



How to Prepare for a Child's Mental Health Crisis — 911 or 988

Mental health is vital to a child's overall health and well-being. Talking to children about their mental health can be uncomfortable and difficult, but knowing how to manage a crisis before it happens can greatly improve the outcome. A mental health crisis is when someone is in danger of harming themselves or others.

When do I call 911?

If you believe a child or teen is in imminent danger of harming themselves or others, immediately call 911. **When calling 911:**

- Explain to the dispatcher that the child is having a mental health crisis and provide any information about their mental health history and/or diagnosis.
- Identify yourself and your relationship to the child experiencing the mental health crisis to the dispatcher and responding officers.
- If an overdose is suspected, provide as much information as you can, including the substance (or drug) the child is using, when it was last used, and whether or not you've administered Naloxone.
- Ask if a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer is available. Many communities have crisis intervention programs, which train police officers on how to safely respond to psychiatric and substance use related crisis calls.
- Stay close to the child until emergency help arrives.
- Be aware that the child may be placed in handcuffs and transported in the back of a police car. This can be extremely upsetting to witness but understand that this is for everyone's safety.
- Be aware of the rights and protections offered by the Good Samaritan Law to both yourself and the young person.

The Good Samaritan Law

Maryland's Good Samaritan Law protects people assisting in an emergency overdose situation from arrest, as well as prosecution, for certain crimes. Scan the QR code to learn more.



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When do I call 988?

When a child is not in immediate danger, but has an urgent mental health need, you can reach out to the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by calling or texting 988, or chatting online at 988lifeline.org/chat. 988 will connect you to a trained counselor who will listen, provide emotional support, connect you to nearby resources, and possibly utilize a mobile crisis service provider if available and necessary. The goal of the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is to assess a situation, prevent an emergency, and link people to services.

When contacting 988, be aware that your conversation could require the crisis counselor to call 911 if there is an imminent risk to someone's life that cannot be reduced during the Lifeline call. In these cases, the crisis counselor will share information with 911 that is crucial to saving the callers life.

Free Resources & Information

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (National/Maryland): Phone or online chat available with trained crisis counselors to anyone who is depressed, despairing, going through a hard time, or just needs to talk, including people who are thinking about suicide. 988lifeline.org

Crisis Text Line (National): 24/7 support for anyone in crisis. Text HELLO to 741741 to connect anonymously with a trained Crisis Counselor. crisistextline.org

Kognito (National): Research-proven training simulations to prepare you to recognize when someone is exhibiting signs of psychological distress or underlying trauma. kognito.com

Maryland Overdose Response Program (Maryland): Provides training in overdose response to individuals and families. Receive training and medication for emergency use in an overdose situation or visit your local pharmacy. NaloxoneMD.org

Online Chat for Youth (Maryland): Online crisis chat services are provided by trained crisis counselors Monday through Friday, 4:00-9:00 pm by the Maryland Crisis Hotline Network. help4mdyouth.org/chat

There Is Hope App (Maryland; Download to your phone or tablet): App provides fast and easy access to crisis intervention and suicide prevention support, including an immediate connection to crisis counselors. Available in Apple and Google Play stores.

Trevor Lifeline (National): The world's largest suicide prevention and mental health organization for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) young people. thetrevorproject.org

Learn the risk factors and warning signs.

