

Crisis Planning for a Loved One With a Mental Illness

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Know what steps to take if your loved one with mental illness is in danger of hurting himself or hurting others:

- Plan ahead by making a list of places that can help you.
- Call 911 in case of an emergency.
- Keep the local police phone number and phone number of a mental health expert handy.
- Have on hand the phone numbers of friends or neighbors who might help you.
- Post these numbers by the phone or load them into your cell phone or smart phone.
- Talk to your loved one's doctor or therapist before a crisis. Ask them what you should do if your loved one goes into crisis.

Find out if your loved one has a crisis plan or a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP®). A person makes a WRAP® or a crisis plan when they are doing well. It gives directions to doctors, family, and others who may help the person in a crisis. If he has a crisis or WRAP® plan, ask him if you can have a copy. Encourage your loved one to use the other parts of his WRAP® when you see early warning signs that he may be headed toward a crisis. It will have many instructions that will help you make the right decisions.

If you think your loved one's mental health condition is getting worse, talk to her. Try to find out what is going on. Everyone has a bad day now and then. But there are early warning signs that signal a relapse. These can include changes in sleep or social activities. Or your loved one becomes very angry or paranoid. Try to get your loved one to see a doctor, therapist, or peer specialist. Your goal is to avoid a crisis.

It is a good idea to have info about your loved one handy. This is in case you need to call for help in a crisis. Make a list that has the following:

- Diagnosis
- Meds
- Situation or behavior that led to the crisis
- Other health problems (diabetes, etc.)
- Info about past crisis (did your loved one try to take her own life? Did he get violent? Did she run away from the hospital? Was he given meds that made him sicker?)

Have extra copies of the list to give to the police and to doctors. A little bit of planning will help your loved one get help she needs.

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