

CALLING 9-1-1

Calling 9-1-1 regarding a person with a mental illness is an extremely stressful act. This step should be taken **only in an emergency**. Not only do you have concern for the person about whom you are making the call, but you also want to make sure that you give law enforcement accurate information so that they will be able to respond effectively and safely. Try to **control the volume of your voice**. Although this is a very emotionally charged time, when you shout over the phone, it is difficult for the 9-1-1 Operator to understand what you are saying and the information may not be accurately received. Try to **speak as calmly and clearly** as possible.

Tell the 9-1-1 Operator the Following Information

- Your name and address
- The person's name and your relationship with them
- A description of what the person is wearing
- That the person has a mental illness and the diagnosis (such as Bipolar Disorder)
- Any medication being used - if use has stopped and for how long
- Any history of violent acting out – is there a past history of fighting with police
- Do you feel threatened?
- If the person hears voices
- If the person fears someone
- If there are any weapons in the house (If there are weapons, try to safely remove them before calling 9-1-1.)
- What the person is doing and saying now and where they are in the house
- Request a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) officer who has experience in working with people who have a mental illness.

When Police Arrive

Have **all the lights in the house turned on**, so that all occupants can be clearly visible to the arriving officers. Have **nothing in your hands** if you come out of the house to meet the officers. **Do not run up to the officers**. They have no idea who you are and anything you may carry can possibly be interpreted as a weapon. It is essential that the **officers responding** to your emergency call **establish a comfort zone** – knowing who the person with the mental illness is, and that you, who possibly may be also agitated, are not a threat. As **calmly** as possible, **identify yourself**. Tell the officers:

- Who you are & your relationship
- Who you have called about
- That the person has a mental illness
- What kind of mental illness it is
- What medication is being taken
- If medication use has stopped and for how long
- If the person is violent, delusional, or paranoid
- Any history of suicide attempts
- An attending psychiatrist's and/or case manager's telephone number

Officers responding to a 9-1-1 emergency call **are very focused** when they arrive on the scene. First, they will make the scene safe for you, the person with the mental illness, and themselves. The more informed and at ease the officers are, the less likelihood that anyone will be injured or that the situation will worsen. **Spend all the time** that is necessary **answering all of the officers' questions**. Answer directly and concisely. **Do not ramble**. Offer any advice you deem helpful. Officers tend to tune out persons who try to tell their entire life's story. After this is done, they will usually be able to deal with you and to answer any questions. Although it is difficult in times of crisis, **being patient is essential**.