



SUPPORTING AND DE-ESCALATING INDIVIDUALS IN CRISIS

Resource Guide for Maine State Employees

INTRODUCTION

The *Supporting and De-Escalating Individuals in Crisis* Resource Guide is a tool for Maine State employees who have completed the *Supporting and De-Escalating Individuals in Crisis* training that is offered in partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Maine).

When an individual is in crisis, the brain will be activated and will respond to a perceived or unknown threat. This can be a trigger of anxiety, feeling out of control, feeling threatened (physical, emotional, financial), mental health conditions (depression, anxiety, psychosis), or an unknown reason. Regardless of the reason, the brain will react and respond the same way and the same techniques can be helpful in de-escalation.

The purpose of this resource guide is to provide you with an immediate tool to use in a crisis situation. It is imperative that you follow Maine State and departmental policies and procedures when in a crisis situation. This resource guide is *not* a substitute to Maine State and departmental policies and procedures.



SIGNS OF A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

A mental health crisis can change the brain and body. Possible changes may include, but are not limited to:

Brain (difficulty with ...)	Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word retrieval and processing • Impulse control and judgment • Insight and decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in respiration and heart rate • Increase in blood pressure • Decrease in fine motor skills



ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADDRESS THE EMOTION FIRST

- Acknowledge the person’s emotion
 - “It seems you are upset. Can you help me understand why?”
- Acknowledge the person’s issue
 - “Help me understand what concerns you the most.”
- Actively listen and summarize the situation.
 - The person’s level of importance and priorities may not be the same as yours. Listen to what the person is saying, then ask which one to address first.
 - Have the person rank multiple issues to encourage motivation toward resolution.
- Regardless of what they are saying – validate the person’s feelings.
 - This is not the time to argue with the person or assume what is factual.



AGREEMENT IN COMMUNICATION

Come to an agreement with the person in how to communicate.

- “I want to hear all of your concerns without interrupting so that I will know how I can best help you. After you finish, it will be my turn to speak.”

- “I will listen to your concerns without interruption so that I can clearly understand. Then I will ask you to do the same for me so that you can understand me clearly.”



USE ‘WE’ STATEMENTS

If a person is escalated, they may feel isolated, out of control, or chaotic, and we want the person to feel connected with you to positively move forward.

- “What do you think we can do together?”
- “This is beyond my capability, let me think of who can best help.” (teamwork)

If you are unable to assist the person, help identify other resources and then support in accessing it with the person. Do not tell the person that it is someone else’s role.



REDIRECT THE PERSON’S THOUGHT PROCESS

Find a simple way to connect with them. This starts to bring the brain out of survival mode and starts to calm the body. And remember the only thing you can control in an encounter is yourself.

- Mirror Neurons: Do simple things that will encourage the person to mirror what you are doing, such as slow deep breaths, relaxed posture, calm voice.
- Rule of 5: no more than 5 letters in a word, 5 words in a sentence, and a pause of 5 seconds between each sentence.
- Silence: You do not need to speak and fill space in the conversation. Pause to show that you are trying to slow down and think of alternative solutions.
 - Sip on water
- Be respectful.
 - “I am so sorry you are experiencing this.”
- Monitor your non-verbal communication – eye contact, body posture, breathing rate.



SIGNS OF SAFETY CONCERNS AND THREAT TO DO HARM

Direct Signs	Indirect Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly states having thoughts of death or dying, self-harm, or harming others • Writes or posts on social media having thoughts of death or dying, self-harm, or harming others • Engages in self-harm or obtains means to do self-harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes passive statements about death or dying, i.e. “things will be better when I am gone” or “it wouldn’t be bad if I went to sleep and didn’t wake up” • Expressing hopelessness, i.e. “what is the point?” • Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities • Giving away possessions or putting affairs in order



TAKE ACTION

- Asking the person questions in a direct, caring, nonjudgmental tone has been found to reduce the risk that they will die of suicide. Do not worry about worry about the person getting mad or feeling like you are overstepping boundaries. It is far more important to help the person.
 - “I am worried about you. Are you having thoughts about suicide?”
 - “I care about you. Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
 - “What you said / posted / wrote concerns me. Have you thought about dying?”

- If the person answers yes, then ask:
 - “Have you ever had these thoughts before?”
 - “Have you ever attempted suicide before?”
 - “Have you thought about when and how you would kill yourself?”



PROVIDE RESOURCES

If you have the ability to call for the person and help make a warm hand off, it will be helpful.

- “I am worried about you and want to connect you with someone who can help. Do you want to call the state or crisis line? Would you prefer to text or call?”

Statewide Crisis Number: 1-888-568-1112 (call or text)

National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

National Text Line: text Home to 741741

IF SOMEONE IS AT IMMINENT RISK – TAKEN AN OVERDOSE, HAS A WEAPON PRESENT, ETC. – CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY AND REQUEST A CIT OFFICER.



SELF-CARE

The only person you can control is yourself! Take care of yourself by drinking water, exercising, getting plenty of sleep, eating well-balanced meals, having positive people in your life, taking breaks, and getting fresh air.

If you have experienced a crisis situation and want support, please reach out:

Living Resources Program

The Living Resources Program offers someone to talk to and resources to consult whenever and wherever you need them – 24/7 support, resources, and information.

- Call: 1-844-207-LINK
- TTY: 1-800-697-0353
- Online: www.guidanceresources.com
- App: GuidanceNowSM
- Web ID: LivingME



Office of Employee Health & Wellness

Phone:
 (207) 624-7380
 or 1-800-422-4503
 TTY: dial Maine Relay 711

<https://www.maine.gov/bhr/oe/home>