

Calling 911 And Talking With Police

If a situation escalates into a crisis, you may have to call the police. Thankfully, there are a few things you can do to keep the situation as calm as possible.

On The Phone

Share all the information you can with your 911 operator. Tell the dispatcher that your loved one is having a mental health crisis and explain her mental health history and/or diagnosis. If the police who arrive aren't aware that a mental health crisis is occurring, they cannot handle the situation appropriately. Many communities have crisis intervention team (CIT) programs that train police officers to handle and respond safely to psychiatric crisis calls. Not every police officer is trained in a CIT program, but you should ask for a CIT officer if possible.

During A Crisis

Police are trained to maintain control and ensure safety. If you are worried about a police officer overreacting, the best way to ensure a safe outcome is to stay calm. When an officer arrives at your home, say "this is a mental health crisis." Mention you can share any helpful information, then step out of the way. Yelling or getting too close to the officer is likely to make him feel out of control. You want the officer as calm as possible.

Be aware that your loved one may be placed in handcuffs and transported in the back of a police car. This can be extremely upsetting to witness, so be prepared.

What Can The Police Do?

- **Transport a person who wants to go to the hospital.** A well-trained CIT officer can often talk to a person who is upset, calm him down and convince him to go to the hospital voluntarily.
- **Take a person to a hospital for an involuntary evaluation.** In certain circumstances, police can force a person in crisis to go to the hospital involuntarily for a mental health evaluation. The laws vary from state to state.
- **Check on the welfare of your family member** if you are worried about her or can't reach her. Call the non-emergency number for the police department in your community and explain why you are concerned. Ask them to conduct a welfare check.

If you have questions about the laws in your state, talk to your local police department or NAMI Hawaii at info@namihawaii.org or 591-1297.

Tips for Hawaii:

- The person can only be taken to the hospital involuntarily if they commit a crime or if they are an imminent threat of danger to self or others.
- Call Police right away. Don't wait.
- Stay calm when talking to the police.
- Present evidence such as photos, emails, damages, and video (take videos/photos only if safe to do so).
- Calmly ask the police officer to call the police psychologist.