How to Help a Loved One in a Mental Health Crisis

Signs that a person may be experiencing a mental health crisis:

- Thoughts of harming self or others
- Attempts at harming self or others
- Mental health symptoms that impact ability to function or care for basic needs

Options in a mental health crisis:

1. **Call 9-1-1**
   If the person is presenting an immediate risk of danger to themselves or others, call 911. You may also call 911 to request a wellness check if you are unsure of their current safety.

1. **Call the Helpline Center through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**
   The Lifeline is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. People may call for themselves or for a loved one who is struggling. Trained crisis workers are available to talk, assess the level of risk, and develop a plan to help keep the person safe.

1. **Go to the hospital for a mental health assessment**
   A mental health assessment is performed by a mental health clinician to assess a person's safety and determine the appropriate level of mental health care for that person. A mental health assessment can be completed at a psychiatric hospital or at any community hospital or emergency room. Based upon the assessment, a clinician may recommend that the person be admitted to an inpatient mental health facility.

1. **Initiate involuntary commitment (IVC)**
   If a loved one is experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis and is refusing treatment, it may be appropriate to file a petition for involuntary commitment. This process is typically initiated through your local law enforcement or the clerk of courts. Call 211 for a referral to the appropriate entity.

For more information on what to do in a mental health crisis, call 211 or search our online database:

- www.helplinecenter.org/211database
  - Use the following keyword search terms:
    - 911 Services
    - Suicide Prevention Hotlines
    - Mental Health Crisis Assessment/Intake
    - Involuntary Mental Health Hold

Sources:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

- South Dakota Department of Social Services https://dss.sd.gov/behavioralhealth/hsc/access/adultpsych.aspx
  https://dss.sd.gov/behavioralhealth/community/involuntary.aspx

Disclaimer: This HelpSheet is developed by the Helpline Center for informational purposes only. HelpSheets provide a brief overview of the designated topic. For more information, call 211 or text your zip code to 898211.

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