

NEWS RELEASE

CASA Mental Health

More northern Alberta children can access mental health care in school

Additional CASA Mental Health Classroom in High Level brings mental health services right to where kids live and learn.

Feb. 19, 2026

High Level, Alta. - A new CASA Mental Health Classroom is now open in High Level Public School, bringing the total number of CASA Classrooms operating in northern Alberta to five. This means up to 120 northern Alberta children can access mental health care right within their school each year.

The program serves children and teens in Grades 4 to 12 with mental health challenges. The High Level classroom serves patients in Grades 5 to 9. These patients have not responded as expected to previous therapy, and experience symptoms that impact their home, social and school lives.

CASA Mental Health Classrooms are CASA Mental Health's model of school-based mental health service, in partnership with the Government of Alberta Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, Ministry of Education and Alberta K-12 school divisions.

Twenty-eight CASA Classrooms in 21 Alberta communities now serve hundreds of kids and their families. Each CASA Classroom provides up to 24 children and youth with much-needed therapeutic and medical mental health services each year.

"The establishment of a CASA Classroom is an important step forward for the Fort Vermilion School Division and the students and families we serve. Through our partnership with CASA, we are expanding access to timely, specialized mental health supports within our communities, ensuring students with complex learning needs can learn, grow and succeed closer to home."

-Mike McMann, Superintendent, Fort Vermilion School Division / President, College of Alberta School Superintendents

"Supporting student success means recognizing and responding to the whole child, not just their academic needs. The opening of a CASA Classroom strengthens the connection between learning and well-being, particularly in the rural north where families often face barriers to accessing professional supports. This partnership with CASA helps reduce those barriers by bringing essential services closer to home and creating conditions where students feel supported, connected and able to thrive."

-Leah Martens, Supervisor of Learning Services - Connectivity, Fort Vermilion School Division

CASA Classrooms address the need for services closer to families by bridging a child's mental health and school needs, through a coordinated approach by a CASA Mental Health team and a teacher. By providing mental health services directly in the school, caregivers do not need to schedule appointments or take time off work. Families receive the support they need in a location already built into their lives.

"Patients receive individual and group therapy, medical care and school programming all right within the classroom. But programming doesn't stop there. We also help families to better support their children at home by offering them mental health education and connections to community supports. We're also ensuring schools receive the tools they need to support students to thrive - not only the students returning from CASA Classrooms, but all students who walk through their doors."

-Lori Roe, Clinical Director - CASA Mental Health Classrooms



NEWS RELEASE

CASA Mental Health

In the 2024-25 CASA Classrooms school year, 100 per cent of caregivers surveyed agreed the CASA Classrooms program improved their child's mental health, and 90 per cent of patients surveyed agreed the program has improved their mental health. Patients consistently see improvements in emotional symptoms like depression and anxiety, over-activity, scholastic and language skills, and school attendance. Seventy-four per cent of patients saw a reduction in self-injury.

"CASA Classrooms was like a reset. It gave us room to breathe, and ultimately gave us our child back. Our daughter suffered greatly from anxiety, causing her to miss school and took a toll on her confidence. The CASA Classrooms staff helped her discover her real self again. Since CASA Classrooms, she has made honour roll, re-joined competitive cheerleading and has even been helping her friends advocate for their mental health. The learning curve was hard work, but it was worth it. I would encourage any family who struggled like ours did to seek help from CASA Mental Health if you have the opportunity."

-Brittany Sweeney, CASA Classrooms parent

"I am excited to see more children and families now able to access CASA Mental Health Classrooms. CASA Mental Health has re-envisioned children's mental health services in Alberta to address the higher level of need, the number of kids and families requiring services and our commitment to bring services to where kids already are. School-based supports decrease the need for treatment in hospitals by providing earlier services where children and teens learn, grow and thrive."

-Bonnie Blakley, CEO, CASA Mental Health

"Every young person deserves the opportunity to live their best life, and that includes access to mental health supports while in school. With classrooms experiencing greater complex needs, CASA Mental Health Classrooms are one of the solutions making a real difference."

-Rick Wilson, Minister of Mental Health and Addiction

Founded in 1989 by families for families, CASA Mental Health is an accredited health-care provider and independent non-profit organization that combines medical and therapeutic treatment of mental illness for three- to 18-year-olds and their families. Our programs range from individual and group therapy to day programs to psychiatric live-in facilities, all at no cost to families as part of the public health system. CASA provides mental health service to the missing middle - mental health treatment for diagnosed children and youth, in between prevention and promotion in primary and community care, and acute treatment in hospital. Please visit casamentalhealth.org to learn more about CASA Mental Health and how we're expanding mental health care services across Alberta.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact:

- Anna York, Communications Specialist, CASA Mental Health
587-985-3885 (cell) or ayork@casaservices.org
- Heather Massel, Manager, Communications, CASA Mental Health
780-499-1257 (cell) or hmassel@casaservices.org

-30-



NEWS RELEASE

CASA Mental Health

Quick Facts

- Three new CASA Classrooms opened in February 2026:
 - High Level: High Level Public School (Grades 5-9)
 - Red Deer: St. John Paul II Outreach School (Grades 8-12)
 - Redcliff: Redcliff Alternative Outreach School (Grades 6-9)
- Seven CASA Classrooms opened in September 2025:
 - Strathmore: Brentwood Elementary School (Grades 4-6)
 - Taber: Central Elementary School (Grades 4-6)
 - Slave Lake: E.G. Wahlstrom School (Grades 4-6)
 - Stony Plain: High Park School (Grades 4-6)
 - Coaldale: R.I. Baker Middle School (Grades 5-8)
 - Grande Prairie: I.V. Macklin Public School (Grades 5-8)
 - Lacombe: École Lacombe Junior High School (Grades 7-9)
- For a complete list of CASA Classroom locations across the province, visit casamentalhealth.org/classrooms.
- Children and teens are better equipped to meet academic goals with the foundations provided by mental health support and care, which include better emotional regulation and increased attendance. Since January 2023, CASA Mental Health data shows that 52 per cent of children in Grades 4 to 9 achieved at least one full grade level improvement in numeracy, 39 per cent achieved improvement in reading and 33 per cent achieved improvement in writing.
- High school patients have also achieved academic progress through course completion in CASA Classrooms. CASA Mental Health data shows that 41 per cent of high school patients completed all courses in the five-month program, and 33 per cent of patients completed at least one course.
- A CASA Classroom looks just like a regular classroom, but with a few modifications to support healing – smaller class size, sensory items, calming spaces to decompress and private space for therapy. Each CASA Classroom supports up to 12 patients at a time, so every patient has one-on-one time with the mental health team and teacher.
- Families can refer to CASA Classrooms with the support of their child's school. Contact CASA Mental Health for more in-depth referral information at casamentalhealth.org/casa-classrooms.

