




One Stop Talk: A Digital Front Door for Youth Mental Health in Ontario

Enhancing Access to Critical Mental Health
Services Through Virtual Counselling

Mental health challenges for young people in Ontario have reached a breaking point. Recent data reveals a deeply concerning trend: **1 in 5 young people are grappling with mental health challenges**, with the situation growing more acute with each passing year.



1 in 5 young people
are dealing with
mental health
challenges

The Current Mental Health Crisis

The [statistics](#) paint a stark picture of youth well-being in Ontario. According to a recent study:

- 38% of Ontario students characterize their mental health as fair or poor
- 37% report experiencing elevated stress levels
- 51% are experiencing moderate-to-serious psychological distress, a rate that has doubled over the past decade
- 19% of students report engaging in self-harm
- 18% have contemplated suicide within the past year

Perhaps most concerning is that, despite recognizing their need for professional support, one-third of students did not seek help. This gap is the result of multiple barriers: long wait times, limited service availability, geographic challenges, and a fragmented healthcare system that leaves families uncertain about where to turn.

An Innovative Solution: One Stop Talk

In response to this urgent need, One Stop Talk/Parlons Maintenant (OST/PM) has emerged as a groundbreaking virtual counselling service that breaks down traditional barriers to mental health support for young people. Launched in November 2023, OST/PM provides an immediate, accessible pathway to care through a single-session model with registered therapists.

In just a short period, OST/PM has demonstrated remarkable impact:

- Over 3,600 counselling sessions delivered
- Proven effectiveness in reaching underserved populations
- Timely interventions that address urgent mental health needs

Powered by Think Research's Digital Front Door (DFD) solution, OST/PM represents a comprehensive, province-wide approach to mental health service delivery. By integrating seamless triage, virtual visits, eReferrals, and advanced data analytics, the platform not only improves access and reduces wait times, but fundamentally empowers youth and their families to seek support proactively.

Exploring the Path Forward

This white paper explores the current state of youth mental health in Ontario, identifies key challenges, and highlights how One Stop Talk is transforming access to mental health care for children and youth.

The Challenge: Barriers to Mental Health Access

The mental health crisis facing our young people has never been more critical. Consider these sobering facts: [70% of people](#) living with a mental illness first experience symptoms before turning 18, and suicide stands as the [second leading cause of death](#) among Canadian youth. Despite the urgent need, **only 1 in 5 children actually receive the mental health support they desperately need.**

Researchers have identified [five key barriers](#) that prevent young people from getting the help they deserve:

1. APPROACHABILITY

Refers to **how easily youth can identify and access services.**

This includes the availability of outreach, clear information, and transparency about services. Many youth **are unaware of available resources or unsure how to navigate the system.**

2. AVAILABILITY AND ACCOMMODATION

Reflects **whether services can be accessed in a timely and effective manner.** Barriers include long wait times, limited hours of operation, and physical or geographic inaccessibility.

3. AFFORDABILITY

Encompasses both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include service fees and treatment expenses, while **indirect costs may involve taking unpaid time off work, transportation, or childcare.** For many families, these financial burdens make seeking care difficult.

4. APPROPRIATENESS AND ADEQUACY

Considers the fit between the services provided and the needs of youth. This includes the **qualifications, competence, and attitudes of service providers, and their ability to effectively engage with clients.** A mismatch between needs and services often leads to dissatisfaction and disengagement.

5. ACCEPTABILITY

Involves sociocultural factors that influence how appropriate services are for diverse populations. **Cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and respect for individual and family preferences play a significant role** in whether youth feel comfortable seeking and engaging with mental health support.

70% of people living with a mental illness first experience symptoms before turning 18.

OST/PM was created to bridge these gaps by offering virtual, in-the-moment clinical counselling with a registered therapist along with seamless referral pathways to ongoing care **when necessary.** OST features registered, culturally diverse therapists to ensure youth from all backgrounds are able to, and feel comfortable accessing services.

One Stop Talk: A Scalable Digital Program

By combining technology, clinical expertise, and a patient-first approach, One Stop Talk/ Parlons Maintenant serves as an agile, province-wide solution to overcome the complex barriers to timely mental health care. As the virtual front door to child and youth mental health services and virtual counselling across Ontario, OST/ PM ensures faster, more accessible support when it's most needed.

Core Features

Streamlined Intake to Virtual Counselling

- Counsellors can use structured clinical assessments to help guide interventions. (e.g. HEADS-ED, Columbia Suicide Screener)
- Multiple connectivity options allow users to connect via phone or video call.

Continuity of Care and Navigation Support

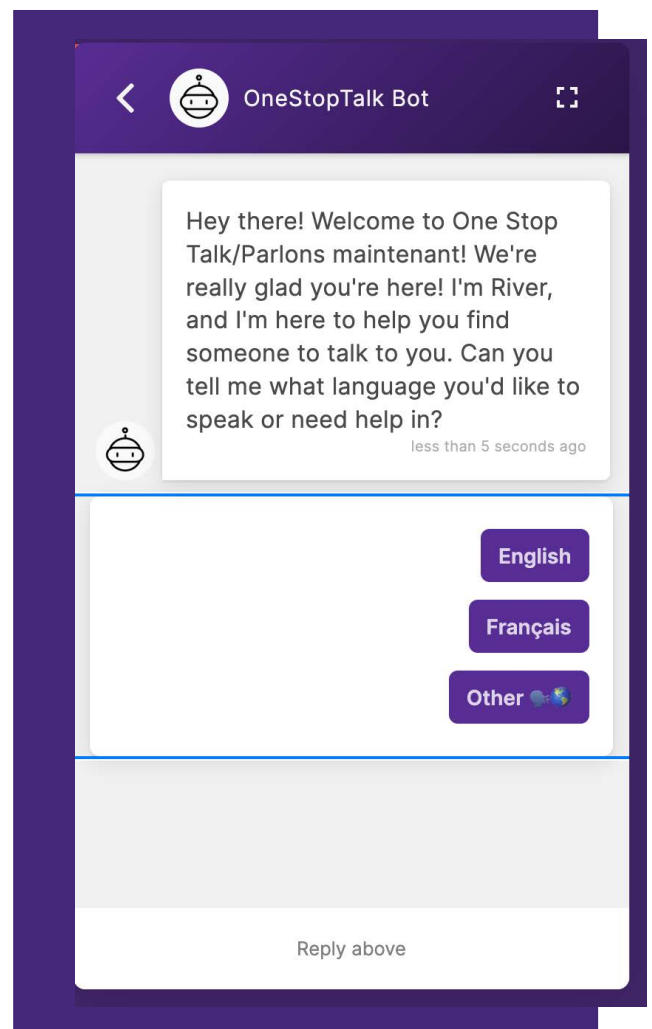
- After their counselling session, some users may be directed to seek in-person care in their community. In these cases:
 - Users will be assigned to Virtual Navigators, who help them find and receive care within their community. (important to note: this is to complement, not replace in-person care)
 - Virtual Navigators will refer to appropriate local community-based child and youth mental health agencies prior to discharging the users, ensuring continuity of care and that no child slips through the cracks. This provides an in the moment solution to people who need care but face lengthy wait times.

Interoperability with Provincial eReferrals

- OST/PM is integrated with the Provincial eReferrals program (Oceans) in Ontario, allowing seamless connection to local care options in the growing network.

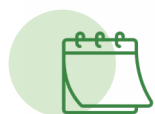
Data-Driven Decision Making

- Custom dashboards provide real-time insights into service usage and patient outcomes, and support continuous program improvements.



Impact & Outcomes

Since its launch, OST/PM has been a remarkable success.



Launched November **2023**



80+ clinicians on the platform



43,000+
connections to OST

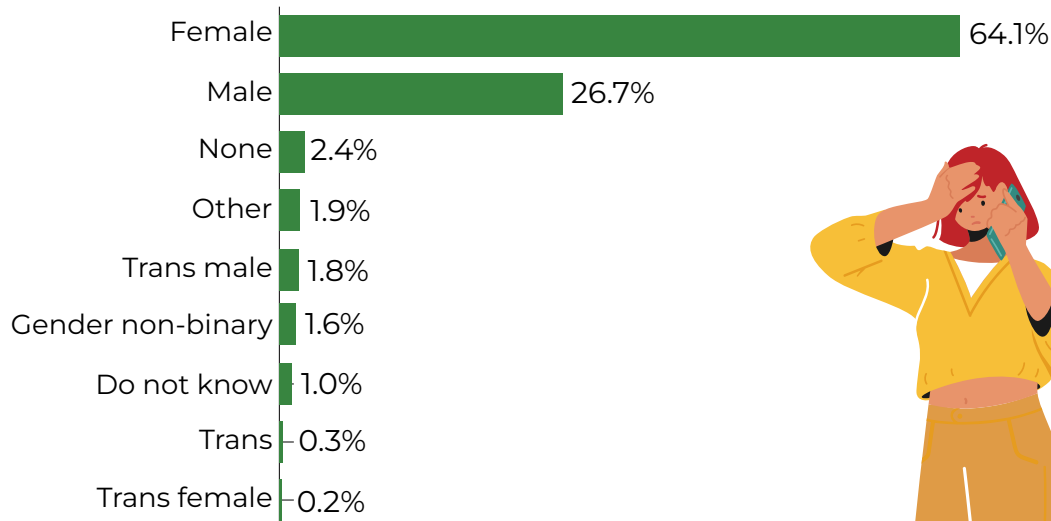


3,600+
clinical sessions
completed

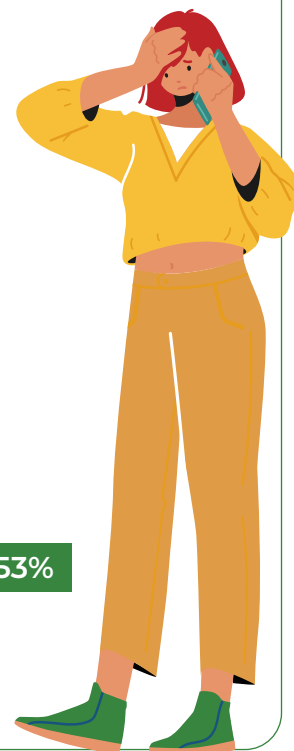
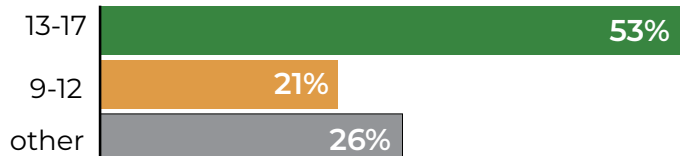


82.3%
of users had no prior
engagement with mental
health services

Clients by Gender Identity
(launch - March 31st, 2025)



Average age of users:



Satisfaction & Effectiveness



100%
agreed that
they could
carry out their
care plan



94%
of users
found the
platform
easy to use



91%
felt their
voice was
heard



90%
agreed that
the session
covered what
they wanted
to talk about



87%
felt their
concerns
were
addressed
during the
session



37%
reported
having
nowhere else
to turn before
accessing
OST/PM



5%
would have
gone to an
emergency
room without
OST/PM
intervention

Impact & Outcomes*

Client Stories

I was a little nervous and shy trying One Stop Talk for the first time, but I called in twice and spoke to really cool counsellors. They listened to me and even though my Mom has been amazing helping me deal with some self-esteem problems, she's my Mom after all and will always say what I need to hear, but it was really helpful hearing advice and tools from professionals. **It was also great being able to get to talk to someone right away! I found the tools that gave me very helpful and will tell my friends to call if they needed help too!**

- Tanna, 10

Clinician Stories

I have appreciated working provincially; my experience has been that immigrant families are the primary users of the service.

OST/PM has allowed me to have more flexibility with my schedule, allowing for time to pursue a higher education and room for specialized trainings.

It has made me more tech-savvy as a clinician entering the virtual world. We are seeing increased access to virtual platforms to meet the needs of our clients.

**all client information has been anonymized to protect privacy*

One Stop Talk: Example Patient Experience

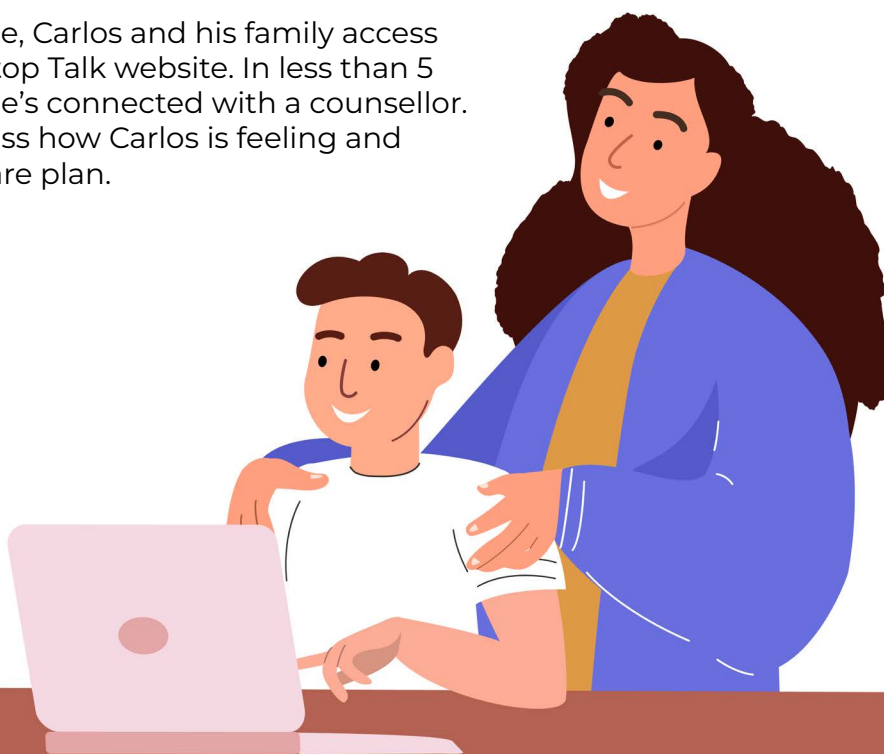


Carlos is a 16-year-old boy who has been struggling with sadness, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, changes in sleep patterns, social withdrawal, decline in academic performance over the past several months. Carlos's parents brought him to his primary care provider for his annual check-up.



Carlos discusses his symptoms with his primary care provider, who suggests One Stop Talk.

Once home, Carlos and his family access the One Stop Talk website. In less than 5 minutes, he's connected with a counsellor. They discuss how Carlos is feeling and create a care plan.



Before the session ends, Carlos is connected to a One Stop Talk navigator, who sends a referral to the appropriate mental health resources available in Carlos' community.

Carlos is reminded that he can access One Stop Talk if he feels he needs to talk again while he is waiting to see his new, in-person therapist.

Advancing a Fully Integrated Digital Ecosystem and Alignment with Ontario Health's Quintuple Aim

The One Stop Talk/Parlons Maintenant program is driving toward a future where mental health services are delivered seamlessly through an integrated digital ecosystem.

By leveraging Ontario's existing digital health infrastructure, such as the Ontario eServices Program and other regional mental health initiatives, OST/PM is part of a connected system that ensures timely, coordinated, and effective mental health support across the province.

OST/PM supports [Ontario Health's Quintuple Aim](#) of building a world-class healthcare system through:



Enhancing patient experience

... by helping children and youth get access to a registered counsellor in minutes.

Improving population health

... by supporting mental health and wellbeing challenges before they become a crisis or emergency.

Improving provider experience

... by maximizing the potential of registered counsellors regardless of their location, to help them support children and youth across the province.

Improving value

... by offering the opportunity for children and youth to try counselling, a proven, effective, and less costly alternative to other treatments.

Advancing health equity

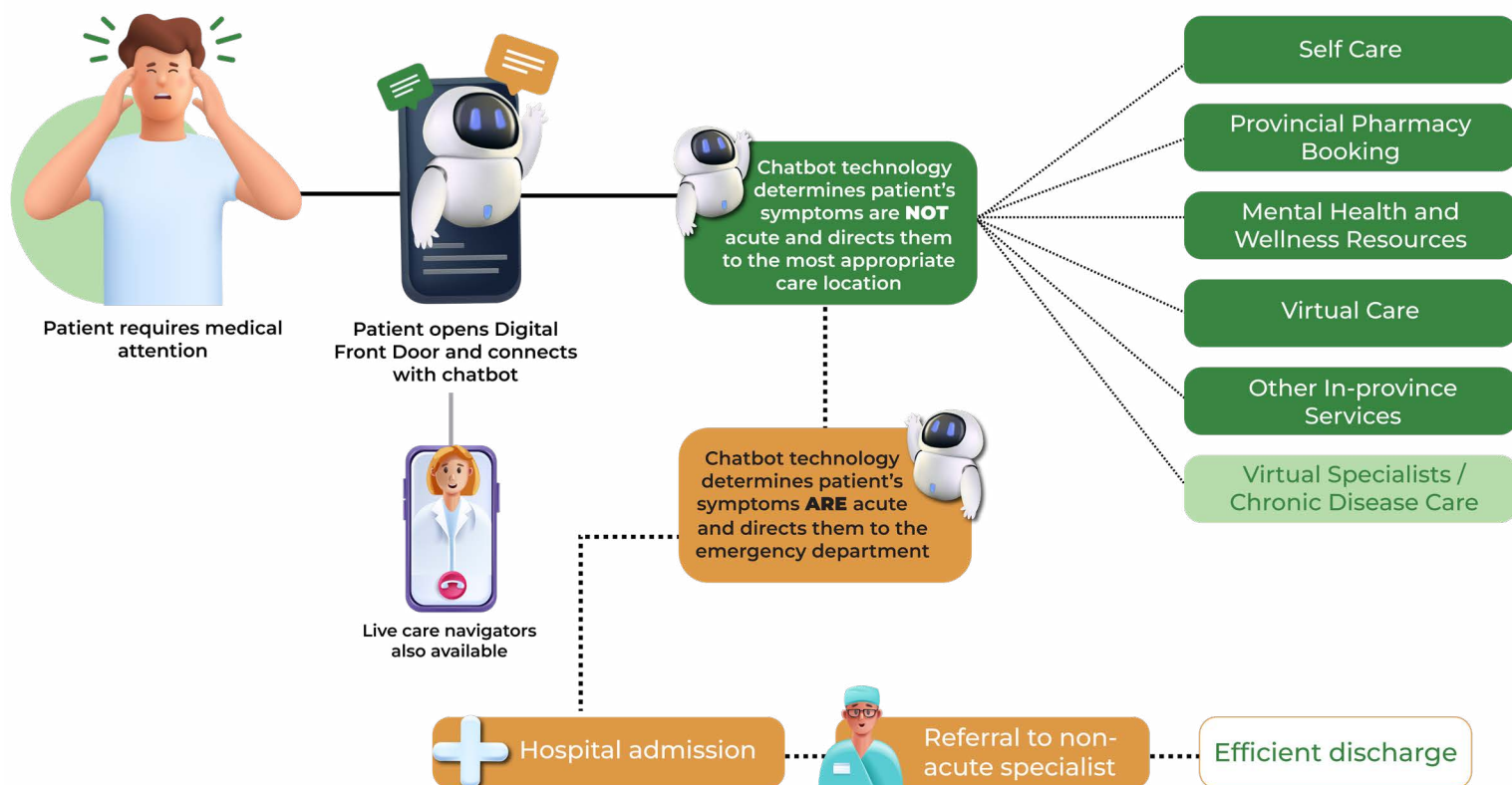
... by reducing barriers to accessing registered counsellors in all regions of Ontario.

A Digital Front Door to Care

One Stop Talk is built on Think Research's [Digital Front Door \(DFD\) platform](#), a comprehensive digital access point for health services. The Digital Front Door connects patients to information and healthcare resources in their community, and directs them to the appropriate level of care much faster.

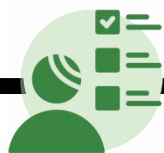
Key benefits of DFD include:

Automated Patient Routing and AI Technology: Intelligent triage directs users down appropriate pathways based on their needs, allowing them to interact using natural language. The illustration below shows a typical patient journey through DFD.



SMS Integration:

Reduces barrier to entry by allowing users to access the DFD through a simple text message.



Intelligent Queueing System and Role Configuration:

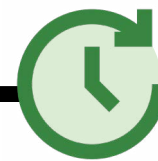
Flexible system allows for a nearly endless combination of roles within the smart queueing and triage system.

Examples in use include non-clinical admins, care navigators, registered counsellors, nursing (registered nurse and nurse practitioners), family doctors, and specialists.



Scalability & Sustainability:

Cloud-based infrastructure supports expansion without increasing operational complexity.



24/7 Availability:

Ensures users can access information about the service at any time, without the need to speak with someone.

Technology Architecture & Security



The DFD aligns with security and privacy standards that are critical in digital healthcare delivery, including:

- **Compliance with PHIPA and PIPEDA** to protect patient data.
- **Secure video conferencing** with encrypted connections.
- **Multi-factor authentication (MFA)** to ensure secure access for clinicians and staff.
- **Integration with Clinical Information Systems**, allows seamless data exchange with agencies that support continuity of care for users.

Conclusion: Transforming Access to Youth Mental Health Care with Virtual Solutions

The mental health crisis among Ontario's youth demands immediate, innovative action. With rising rates of psychological distress, long wait times, and significant barriers to care, too many young people are left without the support they need.

One Stop Talk/Parlons Maintenant is breaking down these barriers by providing timely, accessible, and coordinated virtual counselling services. As a scalable, technology-driven solution, OST/PM ensures that youth can connect with registered therapists in real time, receive immediate support, and access seamless pathways to further care when needed.

Powered by Think Research's Digital Front Door, OST/PM integrates cutting-edge technology, data-driven decision-making, and a patient-first approach to streamline access, improve outcomes, and enhance service delivery across Ontario. With ongoing enhancements and strategic integration into provincial health initiatives, OST/PM is well-positioned to expand its reach and impact, ensuring that more young people receive the mental health support they need.

Through continued collaboration with the Lead Agency Consortium*, the Ministry of Health, and Ontario Health, OST/PM is setting a new standard for virtual mental health services, demonstrating how digital innovation can revolutionize access to care across Ontario. By leveraging technology and collaboration, we can close the care gap and ensure that every young person in Ontario gets the help they need, when and where they need it most.



Learn more. Discover how our Digital Front Door technology can help connect patients in your area to the care they need, when and where they need it.

[Contact us today for a demo.](#)



*The Child and Youth Mental Health Lead Agency Consortium, representing the lead agencies from 33 service areas across Ontario, is committed to the goal of continually improving child and youth mental health services in Ontario so children and youth and their families receive the right services for their unique needs at the right time and in the right place.