study that pooled together data from 29 separate studies from around the world, collectively including over 80,000 youth. Their findings show that depression and anxiety symptoms have doubled in children and adolescents compared to before the pandemic. Meanwhile, Alberta Health Services reported that almost eight times as many youth were admitted to hospitals for anxiety orders than for COVID-19.

As a parent of three school-age children, Geislinger noticed the difference the pandemic has had on his own children as they adapted to living in the era of COVID-19.

“Children are very resilient,” says Geislinger. “But, like all of us, the pandemic has brought massive change to their lives—and even as we see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, we need to be aware that many children are still deeply affected by the stress and uncertainty that have accompanied COVID-19.”

Earlier this year, Alberta Blue Cross partnered with Kickstand and the Mental Health Foundation to launch *MoreGoodDays*, a mental wellness messaging service that delivers daily advice and inspiration to young people through their phones. Youth across Alberta can text ‘MoreGoodDays’ to 393939 to receive these daily text messages for free.

In addition, Alberta Blue Cross published [mental health tips](#) for last year’s return to school, many of which are still applicable in 2021. Alberta Blue Cross offers its plan members a wide range of mental health resources through its Balance® online wellness platform, as well as access to counselling and psychology supports through many of its benefit plans.

Alberta Health Services provides a wide range of mental health resources to support Albertans through COVID-19. For more information, visit the [Alberta Health Services website](#).

The Government of Alberta also has a [COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resource Hub](#) and, last month, announced funding to expand youth mental health services hubs across the province.

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