



A guide for parents and caregivers of children
MANAGING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

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 or 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

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

- Facial expressions look different
- Increase in headaches or stomach aches
- Complains they don't feel well

Know what to do if your child's behavior escalates

- Keep your voice calm
- Avoid overreacting
- Listen to your child
- Don't argue or try to reason with your child
- Express support and concern
- Avoid continuous eye contact
- Ask how you can help
- Keep stimulation level low
- Move slowly
- 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 them space, don't make them feel trapped



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Know where to get help

If your child is in immediate danger

- Call 911
- Let the operator know your child is experiencing a mental health crisis
- Ask for a Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) officer or 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 to 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 behavior and listing strategies that may help. Parents can help prevent a crisis by noting changes in behaviors and documenting 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 is about to occur.

What to include in a Crisis Plan:

- Child's information: name and age, diagnoses, mental health history
- Parents' information: name of parent(s), stepparents and family members who live in the home
- Medical information: contact information for doctors, therapists, professionals and hospitals
- Behaviors: things that trigger a crisis and what calms the child down or reduces behaviors
- 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 child, siblings or 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. Crisis teams are meant to be accessible to anyone in the community at any time. They can meet face-to-face with a child in a mental health crisis, conduct a mental health crisis assessment and create a crisis treatment plan.

For additional information on children's mental health topics, parent support groups, booklets and workshops visit NAMI Minnesota's website, www.nami.helps.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	651-777-5222
Hennepin County	Adult 612-596-1223
.....	Children 612-348-2233
Ramsey County	Adult 651-266-7900
.....	Children 651-774-7000