

For Youth

If you are approached by the police:

- ◆ Keep your hands visible to the police officer.
- ◆ Do not make any sudden movements or loud noises.
- ◆ Answer questions with facts as clearly and calmly as possible.
- ◆ The officer needs to see you are following his/her directions.
- ◆ The officer needs to see you are not going to hurt yourself, him / her, or anyone else.
- ◆ If the officer feels you are not able to control yourself, he/she may handcuff you.
- ◆ You are not under arrest unless the officer says you are under arrest.
- ◆ If you are not home, ask the officer to call your parent or guardian.

If you are taken to the police department:

- ◆ Don't assume you are under arrest. You will be told by the police if and when you are arrested.
- ◆ Remain calm. Try to be polite and cooperative as possible.
- ◆ Ask the police to contact your parents or guardians to come to the police department.
- ◆ Be truthful when answering their questions. However, **DO NOT** admit to anything you may have done wrong without a lawyer's advice.

If you are arrested:

- ◆ Ask for your parent/legal guardian to be called to come to the police station.
- ◆ Do not answer any more questions until your parent/legal guardian is present.
- ◆ You have the right to a lawyer, ask for one to be appointed.
- ◆ Do not answer any more questions without your lawyer being present.

How to Work Effectively with Nassau County Police During a Mental Health Crisis



Tips for Families Raising Children and Youth with Mental, Emotional, or Behavioral Health Challenges

Created By

The Nassau County Children's Mental Health
Advocacy Committee

Adapted from material provided by the National Federation of
Families for Children's Mental Health

Local Resources

Children's Mobile Crisis Team (Monday-Friday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm)
Team visitation hours 10:30 am—6:30 pm
516-868-3030, Ext. 200

Long Island Crisis Center Hotline (24/7)
516-679-1111, www.longislandcrisiscenter.org

Mental Health Association of Nassau County (24/7)
Information and Referral
516-504-HELP (4357), www.mhanc.org

Nassau County Office of Mental Health, Chemical Dependency, and Developmental Disabilities Services
(Monday-Friday, 9:00 am -5:00 pm)
516-227-7057

Long Island Families Together (LIFT)
Information, Referral & Support
631-264-LIFT (5438), www.lift4kids.org

Nassau Alliance for Addiction Services
516-481-4000, www.nassaualliance.org

National Resources

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
240-403-1901, www.ffcmh.com

The National Center on Mental Health and Juvenile Justice
1-866-9NCMHJJ (toll free), www.ncmhjj.com

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
877-726-4727, www.samhsa.gov

National Alliance on Mental Illness
800-950-NAMI (6264), www.nami.org

Coalition for Juvenile Justice
202-467-0864, www.juvjustice.org



For Youth

A police officer may be called if you are experiencing a mental, emotional or behavioral crisis. Police officers may need to intervene if you appear to be a threat to yourself and/or to others, or are engaged in unlawful behavior.

How Can You Best Prepare For A Crisis?

- ◆ Be sure your Crisis Plan is always updated and available.
- ◆ Your Crisis Plan should include a list of things to help you calm down, as well as things that upset you.
- ◆ You can work on this with your parent, guardian, and/or a mental health care professional. For an example of a Crisis Plan, visit www.lift4kids.org
- ◆ This Crisis Plan should be included in your Individual Education Plan (IEP), if you have one. You may want to share your Crisis Plan with your teachers and other school personnel, so they know how to help you.

Resources for Youth

Long Island Crisis Center Hotline (24/7)
516-679-1111, www.longislandcrisiscenter.org

Mental Health Association of Nassau County
Information and Referral
516-504-HELP (4357), www.mhanc.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
800-950-NAMI (6264), www.nami.org, www.strengthofus.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255), www.nationalsuicidepreventionlifeline.org

Youth Power
www.youthpower.com

Working With Law Enforcement

If your child is taken to the police station

- ◆ You or your child should ask to have an adult family member present while they are being questioned.
- ◆ The police will ask questions to understand the situation.
- ◆ Encourage your child to be honest with the police during questioning.
- ◆ If there is something you do not understand, ask for clarification during the process.

REMEMBER: According to New York State law, if your child is NOT under arrest, then the police may speak to them without parental consent.

If your child IS arrested

- ◆ You should request an attorney. The police are required to stop questioning once an attorney is requested.
- ◆ Your permission must be given before your child can be questioned by the police.
- ◆ Continue to advocate for your child.

After an arrest

- ◆ It is imperative that you cooperate with your attorney and attend all hearings.
- ◆ Your child is entitled to continue his / her education. If an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is in place, provide a copy, and insist it be continued and updated as needed.
- ◆ Ask for an appropriate discharge plan to be developed, and be an active participant in the process.

For Parents/Caregivers

What is YOUR Crisis Plan?

Families raising a child with serious mental health needs are encouraged to develop a Crisis Plan. Mental health providers can help with this process. We encourage parents and children to work together to develop their own Crisis Plan. Many children and youth know what others can do to help them regain control when they are in crisis. This plan should list the steps necessary to keep themselves and others safe.

Everyone should have a Crisis Plan! What to include:

- ◆ Child's name, age, diagnosis, current medications and dosage
- ◆ Personalized information about how to help the child calm down and regulate his or her behavior
- ◆ Who to call for help if the child is unable to control potentially dangerous or unlawful behavior
- ◆ Parent or guardian's name(s) and contact information
- ◆ Mental health care providers' name(s) and contact information
- ◆ Medical care providers' name(s) and contact information

For an example of a Crisis Plan, visit: www.lift4kids.org

REMEMBER: Even with a Crisis Plan, it may be necessary for a family to call 911 for assistance in the event a child/youth is exhibiting potentially dangerous or unlawful behavior.

Be aware, when you call the police, an arrest or hospitalization may result. This will be determined by the responding officer. Their responsibility is to keep everyone safe.

When You Call For Police Assistance

1. **REMAIN as CALM** as you possibly can.
2. **PROVIDE ONLY FACTS** as quickly and clearly as possible. *For example: "I am calling from [address]. My 13 year old son is threatening to cut his sister. He has [diagnosis] and may be off his medication and under the influence of alcohol. There are 4 of us in the house: my mother, my son, my daughter, and myself. None of us are able to calm him down. We need assistance."*
3. **IDENTIFY WEAPONS** in the vicinity or in your child's possession, and alert the dispatcher.
4. **BE SPECIFIC** about what type of police assistance you are requesting. *For example: "We want to protect ourselves and get my son to the emergency room for a psychiatric evaluation, but cannot do that by ourselves. Please send help."*
5. **ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS** the dispatcher asks. Do not take offense when you are asked to repeat information. This is done to double check details to more effectively assist you.
6. **OFFER INFORMATION** to the dispatcher about how the officer can help your child calm down, as well as what might cause your child's behavior to escalate.
7. **SUGGEST ACTIONS THE OFFICER SHOULD AVOID** *For example: "Please don't tell him to stand still. He cannot hold his body still until he calms down. If you can get him to walk with you, he can listen and respond better. He is terrified of being handcuffed. Please tell him what he needs to do to avoid being handcuffed."*

REMEMBER: Your primary role in this situation is to be a good communicator. Your ability to remain calm and provide factual details is critical to the outcome.

What To Do When The Police Arrive

1. **IDENTIFY YOURSELF** and provide any additional information before the officer encounters your child. *For example: Wait for the officer by the curb or in the front yard, and state you are the person who placed the 911 call.*
2. **NEVER RUSH TOWARD OR YELL AT THE OFFICER** Remember the responding officer will still be trying to assess who is in danger, who has information, and who is the person making the threats.
3. **SAFELY SECURE FAMILY PETS**
4. **HAVE YOUR CRISIS PLAN HANDY** to assist the officer in stabilizing the situation, and provide the officer with a copy.
5. **LET THE OFFICER TAKE CHARGE** and provide answers to his or her questions. It is the officer's responsibility to take charge and obtain information.
6. **CONTINUE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION** about what you know will help your child to de-escalate; what may cause him or her to become more agitated or threatening; and what resources may be immediately available (providers or emergency care facilities) as appropriate.

REMEMBER: Your ability to provide clear, concise and detailed information in a calm and effective manner is essential to help the officer properly assess the situation and assist you.

REMEMBER: Let the police officer take control of the situation for the safety of everyone involved.