

Why do children & families go to a mental health clinic?

Children sometimes have worries or problems that are too big to handle by themselves. Adults like parents or teachers can usually help children when they have problems. But for big problems, sometimes extra help is needed from adults with special skills who have lots of ideas about how to help children.

Going to a clinic doesn't mean a child has been naughty or bad.



What is it like to have big problems?

- You may feel angry, sad or upset a lot.
- You might feel really worried or scared about things.
- Sometimes you might cry a lot, or get into fights with friends or brothers and sisters.
- Sometimes you may feel like you are always getting into trouble at school and at home.
- You may feel you are being told off a lot.



A Guide for
Children

Mental Health
Assessment



What is a Mental Health Clinic?

The clinic is not a hospital and staff don't give injections or take blood tests. You go with your parents or caregivers for an appointment that takes about two hours. No-one stays there over night.

Who works at the clinic?

Many different kinds of people work at a mental health clinic. There are nurses and doctors, psychologists, counsellors and therapists. There is usually a children's doctor (paediatrician) there too. All these people are used to working with children, and they know about the kinds of problems children have. They also have ideas that might help adults.



What happens at the assessment?

There are questions and a lot of talking. There may be toys or things to do in the room to make it easier for you when the adults are talking.

You go along with your parents, or adult who is taking care of you. Usually two adults will meet with you and your parents or caregivers.

The staff will ask questions to find out about what is worrying for everyone. They try to get to know you and your

family. They want to hear about what is going well, and what it is like at school and at home. You don't have to answer questions, but it usually helps to talk, so people can understand what's going on.

Sometimes you and your parents have different ideas about what is going on. The staff want to hear from everyone.

After everyone has talked about the worries and problems, the staff come up with some ideas about what might be helpful.



What happens after the assessment?

You may not need to go back again. The adults might have sorted out a plan together to try out at home. Sometimes the staff will give the teacher some ideas to try at school.

Staff may ask you and your family if you would like to come back to get help. There are different ways staff can help:

- Talking may help sort out problems.
- Teaching ways to beat worries.
- Showing adults how to help at home, and at school.
- For some sorts of problems, taking medicine can help.

This series of mental health information sheets has been written for children, young people and their families/whanau. They were written by mental health professionals from around New Zealand who have particular expertise and experience in the issues described. All information has been reviewed by our editorial panel, which is comprised of clinical and cultural advisers as well as young people who have themselves faced mental health difficulties.

The information contained in this series is not intended to replace qualified medical or professional advice. For further information about a condition or the treatments mentioned, please consult your health care provider.

The Werry Centre hopes to regularly review information contained in the sheets. Any feedback would be welcome.

Other useful sites are:

For young people: www.trippin.co.nz

For carers: www.mentalhealth.org.nz

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

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