

Report reveals significant gaps in access to pediatric mental health care

For Immediate Release

June 24, 2026

Edmonton, AB — Nearly half of Alberta children who need mental health support aren't getting it, according to the *State of Health Care – 2026 Report* from the Alberta Medical Association.

The report finds mental health concerns among children are widespread and growing, with 40% of parents reporting that at least one child in their household has a mental health or developmental condition. Yet among families who have identified a need, only 42% report their child is currently receiving support.

That gap has consequences. Evidence shows that mental health challenges are easier to manage when addressed early, especially during critical developmental periods.

"The needs of children cannot wait," says AMA President Dr. Brian Wirzba. "Early access to mental health care is critical to long-term outcomes, yet too many children go without it, and often during the very stages when intervention matters most. Families are doing everything they can to get help and still come up short."

Alberta families are clear about what their children need: faster access to assessments, shorter waits for therapy and referrals and better coordination across the providers involved in their care.

But across key measures, parents describe a fragmented system that is difficult to access and even harder to navigate. Timely access to specialist appointments, ease of navigation and coordination between providers are consistently rated poorly.

As in other areas of the health system, the issue is not the quality of care itself, but access to it. Families point to long wait times for assessments, therapy and specialist referrals, along with limited availability of providers and affordability challenges when public services are unavailable.

The report also identifies structural gaps driving these barriers, including poor coordination between health, education and community systems, as well as a shortage of accessible, community-based mental health services.

About the State of Health Care Report

The *State of Health Care – 2026 Report* is produced by the Alberta Medical Association in partnership with ThinkHQ Public Affairs. It provides an annual, evidence-based assessment of patient experiences, system performance and emerging challenges in Alberta's health care system.

The 2026 report is based on an online survey of 1,100 adult Albertans conducted between May 12 and May 19, 2026, along with qualitative insights from the AMA's [PatientsFirst.ca](#) community. The full report will be available on the [AMA website](#) on June 25, 2026

The Alberta Medical Association represents more than 15,000 physicians, residents and medical students in the province. The AMA advances high-quality, patient-centred care by supporting physicians and working collaboratively to strengthen the health care system for all Albertans.

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