

Managing a Mental Health Crisis



1919 University Avenue West, Suite 400, St. Paul, MN 55104 Tel. 651-645-2948 or 888-NAMIHELPS www.namihelps.org

Know when to get help

Sometimes things become so overwhelming you need help from a mental health professional or emergency personnel. GET HELP for your child when you see the warning signs. Know where to go for help and what to do if your child's behavior escalates. Learn how to plan for and prevent a future crisis and how county mental health crisis teams help families

Know the Warning signs

Inability to cope with daily tasks

- Doesn't bathe
- Doesn't brush teeth
- Refuses to eat or eats too much
- Sleeps all day or doesn't sleep

Increased agitation

- Makes verbal threats
- Has violent behavior
- Destroys property
- Is cruel to animals

Displays abusive behavior

- Hurts others
- Cuts, burns, self-injurious behaviors
- Uses of abuses alcohol or drugs

Loses touch with reality

- Unable to recognize family or friends
- Thinks they are someone they are not
- Hears voices
- Sees things that are not there
- Doesn't Understand what people are saying

Know what to do if your child's behavior escalates

- Keep your voice calm
- Avoid overreacting
- Listen
- Don't argue or try to reason
- Express support and concern
- Avoid continuous eye contact
- Ask how you can help
- Keep stimulation level low
- Move slowly
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- Offer options instead of trying to take control
- Avoid touching your child unless you ask permission
- Be patient
- Gently announce actions before initiating them
- Give the space, don't make them feel trapped

Rapid mood swings

- Increased energy
- Inability to sit still, paces
- Depressed mood
- Suddenly happy or calm after a period of depression

Isolation from school, family, friends

- Little interest in activities
- Changes in friendships
- Stops attending school
- Stops doing homework

Unexplained physical symptoms

- Has different facial expressions
- Increase in headache and stomach aches
- Complains they don't feel well

Know where to get help

If your child is in immediate danger

- Call 911
- Let the operator know that your child is experiencing a mental health crisis
- Ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer or a law enforcement officer trained in mental health crisis intervention
- DO NOT interfere when law enforcement arrives
- Provide basic information to law enforcement

If your child is not in immediate danger

- Call your child's psychiatrist, therapist, or family doctor to help assess the situation
- Call the county mental health crisis team to help assess the situation over the phone or meet you in person
- Take your child to the emergency department for an assessment

Know how to plan for and prevent a future crisis

Developing a written crisis plan ahead of time can help prevent a crisis by identifying triggers for behaviors and listing strategies that may help. Parents can help prevent a crisis by noting changes in behaviors in a journal or making notes on a calendar. It is important to note changes in behavior because they may indicate that a crisis about to occur.

What to include in a crisis plan

- Child's information: name and age, diagnoses, mental health history
- Parent's information: name of parent(s), stepparents and family members who live in the home
- Medical information: contact information for doctors, therapists, professionals and hospitals
- Behavior and symptoms: things that trigger a crisis and what calms the child down or reduces the behaviors and symptoms
- Medication: name and type of medication, dosage, name of pharmacy, prescribing doctor or nurse
- Emergency contact numbers: home, work, and cell phone numbers
- Safety plan: the plan for the child, siblings and other family members

Know your county mental health crisis team

In Minnesota each county has a 24-hour mental health crisis phone line for both adults and children that are staffed by trained workers who assist callers with their mental health crisis, make referrals and contact emergency services if necessary. Mobile crisis teams are available in some but not all counties. They can meet face-to-face with a child in a mental health crisis, conduct a mental health crisis assessment, create a crisis treatment plan and provide crisis stabilization services.

For additional information on children's mental health topics, parent support groups, booklets, and workshops visit NAMI Minnesota's website, www.namihelps.org.

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Metro Area Mental Health Crisis Response Teams

Anoka County.763-755-3801
Carver / Scott County.952-442-7601
Dakota County.952-891-7171
Washington County.657-777-5222
Hennepin County.Adult 612-596-1223
Children 612-348-2223
Ramsey County.Adult 651-266-7900
Children 651-268-7378

