

Helping Your Family *Before, During, and After a Crisis*

PARENT & CAREGIVER GUIDE

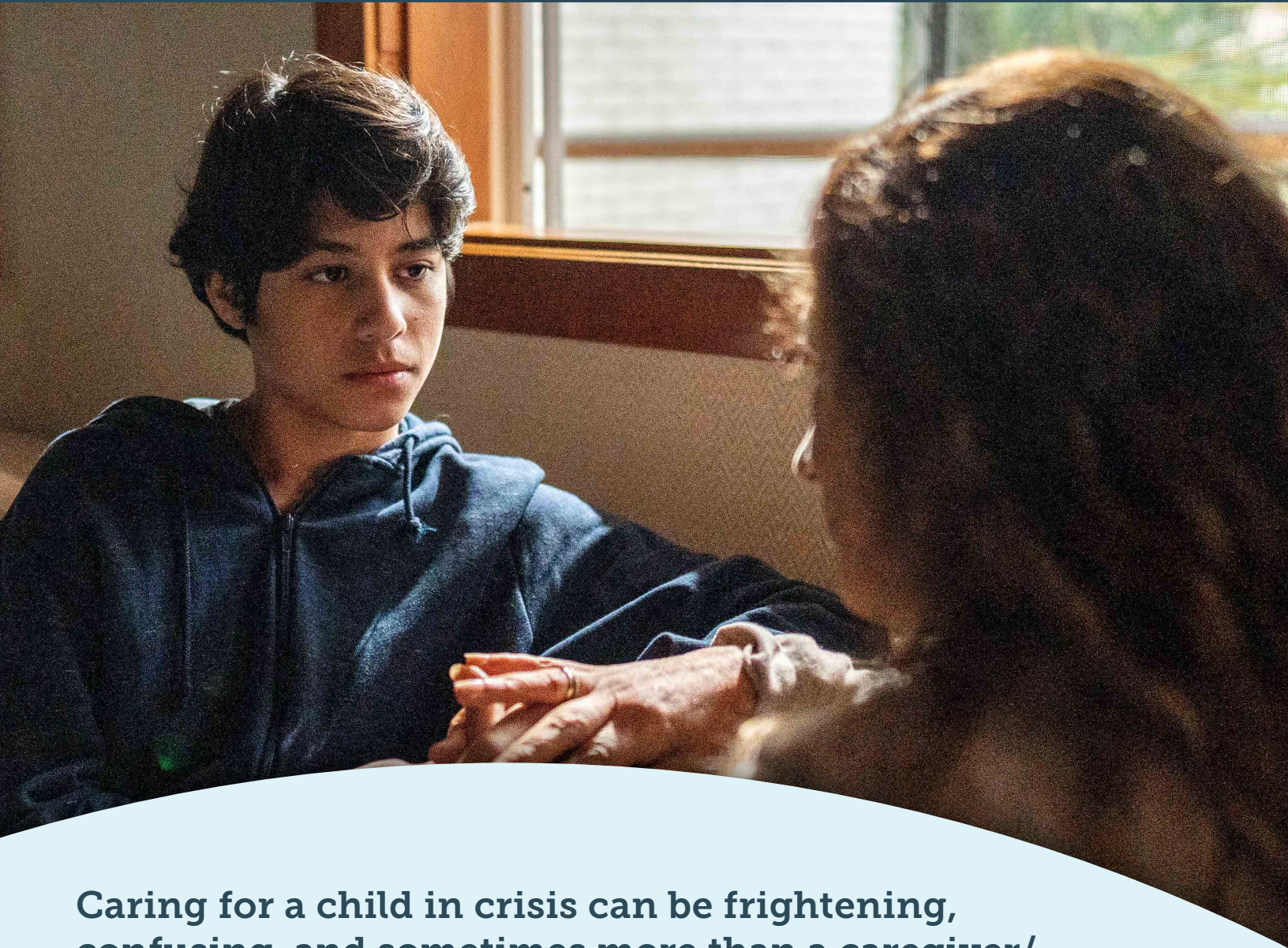


THE BAKER CENTER
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Have you ever been concerned...

You can't keep your child or others in the house safe?

You don't know who to call when things feel unsafe?



Caring for a child in crisis can be frightening, confusing, and sometimes more than a caregiver/family can handle alone.

Asking for help doesn't mean you've done anything wrong, and being prepared doesn't mean there will be a crisis. Sometimes asking for help is needed to keep everyone safe.



Please do not leave safety to chance.



Preparing

Parents/Caregivers are most helpful to a child when the family:

- Is prepared to handle a crisis.
- Knows when and where to get help.
- Can communicate effectively with emergency first responders or other treatment providers.
- Has identified and practiced strategies that help to calm the child.
- Considers creating a safety plan. Let the child's clinician, pediatrician, or school guidance counselor know you have safety concerns and would like help.



Identifying Resources

- Complete a **Crisis Worksheet (p.5)**
- Identify and connect with trusted supports. These may include family members, neighbors, or faith community members.
- Consider connecting with your local police department before a crisis occurs. Call the non-emergency number to begin this partnership. Police officers want to know what works or doesn't work when it comes to keeping a child safe.



Helping

You may be able to de-escalate a challenging situation. Your goal is to calm the situation with your voice, body, and actions.

- Keep your voice and body calm – children take cues from your behavior.
- Be patient. Listen. Support. Ask how you can help: "What do you need right now?"
- Verbally prompt your child to use a rehearsed strategy or point to it on a list of calming skills.
- Offer choices if possible - avoid anything that may feel scary (intense eye contact, no space).
- Avoid overreacting, threatening, reasoning, or arguing with your child.
- Be prepared to offer information to the first responders or treatment team.



Working With Local Police

- In a crisis, families can and should call 911. First responders are trained to know what to do in a crisis.
- Police officers take an oath to assist and serve all community members.
- Some communities have Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers who are skilled in helping individuals with mental health needs and substance abuse concerns.
- Once you ask for help, your role is to provide information to support the best possible outcome. Police officers will be in charge of the crisis once they arrive.
- Police officers may check in with families, calm an escalating situation, stay with a family while a clinician is reached, help with transport to the hospital, and/or calm other family members.

Families Can Use This Guide:

BEFORE a crisis to identify and connect with supports, and to practice strategies.

DURING a crisis to assess if you can handle the situation on your own. If you need to call for help, use the 911 Script (p.7) and share Crisis Worksheet (p.5) with first responders.

AFTER a crisis to review what helped and what might work better next time, and to revise the crisis materials.

Crisis Action Plan

Is There A Chance Of Immediate Danger
To Your Child, Yourself, Or Others?

NO

Can We Handle This
Crisis Ourselves?

YES

Our Tools

- Use de-escalation techniques
- Consult Crisis Worksheet (p.5)
- Re-evaluate your options
- Consider getting more help if crisis not resolving
- Use one of your calming strategies

Is Managing Crisis Sustainable
Beyond Today?

YES

NO

YES

Get Immediate Help!

- Call 911 (USE 911 CRISIS SCRIPT) (p.7)
- Go to nearest Emergency Room
- Call MA Emergency Services Program/Mobile Crisis Intervention: 1-877-382-1609

Call For Help Or Guidance. Consider Calling:

- Clinician – Crisis Team – Police
- Other trusted individual (family, neighbor, faith community)
- Refer to Crisis Worksheet (p.5)
- Use one of your calming strategies

Follow Current Treatment Plan

- Prepare Crisis Worksheet (p.5) if you haven't
- See therapist, take medication as prescribed
- Know your community-based supports
- Review resources now - don't wait for a crisis
- Have child see therapist, take medication as prescribed

Crisis Worksheet

Complete on your own or with a clinician

CHILD'S NAME: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

What name and gender does your child prefer to use?

Child's disability/diagnosis (optional):

Child attends (name of school):

Medical Concerns:

Medications:

Child has the following behaviors (please describe):

Child's reaction to unfamiliar people (please describe):

Child is verbal:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Child is:

☐ Deaf ☐ Hard of Hearing

Allergies:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Child may react to loud noises (i.e. sirens):

☐ Yes ☐ No

Child is capable of being home without an adult:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Child is able to be in the community independently:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Weapons/firearms in the home:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Child is afraid/anxious around new people:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Crisis Worksheet

Complete on your own or with a clinician

Given child's disability, they may:

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Panic if yelled at and lash out if touched or physically restrained.
- ☐ Misinterpret things you tell or ask the child to do.
- ☐ Not be able to answer your questions.
- ☐ Appear not to be listening or paying attention.
- ☐ Tend to interpret statements literally.
- ☐ Appear rude or say things that sound tactless, especially when anxious or confused.
- ☐ Have difficulty making eye contact.
- ☐ Speak too loudly, too softly, or with unusual intonation.
- ☐ OTHER:

Strategies that might help:

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Clearly identify yourself as a law enforcement officer/first responder.
- ☐ Understand that unusual behaviors are part of the child's disability.
- ☐ Avoid touching or restraining the child unless absolutely necessary.
- ☐ Speak to the child in normal, calm, non-confrontational tones.
- ☐ Tell child what is needed as politely, clearly, simply, literally, as possible in small step-by-step directions.
- ☐ OTHER: (i.e. favorite places to visit, toys, likes, etc.)

Parent/caregiver contact information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Support Team information:

Community-based supports:

Therapist: _____

Psychiatrist: _____

Pediatrician: _____



This form was adapted with permission from
the Concord Massachusetts Police Department.

Resources

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

1-800-273-TALK(8255)

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

NAMI MASSACHUSETTS COMPASS

Provides help navigating mental health and related systems in Massachusetts.

1-800-370-9085

www.namimass.org/resources/compass

PPAL (PARENT PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY LEAGUE)

Provides guidance and support for Massachusetts families and their children with mental health needs.

1-866-815-8122

www.ppal.net

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY SERVICE PROGRAM/MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION

Teams of clinicians available 24/7 for mental health and substance abuse crisis assessment, intervention, and stabilization services.

1-877-382-1609

www.masspartnership.com

CRISIS TEXT LINE

text "HOME" to 741741

www.crisistextline.org

OTHER COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES:



SAMPLE 911 CRISIS SCRIPT

If you think you may need to call for help, practice what you might say. Effectively communicating your concerns will help a first responder prepare to interact with your child.

My child is having a mental health emergency.

Please send officers trained in crisis intervention or mental health response.

My safety concerns are: _____.

My child is _____ **years old.**

My child's name is _____.

My child does/does not have a weapon.

My child has a medical condition: _____.

There are _____ **other people present.**

There are _____ **other children present.**

If possible, please tell the responding officers to come without lights and sirens and not to bring the fire department.

If calling from a cell phone you will need to provide your physical location.





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