

What Should I Do?

Where Can I Turn?



A Mental Health Resource for Parents

Getting the Right Care

As a parent or guardian, there's nothing more important than your child's well-being. For most children and teens, behavior and mood changes are a normal part of growing up. However, if you believe your child is struggling with mental health issues, finding the right services to help them can feel overwhelming. Treatment options include individual or family counseling, full or partial day outpatient treatment, inpatient mental health care or residential care facilities.

What should I do?

- When you spend time with your child and pay attention to what's going on in their world, it's an expression of love and support.
- Talk to your child. Sharing your concerns may give you a better understanding of what's going on.
- Meet with your child's doctor, school counselor or school nurse about your child's mental health.

Where can I turn?

These resources can provide helpful information and support to parents and guardians of a child struggling with mental health issues:

- Reach out to New Jersey Mental Health Cares at 866-202-HELP or www.njmentalhealthcares.org.
- If you have an insurance card, call the 800 number on the back to find covered services near you.
- Call the New Jersey Suicide Prevention Hopeline at 855-NJHopeline (855-654-6735).
- Contact your local county mental health screening service. These centers provide rapid assessments and interventions for individuals in a mental health emergency and direct them toward appropriate services. www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/home/hotlines/MH_Screening_Centers.pdf.
- If you believe your child is in immediate danger, call 911.



Identifying a Crisis

A mental health crisis can be any variety of situations in which a child's condition may put them at risk – risk of hurting themselves, risk of hurting others or risk of not functioning in a healthy way. Knowing the right thing to do for a child in a mental health crisis isn't easy. If your child needs help and you feel like you're at a breaking point, that's the time to seek immediate attention.

What should I do?

Watch for these warning signs of a crisis situation in your child:

- Isolation from family and friends
- Behavior changes that are out of the norm
- A drop in grades at school
- Aggression, hostility toward others or destruction of property
- Expressing suicidal thoughts or threatening to harm others
- Experiencing hallucinations or delusions.

Where can I turn?

- If you feel your child's life is in immediate danger, call 911.
- Contact the local county health department screening service; you can find the contact information here: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/home/hotlines/MH_Screening_Centers.pdf.
- If your child has a medical emergency in conjunction with a psychiatric crisis, your local hospital's emergency department will do evaluations and make recommendations for follow-up care.



Asking the Right Questions

Seeking mental health care is an important first step toward treating your child's illness and charting a path forward. Throughout treatment, parents and guardians play a critical role as advocates for their child in a system that can be complex and confusing.

What should I do?

Whether the recommendation is for inpatient, outpatient or residential services, there are basic questions you can ask that will help you advocate for your child.

- How long before my child begins to receive services?
- How will I be involved in my child's treatment?
- What are my rights as a parent or guardian while my child's in treatment?
- Will my insurance cover these services and if not, what can I do?
- Will my child have to go on medication?

- Will my child be arrested for their actions during a mental health crisis?
- Who will we work with to develop a care plan?
- What services are available if we are not able to care for my child at home?
- What support is available for siblings and parents?
- What services are available to support my child at school?
- How can I support my child while in treatment ?

Supporting Your Child While in Treatment

Recovery isn't always a straight line; there will likely be obstacles and setbacks along the way. Parents and other loved ones can provide valuable support during this journey.

What can I do?

- Supportive relationships are an important part of the treatment process. Stay connected with your child.
- Listen to your child, be patient and try not to judge their thoughts or actions.
- Be aware that mental health challenges are often cyclical – symptoms may come and go, and sometimes symptoms may not be noticeable.
- Encourage your child to talk with their doctor, school counselor or other mental health professional if they don't want to discuss their illness with you.

Where can I turn?

- NJ Parent Link www.nj.gov/njparentlink provides information and resources to help parents support their child's well-being.
- New Jersey Parent-to-Parent Support is dedicated to helping parents through challenging times, available at 800-654-7726 or spanadvocacy.org/programs/.

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