

Crisis Planning Fact Sheet for Providers

What is a crisis plan?

A crisis plan is a prioritized written list of coping strategies and sources for support that an individual can use before or during a crisis. Triggers and warning signs are identified to emphasize the need to prevent problems before a crisis occurs.

A crisis plan should be:

- Brief, short-term
- Completed in the individual's own words
- Easy to read and carry; i.e. accessible
- Supported by providers; integrated

When is a crisis plan recommended?

- A crisis plan is considered appropriate when an individual is at high risk of self-harm, suicide or harm to others, or the individual's safe community tenure is otherwise threatened.
- Best practice dictates that a crisis plan is completed when the crisis is over or when the individual is doing well.

What are the benefits of an individual having a crisis plan?

- A crisis plan has been known to reduce suicide risk and is a valuable adjunct to a risk assessment.
- Crisis plans, when completed jointly with an individual and his/her treatment team, are also known to decrease hospital admissions.
- It fosters collaboration between an individual and a clinician, building a therapeutic alliance (e.g., problem solving, identifying support systems and strengths, learning new coping skills).
- The plan allows an individual to maintain some degree of control over his/her life even when it feels like everything is out of control.

Where should an individual keep a copy of his or her crisis plan?

Discuss where the individual will keep the crisis plan and how it will be found during a crisis.

Below are some suggestions:

- Wallet or purse
- Personal records; a place that is accessible and will be remembered
- In the glove compartment of an individual's car
- With a family member
- With a friend or supporter
- With the healthcare team/case manager
- Facility where the individual would likely be admitted if in an acute state
- Managed care entity
- Local crisis team
- With the individual's lawyer, if appropriate, for custody or other legal considerations.

What steps should be taken to ensure the crisis plan is updated / effective?

- Assess the likelihood that the crisis plan will be used and problem-solve with the individual to identify barriers or obstacles to using the plan.
- Evaluate whether the format is appropriate for the individual's capacity and circumstance.
- Review and update the plan periodically when the individual's circumstances or needs change (e.g., diagnosis, treatment plan/goals, supports, team members).
- Date the crisis plan in order to identify the most current version.

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