

Crisis Planning for Families

We want families who have children and youth with mental health needs to be prepared! Not every child is going to need crisis intervention services or need to be hospitalized, but we still encourage families to have a plan in place in case their child experiences a mental health crisis, as it helps to ease any undue stress and trauma on the whole family. We realize that making such a plan can be scary and overwhelming, but you will be glad that you have it if the situation ever arises. The tips below and the attached worksheet provide some guidance and a template for designing your plan and keeping relevant information in one place.

What do crisis services look like in Virginia?

Each Community Services Board (CSB) is required by law to provide emergency mental health services for adults and children. Recently, additional funding has been provided for each region to develop crisis services specifically for children and youth. Emergency rooms, police, and private hospitals are also an avenue to access immediate crisis support.

What are some steps to help me be prepared?

- Contact your health insurer in case they require that you use a particular hospital or provider network; there may be age restrictions that could affect where your child can be placed.
- If you think it's possible you will have to use the police, contact your local police department ahead of time, introduce yourself and provide more information about your child. By doing so, they will already have the necessary information when they respond to the crisis.
- Locate your local CSB, <http://www.vacsb.org/directory.html>, and ask about what crisis services are available in your community.
- Ask your child's mental health providers for information regarding available crisis services. Some mental health providers will have a psychiatrist or other mental health provider on call to help you when there's a mental health emergency. Also, give your child's providers a copy of your crisis plan so that they are aware of it and on the same page.

If you belong to a parent support group or know of other parents who have children and youth mental health needs, ask them for guidance on what is available in your community and what has worked for them. Share and discuss the plan with your family in order to ensure that plan is followed.

What should I do during a crisis?

- When calling about your child, try to remain calm, keep the conversation focused on why your child is not safe, and give clear examples; remember to have your child's medical information readily available. Keep good records of these conversations.
- If you feel the need for help from the police, request that a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trained officer reports to the scene. Not every community has CIT officers, but it is worth asking. Be prepared that you may have to wait for a bed if your child needs to be hospitalized. Also, be aware that the age of consent for hospitalization is 14, so your child may be asked to sign a consent form. If your child refuses, you may go through the TDO process (involuntary commitment).
- If your child is hospitalized, don't be afraid to ask questions. We know that it can be scary, so you have every right as a parent to ask as many questions as you need in order to feel comfortable.

What should I do after a crisis?

- If your child was hospitalized, the hospital should work with you ensure a smooth transition and assess your child's readiness to go home. Ask questions and make sure you have a full understanding of the diagnosis and next steps. Details are important!
- Notify your child's mental health providers (psychiatrist, therapist, care coordinator, etc.) of the crisis and if any changes have been made
- Discuss with your child's team if any steps can be taken to prevent future incidents or if there are any tips for de-escalating your child when a crisis arise
- Remember to take care of yourself!
- Check NAMI Virginia's website (www.namivirginia.org) and/or your local NAMI affiliate to see what support groups and resources are offered for the parents, the child, and the whole family.

For additional information or questions, contact us NAMI Virginia:

- Sarah Wilson (Director of Children and Youth Programs), swilson@namivirginia.org or 804-285-8264 x203
- Amanda Long (Youth Coordinator), along@namivirginia.org or (804) 285-8264 x211
- NAMI Virginia HelpLine, info@namivirginia.org or 1 (888) 486-8264



The Virginia Family Network, is a grassroots network of families committed to providing opportunities that support, educate, and empower other families with children and youth with mental health needs while also promoting family-driven and youth-guided policy throughout the child serving systems. The initiative is designed to “meet the family where they are” through activities such as providing support groups, training, resources, and mentorship from other families with children and youth with mental health needs.

Crisis Planning Worksheet

A crisis means there is an acute mental health emergency, for example:

- Your child is in imminent danger of hurting him or herself or others
- Your child is having severely disorganized and/or experiencing dangerous thoughts

Use this worksheet to help in developing your crisis plan for your child and to keep relevant information in one place. Be sure to share this information with your family as appropriate.

- What hospital will you use? Remember to contact your insurance provider to make sure that they don't have specific requirements. _____
- How will you transport your child safely? (ie, use ambulance, call police, get a friend's help, drive your child yourself) _____
- Who will you call for help: local CSB, Police, Ambulance, Mobile Crisis Team, friend or family member?

- Who will take care of your other children, if applicable? _____

- Which facilities can accept your child based on age restrictions? _____

- What crisis services are available for children and youth in your community? _____

- Your Child's Providers and Contact Information:
Therapist: _____ Phone #: _____
Psychiatrist: _____ Phone #: _____
Care Coordinator/Case Mgr: _____ Phone #: _____
Primary Care provider: _____ Phone #: _____
- Previous hospitalizations/other medical history. _____

- List of medications (include dosages and frequency): _____

- Insurance Information – have your insurance card(s) with you at all times
Provider: _____ Phone number: _____
ID: _____ Plan name (if applicable): _____

If your child is hospitalized:

- Visiting hours and phone time hours (if applicable): _____

- Name of charge nurse/contact info: _____

- Treating physician/contact info: _____

- Policies on food, flowers, cards, personal items from home: _____

Discharge planning process (the hospital will help you create a more comprehensive plan, but use the following to help):

- Medication changes? _____

- Follow-up appointments? _____

- Referrals to other services and treatment providers? _____

- Support groups or other resources? _____

- Tips, strategies, techniques, etc. to hopefully de-escalate and prevent future emergency situations:

