

Mental Health Crisis Safety Protocol

Purpose: To ensure the safety and well-being of all participants by providing clear, compassionate, and timely responses when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis.

Definition of a Mental Health Crisis: A mental health crisis is any situation in which an individual's behavior puts them at risk of hurting themselves or others or when they are unable to function safely. This includes but is not limited to:

- Verbal threats of self-harm or suicide
- Signs of severe anxiety, panic, or dissociation
- Psychotic behavior (e.g., hallucinations, delusions)
- Aggressive or violent behavior
- Incoherent or disoriented speech or actions

Immediate Response Steps:

1. Ensure Immediate Safety

- Remove the individual from any physical danger if possible.
- Call **911** if there is an immediate threat to the individual or others.
- Do not leave the individual alone unless your safety is at risk.

2. Engage a Mental Health First Responder

- Notify a trained staff member (e.g., counselor, mental health professional, Principal).
- If no mental health professional is available, assign a trained staff member to lead the response.

3. Stay Calm and Supportive

- Speak in a calm, non-judgmental tone.
- Use active listening: acknowledge their distress, reflect back what you hear.
- Do not argue, threaten, or minimize their feelings.

Assessment and Intervention

1. Conduct a Basic Risk Assessment *(if trained to do so):*

- Ask directly: "Are you thinking of hurting yourself or someone else?"
- Determine if they have a plan, access to means, and intent.

2. Decide on Next Steps Based on Risk Level

- **Low Risk** (distressed but stable): Connect to on-site mental health support or refer to outpatient services.
- **Moderate to High Risk** (self-harm ideation, impaired functioning): Call a mobile crisis unit, 911, or escort to the emergency room.
- **Violent or uncontrollable behavior:** Call emergency services immediately and follow organizational safety procedures.



Mental Health Crisis Safety Protocol - continued

Communication and Documentation

1. Notify Designated Personnel

- Follow school policy and inform the appropriate staff (Principal, mental health professional, district leadership).
- Contact emergency contacts or guardians (if participant is a minor or dependent adult), in accordance with privacy laws.

2. Document the Incident

- Complete an incident report within 24 hours including:
 - Date, time, and location
 - Description of behavior
 - Steps taken
 - Personnel involved
 - Follow-up recommendations

Follow-Up Plan

1. Coordinate Post-Crisis Support

- Offer resources such as counseling services, hotlines, or support groups.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting to reassess the participant's readiness to return.

2. Debrief with Staff

- Provide a space for team members involved to discuss and process the incident. Identify any areas for improvement in crisis response.
- Ensure staff is aware of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

If you need to speak with someone immediately, please call or text 988.
If this is an emergency, please call 911.