

# Crisis Planning for Families



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# Questions to Address



- What crisis services are available?
- What are the experiences of families when they have a child or youth with mental health needs, especially during a crisis?
- What is the importance of helping families develop crisis plans and how can I support families in developing a crisis plan?
- What are some strategies that I can use in my practice that will support families in all stages of a crisis?

# What is the Virginia Family Network?



- A program of NAMI Virginia
- *Virginia's Statewide Family Network*
- 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
- 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
- Supported through grants from DBHDS and SAMHSA

# Our Families and Youth Need a Voice



- Have a different set of needs and experiences than families and adults affected by the adult mental health system and families with children and youth with special needs.
- Feel blamed and shamed. Stigma is very real and families feel it all the time.
- Feel alone, isolated, helpless and hopeless.
- Want and need a place where their unique needs and voices are being heard and met. And, while other states have very strong and robust statewide family networks in their children's mental health systems, Virginia has never really been able to get its own network off the ground.
- An untapped source of leadership and support.

# Can Anyone Relate to These Words?



But, Mental Health is Involved, Other Words  
Often Get Added...

**Shame**

**Lost**

**Misunderstood**

**Blame**

**Helpless**

**Depression**

**Anger**

**Loss**

**Hopeless**

**Unworthy**

**Stigma**

# The Experiences of Families



- Every family's journey is different, but there are similarities and common feelings and reactions
- Common Stages
  - Shock/Denial/Disbelief
  - Recognition/Acceptance/Loss
  - Coping/Adaption
  - Advocacy
- What stage the family is in affects their responses and actions while experiencing a crisis

# How Do We Define a Crisis?



- **Mental health emergency**
  - Your child is in imminent danger of hurting him or herself
  - Your child is in imminent danger of hurting others
  - Your child is having severely disorganized or dangerous thoughts
- **Other situations may still require an assessment or someone else to help de-escalate the situation**
  - For example, parents may simply need a mobile crisis team to come to their home to support them in de-escalating their child because they are feeling overwhelmed, their child will respond better to someone else, they don't know what else to do, etc.



# We Want Families to be Prepared!



- While not every child is going to need crisis intervention services or is going to need to be hospitalized, we still encourage families to have a plan in place, for just in case
- Situations are stressful and require quick action, and by having a plan already in place, it helps to ease any undue stress and trauma on the whole family
- As a result, we strive to ensure that families have information on what services are available and the steps that they need to take before the crisis, during the crisis, and after the crisis

# What Do Crisis Services Look Like in VA?



- Each Community Service Board (CSB) is required by law to provide emergency mental health services for adults and children
- Recently, additional funding has been provided for crisis response services for children for each region
  - Services vary from region to region, but they include mobile crisis, crisis stabilization, and child psychiatry
- Of course, emergency rooms, police, private hospitals, etc. also play a big role in our crisis service system

# Developing Your Plan



- What hospital will you use for an emergency visit?
- Will you be the best choice for transporting your child safely?
- If not, who can you call to help?
  - Your local CSB?
  - Police?
  - Ambulance?
  - Mobile Crisis Team (if your community has one)?
  - Friend or Family Member?
- Who will take care of your other children while you are taking care of your child who is in crisis?
- Are there are other friends or family members that can support you during the crisis?
- **It is important for the whole family to agree to and follow the plan, including your child, if possible**

# Before the Crisis



- Contact your health insurer in case they require that you use a particular hospital or provider network
- Familiarize yourself with what facility can accept your child; there may be age restrictions that could affect where your child will be placed
- If you know that you will be using the police, contact your local police department ahead of time, just to introduce yourself and provide more information on your child, so that they have it for when there is an emergency
- Visit the hospital ahead of time to familiarize yourself with basics like where to park, where admitting is, what route to use, etc

# Before the Crisis



- Talk with your child's mental health providers to ask questions and make sure that you understand how the process works, as well as to make sure they are aware of your plan
- Research what crisis services are available in your community
- Write down names and numbers that you can access easily when the time comes
- Make sure the whole family is aware of and okay with the plan

# During the Crisis



- When calling about your child, be calm, keep the conversation focused on why your child is not safe, and give clear examples
- Have your child's medical information available
  - Therapist name and contact information
  - Psychiatrist name and contact information
  - Care Coordinator/Case Manager name and contact information
  - Primary care provide name and contact information
  - Previous hospitalizations and other medical history
  - List of medications (both current and previously tried)
  - Insurance information

# During the Crisis



- Be mindful of your child's presence in the room
- If you use the police to help de-escalate and transport your child, ask for a Crisis Intervention Team trained officer, also known as a CIT Officer
- Keep good records
- Do you need an exchange of information form signed?

# During the Crisis



- If your child is hospitalized, here are some questions to ask
  - Charge nurse and contact information?
  - Treating physician and contact information?
  - Visiting hours and policy on phone calls and visits from siblings, family, friends, etc.?
  - Policy on your child getting cards, flowers, food, etc?
  - Policy on your child having personal items from home?
  - Does staff need any other information or records?
  - How much notice will you receive when your child is being discharged?
  - Is there a discharge planning process to help the transition back into the community go smoothly?



# Discharge Planning



- When it is time for your child to be discharged, the hospital should work with you to ensure that the transition goes as smoothly and that your child is safe to go home
- Ask questions and make sure you have a full understanding of the diagnosis and next steps
- Details are important! Again, keep good records

# Discharge Planning



- Do you have enough medication until your child's next psychiatrist visit?
- Were any referrals made? If so, who is responsible for making the appointment?
- Will your child's medical team be notified of what happened and if any changes needed to be made?
- Will there be any follow up appointments?
- Are their support groups and other resources available for the parent, the child, and the whole family?

# After the Crisis



- 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 help prevent future incidents or if there tips or techniques that you can do to help de-escalate your child when a crisis arises

# Strategies for Supporting Parents



- Encourage parents to create your own plans
- Provide information on what crisis services are available in your community
- Explain the process
- Provide concrete examples and set clear expectations– make sure the parent fully understands and is on the same page with any action steps
- Focus on impact – How is he/she thinking and feeling right now; how is he/she coping

# Strategies for Supporting Parents



- As parents, we do the best we know how, and we are the experts on our children
- Encourage parents to describe their experiences as they see it – “I’m not here to judge”
- Be fully attentive – Simply, listening can go a long way
- Approach with acceptance, rather than blame – Parents are the experts on their child
- Provide validation, perspective, and guidance

# Strategies for Supporting Parents



- Connect parents with other parents as much as possible throughout the crisis – Parents need other parents even more during a crisis
- Set a framework for solutions and hope
- Communicate empathy
- Acknowledge that the parent's situation is particularly stressful right now and this affects families reactions and abilities to cope and remember that you are able to go home and get a break from any chaos

# Strategies for Supporting Parents



- Help facilitate any referral processes or any needed communication between the child's team
- Ask questions to better understand where the family is coming from
- Be honest in terms of what you are able to provide
- Acknowledge that the idea of admitting their children to the hospital is a scary and daunting idea, and it is natural for parents to be resistant to the idea
- On the flip side, it is understandable that a parent would want to admit their child – may need respite, may need help stabilizing their child, their child may need a med change, etc.

# Strategies for Supporting Parents



Bottom line, parents and professionals may not agree on the next course of action – In this case, work to understand each other’s perspectives and use the common ground as the starting point for moving forward.

*“The starting point is that we both want your child to be safe. If you aren’t comfortable with your child staying home, what are some steps that we can take to support you and make it safer for everyone?”*



# Discussion and Questions



- What have been your experiences in supporting families through a crisis, as well as planning for one?
- What kinds of strategies have you used in supporting families through a crisis, as well as planning for one?
- What kinds of successes have you had?
- What have been some challenges?

# State Resources



- Virginia Family Network – [www.namivirginia.org/programs/Virginia-family-network](http://www.namivirginia.org/programs/Virginia-family-network)
- FACES of Virginia – [www.facesofvirginia.org](http://www.facesofvirginia.org)
- Campaign for Children’s Mental Health – [www.1in5kids.org](http://www.1in5kids.org)
- FAVY (family organization for families involved with DJJ) - <http://www.favyouth.org/>
- Children’s Mental Health Resource Center – [www.mentalhealth4kids.org](http://www.mentalhealth4kids.org)
- Formed Families Forward (family organization in Northern VA for foster and adoptive families)– [www.formedfamiliesforward.org](http://www.formedfamiliesforward.org)
- Center for Family Involvement (support for families with children with special needs) <http://www.centerforfamilyinvolvement.org/>

# National Resources



- NAMI Child and Adolescent Action Center  
[http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Child and Teen Support&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=72&ContentID=38391](http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Child%20and%20Teen%20Support&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=72&ContentID=38391)
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health – [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org)
- Youth Move National (Youth Resources) – [www.youthmovenational.org](http://www.youthmovenational.org)
- Child Mind Institute – [www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org)
- Children's Mental Health Network – [www.cmhnetwork.org](http://www.cmhnetwork.org)

# Thank you!



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# Thank you!



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