



For Families

Frequently Asked Questions



What's Cartwheel?

Cartwheel is a mental health provider. Our mission is to be a trusted partner to schools, students, and families. We serve over 200 school districts and charter schools across the country by providing students and families with rapid access to care with licensed clinicians. All services are via telehealth.

How can I get connected to Cartwheel?

Parents, guardians, and students (if they're of legal age) can fill out a form at www.cartwheel.org/families to request mental health support from Cartwheel.

A second option is for a school counselor or social worker to refer a student to Cartwheel. They can do this by getting parental consent and then filling out a form themselves on Cartwheel's online portal.

Who can request Cartwheel services?

You can submit an interest form at www.cartwheel.org/families if you're a parent, legal guardian, or student who can legally consent to care in their state of residence.

In most schools, counselors and social workers make referrals to Cartwheel. Other school staff, such as teachers, should speak to a school counselor if they believe a student could benefit from Cartwheel.

How is my information protected? Who can see the information I submit?

Cartwheel takes your privacy and the security of the information you share with us very seriously. Cartwheel complies with laws that protect patients' health information and the privacy of students' education records, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

If you request more information about Cartwheel, we'll let your school know since your school is involved in the referral process. Once the school makes a referral, we'll reach out to you directly to set up the first session. At that point, you can decide whether or not you want Cartwheel to share information with your school about your student's progress in care. If you want a greater level of privacy, you can decline to provide this consent and we will absolutely still provide services without sharing any ongoing information with the school.

What happens after I submit an interest form?

1. We'll let the school know you're interested in Cartwheel's services.
2. Your school team will review your request and either make a referral to Cartwheel or reach out to you to discuss next steps.
3. If a referral is made, a care coordinator from Cartwheel will reach out to you via text message to get started. You'll also be able to call or email us if you prefer that to texting.

How do I know if my child might need mental health support?

Mental health challenges often start small but can grow into more serious issues.

If you notice any of the below with your child, you might want to consider mental health support:

- Changes in mood or behavior
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Declining academic performance
- Withdrawal from friends or activities
- Increased anxiety or stress
- Expressing feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- Experiencing transition (related to life, family, peers, school)
- Exposure to a traumatic event

Please note that Cartwheel does not provide treatment for urgent or emergency care, severe developmental/intellectual disabilities, or primary eating disorders or substance use disorders.

What types of support are available through Cartwheel?

All services are via telehealth:

- One-on-one evidence-based therapy (students in grades 3-12)
- Parent guidance sessions for parents/caregivers (students in all grades)
- Psychiatric evaluation and medication management (students in all grades)
- Family therapy
- Intensive outpatient and partial hospitalization services through our partner organizations

Cartwheel also offers care coordination, webinars, and referrals to other providers if needed.

Does Cartwheel offer in-person therapy?

No, all of Cartwheel's appointments are via telehealth. Cartwheel's telehealth sessions are with licensed clinicians, conducted over Zoom, and can easily be joined via laptop, tablet, or smartphone.

Virtual therapy can be a fantastic, high-quality option for many families. We recognize virtual therapy is not right for everyone, so if a family in care with Cartwheel determines that virtual therapy is not the right fit, our care coordinators work with them to identify in-person options.

Offering mental health care via telehealth helps make it easier to access high-quality care. Telehealth helps save families time and money by eliminating the need to travel. Virtual therapy is easier to attend, and multiple research studies have shown that virtual therapy and in-person therapy are equally effective (Johns Hopkins, 2022; Frontiers in Public Health, 2023).

What do kids do in therapy?

Kids and teens in grades 3-12 can have one-on-one sessions with a licensed therapist to learn how to recognize and understand their emotions, develop practical coping skills, and build resilience to handle life's challenges. Their therapist will help the student set goals for what they want to work on during therapy. The therapist might use games, art, or talking to help kids express themselves, learn about emotions, and practice new skills. Some skills commonly learned in therapy include: understanding and managing emotions, stress and anxiety-management, and communication skills, for example.

What is Parent Guidance with Cartwheel?

Parent Guidance sessions are one-on-one sessions for you as a parent/guardian to meet with a licensed therapist to receive personalized guidance on how to best support your child's mental

health and well-being. These 30-minute virtual sessions occur weekly or every other week for an average of 2-6 months. Both the parent and child need to attend the first session. Follow-up sessions are for just the parent/guardian.

What happens in the first Cartwheel appointment?

The first session with your Cartwheel therapist is called an “intake appointment”.

1. **Before Your Intake Session:** Please complete your initial paperwork. It is important that you do this before your first session so that it goes as smoothly as possible!
2. **First Session Overview:** In the first 1 hour session, your therapist will discuss goals, plan care, and gather important personal history. We'll also discuss what schedule works best for you and your family for future sessions.
3. **Who Must Attend:** Both the student and a parent/guardian must join the first session. If the student is a legal adult, they can do the session by themselves or invite their parent/ guardian to join if they would like them to be there.
4. **Check-In Surveys Before Sessions:** If the student is age 12+ and in individual therapy, they and their parent/guardian will get a quick survey before each session with questions about their mood, sleep, and energy level. These surveys help their therapist understand how they're doing and inform the therapy process.

How long does care with Cartwheel typically last?

Most students are in care with Cartwheel between 2-6 months, depending on their treatment goals and symptom severity. If it's clinically appropriate, it is possible to stay in care for longer than 6 months with Cartwheel.

Where, when, and how do appointments with Cartwheel happen?

To make it as easy as possible to get the support you need, Cartwheel is available from 8am-8pm Monday-Friday as well as some Saturday hours and over school and summer breaks. Many schools help students access therapy during the school day if needed but sessions can be done from school or home. Teletherapy sessions are conducted over HIPAA-compliant Zoom and can easily be joined via laptop, tablet, or smartphone.

Telehealth sessions must be attended from your home state. For instance, if your child is traveling out-of-state, they cannot join their telehealth session.

How much does Cartwheel cost?

If you have Medicaid or are uninsured, it's free.

If you have private insurance, Cartwheel will probably be in network. Standard co-payments and deductibles may apply and other payment plans and financing options are available if needed. Before your first appointment, we'll provide you with a cost estimate. Most families with private insurance pay \$20-30 a session, but sometimes it can be more or less depending on your specific insurance plan.

If I fill out an interest form with Cartwheel, will my child be in trouble?

Will this go on their transcript or academic record?

No, your child will not be in trouble and this will not appear on their transcript or academic record. HIPAA and FERPA protections mean that information will only be shared for authorized purposes.

How quickly will I be contacted?

Once your school reviews your request, if they make a referral, Cartwheel will reach out to you within 24-48 hours (may be longer depending on weekends and holidays) to work on scheduling your first appointment. Please reach out to your school counselor if you haven't heard from your school after a few days.

Can I withdraw my interest?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time. If you've submitted a form and Cartwheel hasn't reached out to you yet, feel free to contact your school to stop or pause the process. If you're in touch with Cartwheel already, let your Cartwheel care coordinator know that you'd like to pause. Services can be paused for up to 30 days before another referral needs to be submitted.

Have more questions about connecting to Cartwheel?

Please contact a member of your school's team or contact Cartwheel directly by calling/texting (617) 272-7439 or emailing office@cartwheelcare.org. Or visit our website at www.cartwheel.org/families.

In case of a mental health emergency:

If you or a loved one are experiencing mental health-related distress, call or text 988 for free and confidential support 24/7.

If you are experiencing an emergency, visit your closest emergency room or call 911.