

# Planning Ahead for Mental Health Care

## Knowing Where to Go for Help

Many historical and cultural reasons make it harder for Black adults to seek, access, and maintain mental health care that considers culture and beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

Black adults impacted by mental health conditions are more likely to receive treatment in emergency or hospital settings, and are more likely to be incarcerated.<sup>2,3</sup>

Having a plan can help when making decisions on what to do during difficult times. This plan can include:

- Information on working with trusted healthcare providers and support teams
- How to recognize symptoms of a crisis
- Tips for communicating with first responders
- Ways to get back on track with a treatment plan



## Recognizing Signs of a Crisis

A mental health crisis is any situation in which someone's behavior may hurt themselves or others. While there are some common signs of a mental health crisis, not everyone displays them and some people may show signs unique to them. It is important to know what to look for.

**If you have experienced a crisis, what signs did you notice before it occurred?<sup>4</sup> Check all that apply:**

- Change in daily tasks, like not being able to shower or change clothes
- Quick changes in mood, such as increased energy that suddenly changes into depression
- Change in behavior, such as acting out of control or being violent to self or others
- Change in feelings, like feeling more lonely
- Change in being able to recognize family or friends; feeling confused or paranoid
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



It is important to talk with a trusted healthcare provider as soon as you start to notice crisis signs.

Friends, family, and community members are often the first to recognize these signs or related behavioral changes. They can play an active role in helping to find care.

Who are some people in your life that you feel comfortable with contacting when you notice a change in behavior or signs of crisis? Fill in the table below.

| Treatment team                                  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Emergency contact<br>Example: doctor, therapist | How can they help?<br>Example: knows my medication schedule | How to contact them?<br>Example: [insert phone number] |
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| Support team  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Emergency contact<br>Example: parent, sibling, faith leader | How can they help?<br>Example: understands my cultural beliefs, has my important personal information | How to contact them?<br>Example: [insert phone number] |
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## Communicating and Engaging With First Responders

When planning with loved ones, consider the following options for seeking help:

**Mobile Crisis Units:** These units include mental health professionals, community health workers, and/or peers. They support individuals who need mental health or emergency support systems. These units have the knowledge and skills to respond. They can also refer individuals in crisis to the appropriate resources.<sup>5</sup> Mobile Crisis Unit teams can meet in a safe location, including at home, school, or a workplace.

**Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Officers:** If you need to engage law enforcement, ask for a CIT officer. They have received extra training in handling mental health–related situations. CIT officers often partner and build relationships with mental health professionals, support teams, and advocates to work together to avoid a crisis. They can connect a person in crisis with appropriate mental health treatment, which can help them avoid jail time.<sup>6</sup>

For help finding crisis services in your area, visit [crissolutionsnc.org](http://crissolutionsnc.org). You can also fill out the table below to help know who to contact for immediate help.

| Organization                                  | Contact information  | Hours of operation |
|---|--|--------------------|
| Example: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline | 1-800-273-8255<br>Chat at <a href="http://SuicidePreventionLifeline.org">SuicidePreventionLifeline.org</a> | 24/7               |
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## Developing a Treatment Plan

When you are feeling good, think about what has worked and what has not worked. This will help first responders know how to help when in crisis. This will also help to delay time to future crisis.

A comprehensive treatment plan can be very important to an individual's recovery journey and well-being. This may include therapy, medication, and support services.

With the help of healthcare providers and others who support you, fill out the below to plan for unexpected challenges.

What is your current treatment plan (such as medications, supportive therapies)?

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What do you need from your support and treatment teams to stay on track?

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What causes your symptoms or changes in behavior?

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What treatment plans have not worked for you in the past?

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What cultural beliefs do you have that are important for healthcare providers to keep in mind?

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What routines or habits help you stay on track and ensure you follow your treatment plan? For example, do you use a calendar, put reminders on your phone, or write notes to yourself in a journal?

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*It is important to remember that when in a mental health crisis, you are not alone. Support is available.*

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1. Ward, EC, et al. African American men and women's attitude toward mental illness, perceptions of stigma, and preferred coping behaviors. *Nursing Research*. 2013;62(3): 185-194.
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3. Snowden LR, Catalano R, Shumway M. Disproportionate use of psychiatric emergency services by African Americans. *Psychiatr Serv*. 2009;60(12):1664-1671.
4. NAMI. Navigating a mental health crisis—a NAMI resource guide for those experiencing a mental health emergency. Accessed February 2022. <https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Guides/Navigating-a-Mental-Health-Crisis/Navigating-A-Mental-Health-Crisis>
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