

## What to do in a crisis

*Emergencies can come in all shapes and forms. While it remains clear to call 911 when you feel like your or someone else's life is in danger, it might not be that straightforward to tackle or know what to do when it comes to a mental health crisis.*

***Here are some things to consider if a mental health crisis strikes you or a loved one:***

### 1. RECOGNIZING IF IT'S A CRISIS EMERGENCY

A mental health emergency is considered any time a person is in immediate danger to others or to themselves. Some signs that signal that the person in crisis requires medical help beyond what you are able to provide includes:

- Attempts to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so
- Verbal or physical abuse
- Neglecting food or sleep continuously
- Experiencing psychotic symptoms (i.e. hallucinations, delusions)
- Rapid mood swings
- Isolation from school, work, family, friends

### 2. COMMUNICATING WITH SOMEONE IN CRISIS WHO HAS A PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS

DO'S	DONT'S
<p><b>Be genuine.</b> Listen</p> <p><b>Be calm.</b> Express support and concern</p> <p><b>Speak calmly, softly and slowly</b></p> <p><b>Ask</b> simple, respectful questions.</p> <p><b>Be helpful.</b> Respond to basic needs</p>	<p><b>Don't confuse the subject.</b></p> <p><b>Don't Shout.</b> This increases anxiety</p> <p><b>Don't deceive the subject.</b> Dishonesty increases fear and suspicion</p> <p><b>Don't join</b> into behavior related to the person's mental illness</p>

### 3. CALLING FOR HELP

#### WHO SHOULD I CALL?

**Local Mental health agency:** if safe and appropriate your first call should be to the local mental health agency, where you will be working with a mental health professional

**Agency name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of service:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Local Emergency Services:

If there is an emergency situation involving any type of immediate danger (to yourself or to others) when a person is in crisis, the local emergency services should get involved

**Non-emergency #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **911** \_\_\_\_\_

#### SHARE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON THE CALL

- Your name, address and phone number
- The name and description of the person in crisis and your relationship with them
- If the person has had a mental health condition and if they are receiving treatment or medication for it
- Any alcohol or substances being used— either at the current time or in the past (any addiction/dependency)
- If the person has a history of suicide attempts or self-injury or if they have had any interactions with the police
- If there are any weapons in the house (If there are any weapons, try to safely remove them before calling)
- What the person is currently doing and saying
- Request a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) officer who has experience in working with people who have a mental illness if the police are dispatched to the home

#### WHILE WAITING FOR HELP TO ARRIVE

As you wait for help to arrive try to make sure that the environment is as calm and safe as possible. This is a stressful time for both of you so make sure you try to reassure the person in crisis that help is on its way. Keep the person in crisis engaged and keep the communication techniques listed above in mind as you interact with the person in crisis. Ask them if they have a crisis safety plan and whether there are any strategies in the plan that could help them.

#### WHEN THE POLICE ARRIVES

It is important that when the officers get to the location, you do not run up to them or start shouting. Keep calm while they make sure that you, the person in crisis and themselves are safe. Make sure to identify yourself and fill them in with the information that you shared with the dispatcher on the phone call beforehand. The more informed they are about the situation, the less likely that it is that anyone will be injured or that the situation will worsen. Answer their questions directly and concisely and offer any advice if you think it is appropriate. Being patient for the person in crisis and for yourself is very crucial in such a stressful situation.

Make sure to tell the officers information about the attending psychiatrist or physician's contact information and make sure they know the immediate symptoms or behaviors that caused you to call for help. It is important for them to know that the person has a mental/physical health condition and that the situation should be handled as such.