

# Calling for Help for Someone in a Mental Health Crisis

This call will start the process of getting the person in crisis medical help beyond what you are able to provide. Calling for help when someone is in a mental health crisis can be extremely stressful.

## WHO SHOULD I CALL?

**COMMUNITY SERVICE BOARD (CSB)  
&  
LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH AGENCY**

**OR**

**LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES**

If safe and appropriate first call your local mental health agency, which will begin the process with a mental health professional.

If there is an emergency situation involving any type of immediate danger (where your life or the life of someone else is being threatened or when a person in crisis is out of control and could be a danger to him/herself and others), call your local emergency services.

## HOW DO I REACH THESE SERVICES?

**LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH AGENCY:**

**AREAS OF SERVICE:**

**MENTAL HEALTH AGENCY PHONE #:**

**LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT  
NON-EMERGENCY #:**

**LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT EMERGENCY #:**

**911**

When calling for help please have accurate information ready to share so the response can be effective and safe for all concerned. Try to control the volume of your voice. Although this is a very emotionally charged time, when you shout over the phone it is difficult for the person on the other end to understand what you are saying and the information may not be accurately received. Try to speak as calmly and clearly as possible. Stay on the phone until the call taker tells you it is okay to hang up.

## **BE READY TO SHARE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION**

- Your name, address and phone number
- The name of the person in crisis and your relationship with them
- A description of the individual in crisis (ex. their age, gender, clothing)
- If the person has had a mental health condition and if they are receiving treatment for it
- If the person has a physical health condition and if they are receiving treatment for it
- Any medication being used — if use has stopped and for how long
- Any alcohol or substances being used— either at the current time or in the past (any addiction/dependency)
- Any history of interactions with the police — especially if calling 911
- If you feel threatened
- If the person in crisis hears voices

- If the person in crisis fears someone or something
- If the person has a history of suicide attempts or self injury
- 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 and where they are in the house or on the property
- 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
- If the person has a Mental Health Crisis Plan (for instance, plans like Advanced Directive or WRAP)

## WHILE WAITING FOR HELP TO ARRIVE

While waiting for help to arrive stay calm and try to keep the environment as calm as possible. Let the person know you are getting help and everyone will be kept safe. If you plan to stay with the person in crisis as they receive help, let them know. Ask the person who is experiencing the crisis what they need right now to help them. Ask if they have any wellness tools they've used in the past that have helped. Ask if the person has a Crisis Plan and read it, if available, while waiting for help to arrive. Implementing the strategies in the Crisis Plan may help avoid any further need for intervention.

## WHEN THE POLICE ARRIVE

If the police are dispatched to the home to help, have all the lights in the house turned on so that all occupants can be clearly visible to the arriving officers. Have nothing in your hands if you come out of the house to meet the officers. Do not run up to the officers. They have no idea who you are and anything you may carry can possibly be interpreted as a weapon. It is essential that the officers responding to your emergency call establish a comfort zone — knowing who the person with the mental illness is, and that you, who possibly may also be agitated, are not a threat. As calmly as possible, identify yourself.

### **TELL THE OFFICERS:**

- Who you are and your relationship to the person experiencing the mental health crisis
- Who you have called about
- If the person has a mental health condition and if they are receiving treatment for it
- If the person has a physical health condition and if they are receiving treatment for it.
- What medication is being taken
- If any medication has been stopped and for how long
- What immediate symptoms or behaviors caused you to call for help
- Any history of suicide attempts
- An attending psychiatrist's and/or case manager's contact information
- An attending physician's contact information
- If the person has a Crisis Plan — and if possible, share the Crisis Plan with the officers

Officers responding to a 911 emergency call are very focused when they arrive on the scene. First they will make the scene safe for you, the person experiencing the crisis, and themselves. The more informed and at ease the officers are, the less likely it is that anyone will be injured or that the situation will worsen. Spend all the time that is necessary answering all the officers' questions. Answer directly and concisely. Do not ramble. Offer any advice you deem helpful. After this is done, they will usually be able to spend time with you and to answer any questions. Although it is difficult in times of crisis, being patient is essential.