

What to Expect from Child Therapy

A Guide for Parents & Caregivers

Child therapy provides children with a private and supportive space to express themselves, build skills, and work toward goals in a developmentally appropriate way. Parents and caregivers also play an important role by sharing information, supporting strategies at home, and participating in planned communication with the therapist.

The process below describes the approach our therapists typically use. The timing, format, and level of parent or caregiver involvement may be adjusted based on the child's age, needs, treatment goals, consent requirements, and family circumstances.

Child Therapy and Parent/Caregiver Involvement

Child therapy sessions are focused on the child. A parent or caregiver may be asked to attend part of a session when the therapist determines that their involvement would support comfort, assessment, case planning, or treatment. Parent or caregiver participation in a child session is therefore based on the therapist's clinical discretion and is not a routine part of every appointment.

Separate Parent/Caregiver Consultation Sessions are the primary communication points for parents and caregivers to ask questions, receive general progress updates, share observations, and provide additional information while respecting the child's privacy.

The Therapy Process

1. Parent/Guardian Information Questionnaire

Before the initial child therapy session, a parent or guardian is asked to complete the Parent/Guardian Information Questionnaire. The questionnaire can be completed before the appointment and provides the therapist with foundational information to support preparation and case planning.

The questionnaire takes approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. Brief answers are sufficient, and parents or guardians may leave a question blank or indicate that they would prefer to discuss it with the therapist.

The questionnaire gathers information about:

- the child's strengths, interests, supports, and reasons for seeking counselling
- concerns and functioning at home, school, with peers, and in the community
- family and life circumstances that may be affecting the child
- developmental, medical, mental-health, service, school, and social history
- current safety and well-being concerns
- counselling goals and strategies that may help the child feel comfortable
- household, guardianship, consent, and decision-making arrangements

The therapist reviews the questionnaire before or during the early stages of therapy. If information is missing or clarification is needed, the therapist may ask the parent or guardian who attends with the child to join part of the initial session or may arrange another appropriate follow-up.

2. Initial Child Therapy Session

The initial appointment is a standard therapy session with the child. The therapist may ask the parent or guardian who arrived with the child to attend part of the session. This may help the child become comfortable, support case planning, or allow the therapist to ask follow-up questions about the questionnaire or the concerns that led to counselling.

This initial session provides an opportunity to:

- Introduce the child to the therapist and therapy space
- Help the child feel comfortable
- Review what the child can expect
- Clarify the purpose of therapy in age-appropriate language

3. Subsequent Child Therapy Sessions

Following the initial appointment, the therapist will generally complete two additional sessions with the child before arranging the first Parent/Caregiver Consultation Session. These sessions are usually held individually with the child, although the therapist may ask a parent or caregiver to join part of a session when clinically helpful and appropriate.

Child therapy sessions may focus on:

- building trust and comfort with the therapist
- understanding the child's feelings, experiences, strengths, and concerns
- identifying treatment goals
- teaching emotional regulation, communication, coping, or problem-solving skills
- using conversation, creative activities, games, play, or other age-appropriate approaches

4. Parent/Caregiver Consultation Sessions

After approximately three child therapy sessions, the therapist will generally schedule a 30-minute virtual Parent/Caregiver Consultation Session by phone or video. These appointments are planned communication points between the therapist and the child's parent or caregiver.

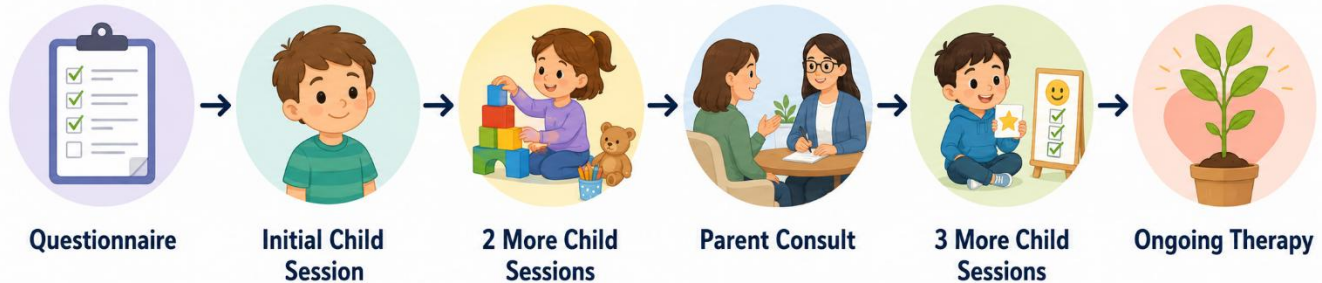
During a Parent/Caregiver Consultation Session, parents or caregivers may:

- ask questions about the therapy process or how to support the child
- receive a general update on progress, treatment goals, and skills being introduced
- share updates, changes, or concerns from home, school, or other settings
- describe additional behaviours, patterns, strengths, or challenges they have noticed
- discuss strategies that can be practised or reinforced outside therapy
- review the general focus and direction of future sessions

Parent/Caregiver Consultation Sessions support communication and collaboration while maintaining the child's privacy. The therapist will not ordinarily provide a detailed account of everything discussed during the child's individual sessions.

5. Continuing Therapy

Following the first Parent/Caregiver Consultation Session, the therapist will generally meet with the child for approximately three additional sessions before scheduling another 30-minute virtual parent or caregiver consultation.



This cycle may continue for as long as therapy remains helpful. The therapist may recommend a different schedule based on the child's age, needs, progress, treatment plan, privacy considerations, or current circumstances.

Additional Considerations When Accessing Child Therapy

Remaining at the Clinic During Child Sessions

For all in-person child therapy sessions, the **parent or guardian who brings the child is required to remain at the clinic for the full appointment**. The adult on site must remain available if the therapist needs their involvement and will receive relevant scheduling and follow-up communication at the end of the appointment.

Therapy for Youth Ages 13 and Older

For children aged 12 and under, parent or caregiver participation in the intake process is generally part of the regular approach to therapy.

For youth aged 13 and older, parent or caregiver participation is still encouraged when appropriate. Family support can help the therapist understand the youth's history and create consistency between therapy and home.

The therapist will also consider the youth's age, preferences, independence, and individual circumstances. When a parent intake session does not take place, the therapist may still request that a parent or caregiver complete the detailed intake and screening form. The therapist may also discuss alternative arrangements with the family when a youth or parent is uncomfortable participating in the usual intake process.

When Parents or Guardians Are Separated

The parent or guardian arranging counselling should complete the Parent/Guardian Information Questionnaire and provide accurate information about guardianship, parenting, custody, and decision-making arrangements. If another parent or guardian would also like to provide information, the therapist may consider additional or separate communication arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

Parent/Caregiver Consultation Sessions may be arranged jointly or separately where appropriate, depending on the child's needs, the parents' ability to participate together, legal decision-making requirements, and the therapist's clinical judgment.

Parenting Orders and Shared Decision-Making

When a parenting order, separation agreement, or other legal arrangement addresses healthcare or counselling decision-making, the practice requires a copy of the relevant section or pages that identify who has authority to make those decisions. Full legal documents are not required.

Parents and guardians are responsible for advising the practice of applicable arrangements and providing updated documentation if those arrangements change. If decision-making authority is unclear or disputed, the practice may request clarification before services begin or continue.

Your Child's Privacy

A trusting relationship between the child and therapist is an important part of therapy. Parent consultations therefore focus on the child's overall progress, treatment goals, skills being developed, and ways the family can provide support.

The therapist will not ordinarily provide a detailed account of everything the child discusses during individual sessions. The therapist will explain confidentiality, its limits, and how information will be shared at the beginning of the therapy process.

Creating a Collaborative and Safe Environment

Children often benefit most when therapists, parents, caregivers, and other important supports work together.

Parents and caregivers can support the therapy process by:

- completing the questionnaire as thoroughly as possible before the initial session
- sharing relevant changes, concerns, or information with the therapist
- remaining at the clinic during all in-person child sessions
- attending scheduled Parent/Caregiver Consultation Sessions
- practising or reinforcing recommended strategies at home
- giving the child time and encouragement to develop new skills
- asking questions when they are uncertain about the process

Therapy is individualized, and progress may look different for every child. The therapist will work with the child and family to create an approach that supports the child's needs while encouraging safety, trust, privacy, and healthy development.

At Your Counselling Ltd, we are here to support you every step of the way. If you'd like to know more about the child therapy process or have administrative questions, contact us at info@yourcounselling.ca or 1-833-989-7561.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will I attend my child's therapy sessions?

Child therapy sessions are focused on the child. A parent or caregiver may join part of a session when the therapist determines that it would support comfort, assessment, case planning, or treatment. Parent or caregiver participation is not automatic and is based on the therapist's clinical discretion.

Can I leave the clinic while my child is in session?

No. The parent or guardian who brings the child must remain at the clinic for the full appointment and be available if the therapist requires their involvement. Child therapy appointments are not a drop-off service.

What is a Parent/Caregiver Consultation Session?

It is a separate 30-minute virtual appointment by phone or video. It gives parents and caregivers an opportunity to ask questions, share updates and observations, receive general progress information, and discuss ways to support the child outside therapy.

How often are parent or caregiver consultations scheduled?

The usual structure is an initial child session, two additional child sessions, and then a parent or caregiver consultation. Therapy will generally continue in cycles of approximately three child sessions followed by a consultation, although the therapist may adjust this schedule.

What information will the therapist share with me?

The therapist may discuss general progress, treatment goals, skills or strategies being introduced, recommendations, and ways to support the child. To protect the child's therapeutic privacy, the therapist will not ordinarily provide a detailed account of everything discussed in individual sessions.

How can I provide updates or new information to the therapist?

Parent/Caregiver Consultation Sessions are the primary opportunity to provide updates and ask questions. Important information that may affect an upcoming session can also be shared with the practice so it can be directed appropriately. Routine forms and messages should not be used for urgent concerns.

What happens if the questionnaire is not completed before the first appointment?

Completing the questionnaire before the initial session is encouraged because it helps the therapist prepare. If it is incomplete or the therapist has follow-up questions, the parent or guardian on site may be asked to complete the form during the initial session.

What if the child's parents or guardians are separated or share decision-making?

Please provide accurate information about guardianship and decision-making. The practice requires the relevant section or pages of any parenting order or separation agreement that addresses healthcare or counselling decisions; the full document is not required. Communication and consultation arrangements will be considered case by case.

How does the process differ for youth ages 13 and older?

Parent or caregiver involvement is still encouraged when appropriate, and the questionnaire remains helpful. The therapist will also consider the youth's age, preferences, independence, consent, privacy, and individual circumstances when deciding how parents or caregivers will participate.