

SmartStart Hubs

Q&A for Families and Caregivers

What is a SmartStart Hub?

Ontario's Children's Treatment Centres are taking on a new service called SmartStart Hubs. The John McGivney Children's Centre is one of 22 Children's Treatment Centres. As SmartStart Hubs, these Children's Treatment Centres will be a clear point of entry to services for children and families. Each Hub will bring together local child development professionals, giving families that have a concern about their child's development seamless connections to assessments and services.

How does it work?

Anyone with a concern about their child's development—whether their child is meeting developmental milestones—can contact a SmartStart Hub to start the process of assessment. No diagnosis or referral is required. You might call it a one-stop shop for getting help.

What will the SmartStart Hub do for my child? For my family?

Think of the SmartStart Hub as the front door to child development services. You'll be warmly greeted, and you'll have a conversation with a professional about your concerns, your child's development and strengths, and any supports that might be needed. The SmartStart Hub will be able to offer services and programs for your family and your child. Depending on what is recommended, the SmartStart Hub might also connect you with another provider in your area that can provide services. You won't need to tell your story again because the SmartStart Hubs works directly with partner agencies in your community.

What kind of services can the SmartStart Hub organize for my child and my family?

SmartStart Hubs will connect you to assessments and services including speech and language pathology, occupational therapy, and physical therapy as well as mental health services, specialty clinics, and family-based supports like respite services and parent coaching.

How are SmartStart Hubs connected with other service providers?

Every community in the province will have a SmartStart Hub. These providers bring together local professionals to ensure the range of child development services are connected. That means families have one place to go to access the range of services and supports that will help their child reach development goals. Families no longer need to make connections on their own—the SmartStart Hub can do this for them.

Does my child need a referral to go to a SmartStart Hub?

No referral or diagnosis is necessary. If you have concerns about your child's development for any reason, you can go directly to the SmartStart Hub that serves your community. You can also access the SmartStart Hub through another service provider in your community, your child's doctor, your child care provider or your child's school.

If I already have a referral, do I use the SmartStartHub?

If you have a referral, you might not need the SmartStart Hub. It is primarily a place where families can go when they have questions about their child's development and need a place to connect for advice and potentially for services.

Does my child need a diagnosis to get service at a SmartStart Hub?

Your child does not need a diagnosis to access services through the SmartStart Hub.

Do SmartStart Hubs do more than meet our family and assess our child?

Yes, agencies that are SmartStart Hubs offer child development services like physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech language therapy – such as the John McGivney Children's Centre. Some offer other services like behavioral therapy, or specialty clinics. If your child needs clinical services that aren't offered by the SmartStart Hub, or your family can benefit from programs offered by other agencies, the SmartStart Hub will connect you with partner agencies in your area for services.

What happens if my child needs services that the SmartStart Hub doesn't offer?

The SmartStart Hub will connect you with a partner agency that can provide the services your child and family need. The SmartStart Hub is your door to a range of child development services.

What does it cost to use the services of a SmartStart Hub?

There is no cost. In Ontario children and youth up to age 19 and up to age 21 for youth in school can access a SmartStart Hub as well as all publicly funded child development services, for example services for kids with physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, or communication disorders.

When will SmartStart Hubs services be available?

All 22 SmartStart Hubs will be set up and delivering services to families by January 2023.

Do I have to go to a SmartStart Hub in person, or can we arrange for a virtual appointment?

Many SmartStart Hubs services, including exploratory conversations, may be accessible by phone or video chat for families who cannot easily visit in person.

Do I have to go to a SmartStart Hub to arrange services for my child?

Not at all. SmartStart Hubs are intended for families who aren't sure where to go to access services, or what services they should receive. If you know your child's support needs and where to go to access a particular service, you can contact that service provider directly.

What are the benefits of going to a SmartStart Hub?

The SmartStart Hub gives you and your family a clear point of entry to a wide range of children's services. You'll receive a warm welcome, and you will only need to discuss your concerns about your child's development one time. The Hub will connect you to local professionals for assessments and child development services—in some cases these may be provided by the SmartStart Hub organization itself. SmartStart Hubs are a clear point of entry to Ontario's child development services.