New Jersey Crisis Support Toolkit

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Crisis Services Toolkit
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Forward

The primary aim of the New Jersey Crisis Services Toolkit is to empower the crisis support workforce to deliver strength focused practices. The Crisis support workforce consists of all professional counselors, practitioners, and peer specialists who work in crisis/acute care services, including mobile response, community supports, crisis call centers, crisis stabilization and screening centers. This Toolkit is designed to serve as a comprehensive guide born out of real-world experiences and insights from experts, providers, and persons served by the crisis service system. Within these pages, you will find a roadmap for understanding the complexities of crisis support services. Drawing upon lived experiences, evidence-based practices and innovative approaches, this toolkit empowers its readers to foster resilience, promote wellness, and build stronger, more resilient communities. It offers practical tools, strategies, and frameworks designed to equip the crisis support workforce of all types, and individuals alike, with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate crises with compassion and efficacy.

Section 1: Overview of the New Jersey Crisis Services Toolkit

This section highlights how the New Jersey Crisis Services Toolkit was developed and how it can be used. Key crisis management skills including crisis awareness, establishing habits and routines, planning, and control are reviewed. These skills are vital for managing crises effectively and are reinforced by environmental factors such as supportive interactions, access to information, and opportunities to regain personal control.

How the Toolkit was Developed

This Toolkit was co-developed using a collaborative approach involving feedback from the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), a New Jersey Crisis Services Steering Committee, and subject matter experts.

The Purpose of the Toolkit

The primary aim of the New Jersey Crisis Services Toolkit is to help **support a capable and resilient workforce who are prepared to apply strength focused approaches to deliver crisis support services**. The toolkit is also accessible to people seeking crisis supports and services and their families. The toolkit can also serve as a useful training tool and can contribute to continued professional development for crisis service staff in all roles. Organizational leaders can consult the New Jersey Crisis Support Toolkit to ensure adherence to the best practice model and approaches and can be utilized to emphasize and support the wellness self-care of all staffing these roles.

How to use the Toolkit

The toolkit has been prepared as a "living" document; meaning, it should be accessible, easy to use, and useful for staff and organizational leaders. Therefore, agencies are encouraged to add program specific policies and procedures, community-based resource information, and links to other local resources to support staff working in crisis programs and services. Providers can access the information and resources in the various sections of the toolkit in its pdf version (as a downloadable/printable document) or on the website from a laptop, desktop, or mobile device. The online toolkit has been segmented by topic with additional resources of interest to crisis support and service providers included.

The purpose of the New Jersey Crisis Services Toolkit is to serve as a resource for the behavioral healthcare workforce providing crisis supports and services in the New Jersey Crisis System.

Glossary of Terms

- **Crisis**

  A state of upset experienced by an individual, group, or community when an individual is confronted by serious and significant demands that may constitute a turning point for better or worse in their continued wellness. Crisis occurs when individuals are confronted with problems that cannot be solved. These irresolvable issues increase tension, signs of anxiety, a subsequent state of emotional unrest, and an inability to function for extended periods.[1]

- **Crisis System**

  An effective crisis services continuum, with customizations for adult and child/family populations, provides all individuals in crisis a clear pathway for accessing support and options for how best to meet their needs. A wellness-oriented approach to crisis service support is a model that focuses on supporting individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. It emphasizes the person's strengths, self-determination, and the potential for personal growth and well-being.

- **Behavioral Health/Healthcare**

  Behavioral health generally refers to mental health and substance use disorders, life stressors and crises, and stress-related physical symptoms. Behavioral healthcare refers to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of those conditions.

- **NJDMHAS**

  New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

- **SAMHSA**

  Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation.

"When you're in the midst of an emotional crisis, feeling isolated and alone can amplify your distress. Knowing that there are people who care about your wellness and are there to listen can provide immense relief and hope."

The Crisis Services Continuum

An effective crisis services continuum provides all individuals in crisis a clear pathway for accessing support options. The SAMHSA National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care Best Practice Toolkit[2] outlines the essential elements of a comprehensive crisiscare response framed using a three-pronged approach: Someone to Call, Someone to Respond, and Somewhere to Go. Crisis services are defined as universally accessible, available for anyone, anywhere, and anytime. These services include crisis lines that accept all calls and dispatch support based

on the assessed need, mobile crisis teams dispatched to community locations (not hospital emergency departments), and crisis receiving and stabilization facilities serving everyone from all referral sources.

SOMEONE TO CALL[3]

988 24/7 National and Local Crisis Call Centers:

988 is the three-digit dialing code connecting people to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, where compassionate, accessible support is available for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress — whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can also contact 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. The 988 service ensures that all calls are answered locally by well-trained and experienced staff. These crisis call centers aim to connect individuals to local services, dispatch mobile crisis teams, and schedule follow-up appointments with local providers.

In New Jersey, The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) has been working with the five current Lifeline member centers to ensure an effective transition to 988. When a person calls or text to 988, or chat through https://988lifeline.org/chat/, a trained counselor will respond, understand how the person's problem is affecting them, provide support, and share resources that may be helpful. In New Jersey, DMHAS is funding centers to expand their capacity to respond to the 988 Lifeline system.

SOMEONE TO RESPOND[4]

Mobile Crisis Teams:

Mobile Crisis Teams play a crucial role in crisis response, providing support for individuals who need more assistance than can be offered over the phone. Mobile crisis team services offering community-based intervention to individuals in need wherever they are; including at home, work, or anywhere else in the community where the person is experiencing a crisis. These teams, staffed by mental health professionals and peers, are equipped to de-escalate crisis situations and connect individuals to crisis stabilization programs or other necessary services. Collaboration with law enforcement is a key aspect, with police involvement limited to co-responders in high-risk situations.

SOMEWHERE TO GO[4]

Crisis Stabilization Options:

Crisis Stabilization Options serve as a "safe place to go" for individuals in crisis, offering short-term observation and stabilization. These trauma-informed programs not only provide immediate assistance but also identify additional treatment needs. They facilitate a "warm hand-off" to follow-up support, which may include peer supports, outpatient services, or more intensive options like hospitalization.

Defining Crisis

Crisis from the Lens of Wellness[5,6]

During a time of crisis, the person feels upset and has heightened levels of anxiety which impacts ability to focus, concentrate, and solve problems. A person may not be able to think clearly and rationally, may have a limited capacity to evaluate events and respond to others. People may have difficulty evaluating and responding to the demands of others and the tasks related to the crisis.

They may experience tension, physical symptoms or pain and associated feelings of frustration, sadness, anger, and helplessness. They may not be able to sit still, initiate and sustain patterns of activity, and appear to lack a sense of zest to purse or sustain involvement in activities they formerly performed without any effort (work, leisure/play, self-care, etc.). Typically, they may not be sleeping well and engage in over activity to release tension, which leads to fatigue and ineffectiveness in being able to solve the problems associated with the crisis. Normal daily activity patterns are disrupted and heightened emotional responsiveness manifest itself in symptoms of depression and anxiety. They may become preoccupied with current incapacities which further impact problem solving capacities. Self-concept is impacted as well as the ability to assess capacities and persevere in the face of discomfort. Individuals frequently express a sense of hopelessness. If this pattern persists or is exaggerated, people can be negatively impacted, and they may experience disabling physical and emotional problems and resulting disability. The goal is to help the individual to become aware of and gain a cognitive perspective of the crisis and associated feelings, offer opportunities to verbalize feelings and tension, and re-establishing habits and routines to restore a sense of wellness.

Support

Individuals are believed to be more susceptible to the influence and guidance of others during a crisis. They have heightened desire for help and are susceptible to the influence of interpersonal interaction from supportive figures. Natural and mutual help systems in communities are believed to be an important source of support to help an individual manage/resolve a crisis and develop the capacity to manage crisis effectively in the future. Support can come from a multitude of sources including peer groups, families, caregiving professionals, friends, and neighbors who offer the individual in crisis guidance during the crisis.

- Support can be more effective when provided in frequent and brief intervals.
- Supporters emphasize the time-limited nature of the discomfort, aim to listen, and encourage verbal expression.
- Effective supporters foster hope.

→ Supporters can help the individual to resume habits, routines, and valued life activities.

→ Supporters can promote competence by providing information and guidance in problem solving and the opportunity to verbally express thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment.

→ Support should be focused on helping the individual to restore day-to-day habits and routines.

→ Supporters should encourage active participation in planning and implementation on the part of the individual, focusing on immediate personal wellness needs (i.e., sleep and rest, managing stressful problem situations instead of allowing an individual to dwell on the past and blame others and external events).

Crisis Awareness Skills

To manage a crisis, the person needs to have an awareness of the situation and their reaction to it. Crisis awareness requires the ability to clearly describe the nature of the difficult situation and to express the feelings associated with it. Using crisis awareness skills, the person is able to enhance their understanding, gain an objective view of the crisis, and express feelings such as tension and frustration.

Crisis Awareness Skills include the ability to:

- Clearly describe the nature of the crisis.
- Clearly and objectively describe the meaning and significance of crisis for themselves.
- Freely express feelings, such as tension, anxiety, and frustration.
- Gather information and solicit feedback from peers and other supporters to enhance understanding of crisis.

Crisis awareness skills are enhanced in an environment that provides the person with:

- Information regarding the nature of the crisis.
- Activities that provide constructive outlets, elicit a variety of emotions, and promote exploration, reflection, and opportunity to discuss ideas and feelings aroused by the activity.
- Opportunities to gather feedback to enhance understanding of crisis and enhance one's understanding of habits and routines to support wellbeing.

Establishing Habits and Routines

Habits and routines are often disrupted by a crisis. Re-establishing the habits and routines that keep the person well is an important part of managing a crisis. First, it is important to become aware of physical needs (i.e. sleep, rest, and physical activity) and social and emotional needs; to have access to supports, including secure interpersonal, emotional, and physically stimulating resources; and to seek activities and routines that support and maintain bodily growth and health. This includes engaging in supportive dialogues with helping figures who can guide and support you. Routines need to be re-established, such as encouraging adequate rest to counteract fatigue. It can be helpful to establish (or re-establish) a consistent pattern of an orderly, predictable, daily schedule of work, leisure activity, and social interaction, while resuming valued activities. There are skills that people can establish and use leading to the development of routines to sustain wellness. There are also environmental factors that can help people to establish habits and routines for wellness.

Skills to Establish Habits and Routines include the ability to:

- Organize a daily routine, which includes a balance between rest, physical activity, adequate nutrition, and interaction/forming relationships with supportive figures (including peers).
- Engage in activity that provides constructive release for frustration, anxiety, and other feelings arising from the crisis.

Establishing habits and routines can be helped by an environment that offers:

- Activities that reinforce and provide basic health information on physical activity, eating well, relaxing, setting a regular time to sleep and wakeup, scheduling time to relax, and participating in meaningful and productive activities.
- Activities that require peer interaction and support.

Planning Skills

Managing a crisis requires identifying, focusing, and organizing resources to deal with the immediate problem. Any planning should be flexible with the capacity to change, be reality-based, and be broken down into manageable bits that are shaped to avoid obstacles and overcome barriers that interfere with action.

Planning Skills include the ability to:

- Clearly and objectively identify a specific problem.
- State things that you can do to meet the demands of a problem.
- Describe a daily wellness plan for yourself.
- Outline specific tasks and activities in sequence.
- Identify available resources and supplies that you need to carry out your wellness plan.
- Gather information regarding potential obstacles and barriers that might prevent mastery of your wellness plan.
- Determine whether information is relevant to helping you assume greater control in planning for immediate and short-term goals.

Planning skills can be helped by an environment that offers:

- Anticipatory guidance about stressors that draws attention to the details of the problems in order to help you recognize associated feelings.
- Activities that require organization and can help you prioritize available resources.
- Activities that can help you organize available resources to meet demand of crisis tasks and the demands of organizing a structured daily routine.
- Shared decision-making dialogues to explore practical advice and evaluate information.
- Hope.

Control

A plan requires a focus on competence, mastery, and an optimistic outlook (hope). Perseverance in following through with the plan can be strengthened by enhancing your awareness that you can expect some pain and discomfort, while recognizing that your discomfort will be time-limited.

Control requires the ability to:

- Assume responsibility to initiate a wellness plan.
- Initiate behavioral actions and tasks to implement your wellness plan.
- Exert and sustain effort in the face of obstacles and barriers.

Control can be helped by an environment that offers:

- Opportunities to engage actively in habits and routines and practice self-care skills.
- Anticipatory guidance that draws attention to the action steps in the plan in order to help you recognize and deal with any obstacles or barriers.
- Support networks and groups to increase your chances of mastering the crisis by reminding you of your strengths in the 8 dimensions of wellness and 6 physical wellness domains.
- Hope and belief that implementing your wellness plan will lead to mastery and give you the strength needed for crisis resolution.

The combination of crisis awareness skills, establishing habits and routines, planning, and control provide the foundation you need for managing a crisis. These self-management skills to manage the crisis are facilitated in an environment providing:

Environmental Factors for Wellness in Crisis

- Opportunities to interact one-on-one or in a small group that offer guidance, support, safety, and opportunity to express thoughts, share information and explore resources.
- Information and resources that focus attention on relevant problems.
- Activities that are purposefully focused and provide a balance between attention to task requirements and expression of emotional needs.
- Opportunities for individuals to assume responsibility and control in planning.

Suicide Prevention Trainings, Models, and Screening

QPR[8]

QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer, the 3 simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. Just as people trained in CPR and the Heimlich Maneuver help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. QPR training ranges from one to 20 hours.

eCPR[9]

Emotional CPR is a community education program of the National Empowerment Center (NEC) and was created by a diverse group of people who themselves have experienced emotional crisis (http://emotional-cpr.org/about-ecpr.htm). It was developed out of the premise that emotional crisis represents an opportunity for deeper self-awareness, growth, and connectedness with others. With eCPR the public health education program is designed by people with behavioral health conditions to teach others how to help those who are experiencing an emotional crisis. Those who are trained in eCPR are better able to understand and assist those who are exhibiting behavior that is brought on by an emotional crisis, and to provide the support needed to work through a crisis. With eCPR, peers and laypeople are trained in how to talk to someone who is facing a crisis and identify how to get that person the right help.

Emotional CPR has a three-step action plan:

1. Connecting
2. Empowering
3. Revitalizing

(http://emotional-cpr.org/about-ecpr.htm).

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)[10]

ASIST is a two-day training that helps participants to recognize when someone may be thinking about suicide, and how to provide a skilled intervention and develop a safety plan with the person to connect them to further support. ASIST training also helps participants to consider how personal and community attitudes about suicide affect someone's openness to seek help and the provider's ability to provide it.

https://livingworks.net/training/livingworks-asist/

Topics covered in ASIST training include:

- Understand how attitudes affect views on suicide and prevention.

- Provide assistance and suicide first aid to a person at risk.

- Identify the elements of a suicide safety plan and the actions needed to implement it.

- Value improving and integrating suicide prevention resources in the community.

- Recognize other aspects of suicide prevention, including self-care.

safeTALK[11]

LivingWorks safeTALK is a four-hour training that equips people to be more alert to someone thinking of suicide and better able to connect them with further help. (https://livingworks.net/training/livingworks-safetalk/). The safeTALK training helps participants to learn how to reach out to someone thinking about suicide and help them keep safe by promptly connecting them to further support. The role of the "connector" is the main focus of this training.

Suicide Assessment Five-step Evaluation and Triage (SAFE-T)[12]

The five-step SAFE-T plan involves identifying risk factors and protective factors, conducting a suicide inquiry, determining risk level and interventions, and documenting a treatment plan. Suicide Safe mobile app based on the SAFE-T is available on the app stores. You can download SAMHSA's Suicide Safe mobile app on your mobile device. You can also access a pocket-guide of the SAFE-T here: https://store.samhsa.gov/product/safe-t-pocket-card-suicide-assessment-five-step-evaluation-and-triage-clinicians/sma09-4432

Zero Suicide[13]

Suicide prevention is something that the entire system needs to implement and roll out. To this end, the Zero Suicide initiative is aimed at improving the system so that zero suicides happen. Zero Suicide is based on the belief that suicide deaths for individuals under the care of health and behavioral health systems are preventable. Within this framework, the developers have put together a toolkit and trainings to help the behavioral health system achieve this goal. There are 7 Elements in the Zero Suicide model necessary for healthcare systems to transform suicide care.

The Zero Suicide toolkit is available here: https://zerosuicide.edc.org/toolkit/zero-suicide-toolkitsm

Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS)[14]

There are many different screening tools, and you should again rely on your agencies' policies for which screening tool is used, who uses it, and what the follow-up steps are if a person scores "high" on the scale. The CSSRS is an evidence-based tool to assess for suicide through a series of simple, plain-language questions that anyone can ask. Any person can use the scale, not just clinicians. However, in some programs, only the licensed clinician and/or screener uses it.

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Section 2:
The New Jersey Crisis Services System[15]

This section identifies programs, services, and interventions offered by The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), demonstrating the concerted efforts aimed at promoting resilience, and wellness of people served by the behavioral health system across the state.

Overview of the Crisis Response System

The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) serves as the Single State Agency (SSA) for Substance Use and the State Mental Health Authority (SMHA) as designated by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Division oversees New Jersey's adult system of community-based behavioral health services. These agencies provide a full array of services, including substance use prevention and early intervention, emergency screening, outpatient and intensive outpatient mental health and addictions services, partial care and partial hospitalization, case management, medication assisted treatment for substance use, and long and short term mental health and substance use residential services, in addition to other evidence-based practices such as the Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT), supported employment and education, and supportive housing.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

The 988 Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, every day of the year. You can dial or text 988, or chat with a 988 counselor at www.988lifeline.org/chat. Call, text or chat with 988 any time if you are having suicidal thoughts, or a mental health or substance use crisis.

ReachNJ (844-REACHNJ)

ReachNJ is New Jersey's 24 hour a day/7 day a week addiction helpline (**1-844-732-2465**). ReachNJ is a central call-in line for New Jersey residents who are looking for help with a substance use disorder (SUD). Each call to ReachNJ is answered by a live person in the first 30 seconds. Trained staff will screen callers to identify their exact needs, are able to provide referrals to supportive services, and a seamless connection to a local treatment provider. ReachNJ serves NJ residents of all ages regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

Psychiatric Emergency Screening / Designated Screening Service

Public or private ambulatory care service designated by the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, which provides mental health services including assessment, emergency and referral services to mentally ill persons in a specified geographical area. Screening is the process by which it is ascertained that the individual being considered for commitment meets the standards for both mental illness and dangerousness as defined in P.L. 1987,c.116 (N.J.S.A. 30.4-27.1 et seq.) and that all stabilization options have been explored or exhausted.

Affiliated Emergency Service (AES):

AES operates under a contractual agreement with a geographic area's Designated Screening Service, providing critical support in mental health emergencies. AES offers comprehensive services including crisis intervention counseling, medical care arrangement, medication monitoring for stabilization, and continual assessment and follow-up. It also facilitates connections to appropriate care settings and manages a hotline staffed by clinical personnel. Additional services might include extended crisis evaluation and outreach efforts to ensure patient stabilization and continued care.

Acute Care Family Support:

The Acute Care Family Support Project is targeted to families with an adult member who is experiencing a psychiatric crisis and is being assessed in a Designated Screening Service or Affiliated Emergency Service. They provide onsite or offsite support to the family while their loved one is being assessed, educate them regarding services/treatment in an acute care setting, including the commitment process, and link them to existing family support in the community. Family may also include significant others and primary caretakers.

Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams (MCORT)

MCORT will respond to non-life-threatening mental health, substance use or suicidal crises in the community. Referrals to MCORT may be made by 988 crisis counselors following an assessment of the individual in crisis. The program will be operational statewide, 24 hours a day every day of the year. MCORTs are designed to include a two-person team (a trained peer support specialist and a bachelor's level mental health professional), with a master's level professional providing clinical backup from a remote location. MCORT staff will help to de-escalate a crisis and stabilize individuals in the community. MCORT will be dispatched without law enforcement whenever it is deemed safe to do so.

Crisis Diversion Programs

These intensive case management programs aim to minimize unnecessary psychiatric hospitalizations by supporting individuals in setting treatment goals and connecting them to community-based services, enabling them to remain in their environment.

ARRIVE Together (Alternative Responses to Reduce Instances of Violence and Escalation)

ARRIVE Together is a co-response model for mental health and law enforcement. Officers in counties using the follow-up model identify individuals who would benefit from mental health resources and supports. Mental health and community partners then follow-up without law enforcement to assist residents in gaining and navigating access to mental health and other support services. Those counties using a close in time follow-up model have mental health partners who are available to meet officers while they are interacting with a resident potentially in need of behavioral health support and/or evaluation and provide those resources immediately when possible. ARRIVE is now active in all twenty-one of New Jersey's counties, making New Jersey the first state in the country to have a statewide law enforcement and mental health alternative response program.
https://www.njoag.gov/programs/arrive-together/

Early Intervention Support Services (EISS)

EISS offers short-term mental health services for adults experiencing significant emotional or psychiatric distress in need of immediate intervention. Services include crisis intervention and stabilization in an alternative setting to hospital emergency rooms, with outreach services available. EISS is available in all 21 counties, providing mental health urgent care centers for immediate intervention.

Crisis and Peer Respite Residences

These short-term residential programs offer an alternative to inpatient psychiatric hospitalization for individuals in crisis. Staffed 24/7, crisis homes work to stabilize individuals within the community.

Inpatient Treatment

Voluntary Inpatient Treatment Settings

A unit within a hospital which provides transitional intensive short-term treatment for the care of adult patients affected with acute or chronic mental illness on a voluntary basis. These units may be intermingled on STCF (short term care facility) units. Individuals under this status voluntarily admit themselves for a STCF for stabilization and treatment. However, a STCF shall agree to make every effort to discharge the person to appropriate voluntary outpatient services before making a referral to a State or county hospital.

Involuntary Inpatient Commitment

"In need of involuntary commitment" or "in need of involuntary commitment to treatment' means that an adult with mental illness, whose mental illness causes the person to be dangerous to self, or dangerous to others or property and who is unwilling to accept appropriate treatment voluntarily after it has been offered, needs outpatient treatment or inpatient care at a short-term care or psychiatric facility or special psychiatric hospital because other services are not appropriate or available to meet the person's mental health care needs. (N.J.S.A. 30:4- 27.2m).

Short term care facilities (STCF)

Acute care adult psychiatric units in a general hospital for the short-term admission of individuals who meet the legal standards for commitment and require intensive treatment. All admissions to STCF must be referred through an emergency or designated screening center. STCF are designated by DMHAS to serve a specific geographic area, usually a county.

County and State Hospitals

Psychiatric residential mental health facilities operated by the state and counties are authorized to accept persons in need of involuntary commitment under NJS 30:4-27.2 et seq. Admissions are only accepted from Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services and Short Term Care Facilities.

Intermediate Care Units

A specific type of psychiatric care facility that provides an intermediate level of inpatient treatment. This level of care typically serves individuals who require more extensive treatment than what is provided in a standard acute psychiatric unit but do not need long-term psychiatric care. Such units are equipped to handle patients needing intensive supervision and multiple therapies due to severe and complex psychiatric conditions.

Outpatient Services

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC)

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) are designed to ensure access to coordinated comprehensive behavioral health care. CCBHCs are required to serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age. This includes developmentally appropriate care for children and youth. CCBHCs must meet standards for the range of services they provide and are required to get people into care quickly. The CCBHC model requires:

- Crisis services to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Comprehensive behavioral health services to be available so people who need care don't have to piece together the behavioral health support they need across multiple providers
- Care coordination to be provided to help people navigate behavioral health care, physical health care, social services, and the other systems they are involved

Involuntary Outpatient Commitment (IOC)

IOC programs coordinate community-based mental health services for individuals, who are court ordered into mental health treatment. IOC programs enroll individuals who have been assessed by mental health professionals and adjudicated by a court as meeting the legal standard for involuntary outpatient treatment. IOC programs offer:

- Court ordered outpatient-based mental health treatment;
- Assistance with linking with community-based mental health services;
- Monitoring of adherence to the court ordered plan;
- Ongoing assessment of clinical progress;
- Interface with the judiciary including transportation to court hearings and contact with the presiding judge, as needed.

IOC consists of services provided to clients who possess a psychiatric diagnosis, including clients who are seriously and persistently mentally ill, but excluding substance abuse and developmental disability unless accompanied by treatable symptoms of mental illness. Periodic therapy, counseling and supportive services are generally provided at the provider agency for relatively brief sessions (between 30 minutes and 2 hours).

Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services (MAT)

DMHAS administers a system of care that consistently offers individuals the means to seek and sustain recovery. The DMHAS promotes evidence-based practices that include Medication-Assisted Treatment Initiative (MAT) in the management of substance use disorders. The U.S. Department of Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines MAT as the use of medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a whole-patient approach to the treatment of substance use disorders. MAT is clinically driven with a focus on individualized patient care. Research continues to demonstrate medication, along with behavioral therapies, results in successful outcomes.

The FDA has approved certain medications for the treatment of substance use disorders. For alcohol use disorder, the medications include: Naltrexone, Disulfiram and Acamprosate Calcium. The current medications approved for the treatment of opioid use disorders are: Methadone, Buprenorphine and Naltrexone.

The DMHAS licenses numerous treatment programs that serve consumers that want more information or are interested in accessing MAT for their treatment. Licensed treatment programs are listed on this site at https://njsams.rutgers.edu/treatmentdirectory/. For information regarding treatment programs call the IME Addictions Access Center at **1-844-276-2777**. DMHAS has created a searchable directory to assist in locating programs for alcohol and drug abuse treatment and related services in the State for adolescents and adults. The treatment directory can be searched by alphabet or name of treatment agency, by county, by municipality, by type of treatment services, type of care, special populations, type of funding and special initiatives. Those seeking substance use disorder treatment services can also contact their County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Director.

Other Support Services

❯ Wellness Centers

DMHAS currently funds and supports Community Wellness Centers in the 21 counties across the state, and provides dedicated space for individuals to grow in their recovery through self-help, socialization, peer support, opportunities for employment, and specialized wellness programs.

❯ Community Peer Recovery Centers (CPRCs)

CPRCs are a place where individuals can access peer support, information about substance use disorder treatment, recovery support services, and information about other community resources in a supportive substance free environment.

CPRCs provide peer-to-peer recovery support services to prevent recurrence of substance use and promote sustained recovery. All activities and services are led and driven by "peers" (i.e., individuals who have experienced addiction and recovery, either directly or indirectly as a family member or friend). The overall goal of the CPRC is to provide a safe place for individuals in all phases of recovery to gather in support of one another, share experiences, discuss coping skills, and offer each other hope in a community setting. It is the ideal place for those in recovery to receive peer-to-peer support and attain guidance in a number of life-skill areas.

"Peer support in crisis work provides empathetic understanding and relatable experiences, fostering connection and trust that are essential for wellness."

Section 3: Strength-Based Crisis Services & Supports

Introduction

This section highlights that effective strength-based crisis services and supports require a combination of communication and other soft skills that focus on empowering individuals, fostering resilience, and addressing their holistic wellness needs. First, we will define the three main types of support often offered to a person experiencing intense emotional distress followed by important skills, techniques and strategies.

Emotional Support

Involves expressions of empathy, love, trust, and caring. It is the reassurance and encouragement provided by others that can improve emotional wellness during stressful times.[16]

➜ **Example:**
A friend or family member sits with someone in distress, listens to their concerns, offers comforting words, and provides a shoulder to cry on. Offering comfort, listening to their feelings, and providing a compassionate presence to help them feel supported and cared for are all examples of emotional support. This kind of support helps the person feel understood and less alone in their struggles.

Instrumental/Practical Support

Refers to the tangible, physical assistance provided to help someone in need. This could include help with tasks or responsibilities that are difficult to manage during a crisis.[17]

➜ **Example:**
A neighbor helps a person in crisis by running errands for them, preparing meals, or providing transportation to medical appointments. This type of support reduces the practical burdens the individual faces, allowing them to focus on emotional equilibrium.

Informational Support

Involves providing information or collaboratively brainstorming ideas that can help someone to solve problems or cope with difficulties. It is the guidance and resources shared that can aid decision-making and problem-solving. Helping a person who is overwhelmed by a personal crisis by helping them to find ways for someone to take over their work responsibilities temporarily, arranging childcare, or assisting with household chores to ease their daily burden.[16]

➜ **Example:**
A supporter provides the person in distress with information about coping strategies for anxiety, resources for financial assistance, or details about support groups. Other examples of this type of support are providing information about coping mechanisms for stress, recommendations for mental health resources and contact information for local support services to help the person to navigate their situation. This type of support empowers the individual by giving them the tools and knowledge to manage their situation more effectively.

Next is a breakdown of the essential skills needed to offer support:

Person-Centered Approach	Communication skills should prioritize viewing the person as a whole, recognizing their inherent strengths, and focusing on their wellness rather than solely on the crisis situation. This involves active listening, empathy, and demonstrating genuine care and respect for the individual's experiences and perspectives
Strengths-Based Assessment	Crisis support workers should assess the individual's strengths, resources, and coping mechanisms. This involves asking open-ended questions, exploring past successes, and identifying positive aspects of the person's life that can be leveraged to promote resilience and wellness.
Engaging Individuals with Co-Occurring Challenges	Crisis support workers need to be equipped to engage individuals with co-occurring substance use disorders and other complex challenges. This requires knowledge of integrated treatment approaches, harm reduction strategies, and collaborative care coordination with other service providers.
Empowerment and Engagement	Effective communication involves empowering individuals to take an active role in their own resolution of the crisis situation. This includes fostering autonomy, providing options and choices, and collaboratively developing a plan of action that aligns with the person's goals and values.
Managing Intense Emotions	Crisis support workers must be skilled in responding to intense emotions, such as anger, tension, and anxiety, in a calm and compassionate manner. This may involve validating the person's emotions, teaching relaxation techniques, and providing a safe space for emotional expression.
Trauma-Informed Communication	Understanding the impact of trauma on individuals' experiences and responses is essential. Trauma-informed communication involves creating a safe and non-judgmental environment, respecting boundaries, and being sensitive to triggers and potential re-traumatization.
Suicide Risk Assessment and Intervention	Crisis support workers must be trained in suicide risk assessment and intervention techniques. This includes asking direct questions about suicidal ideation, assessing risk factors and protective factors, and connecting the individual with appropriate resources and support services.
Developing Crisis Management Plans	Helping individuals develop a crisis management plan involves collaboratively identifying coping strategies, support networks, and resources that can be utilized during times of distress. This may include teaching self-care skills, developing wellness and safety plans, and establishing communication protocols for accessing support.

Tips for Implementing Strength-Based Strategies:

Begin with rapport-building and validation
to establish trust and connection.

Use strengths-focused language and affirmations
to highlight the individual's capabilities.

Encourage self-reflection and problem-solving
to empower the individual to take ownership of their
recovery journey.

By employing these best practices and skills, crisis support workers can effectively engage and support individuals in extreme distress, helping them to express their feelings, gain composure, and prevent harm.

Here are some key strategies:

Establishing Rapport and Building Trust	Begin by establishing rapport and building trust with the individual. Approach them calmly, respectfully, and non-judgmentally while demonstrating empathy and genuine concern for their well-being.
Active Listening	Practice active listening by giving the person your full attention, maintaining eye contact, and validating their feelings and experiences. Reflect back what they're saying to show that you understand and empathize with their distress Here is video resources that demonstrates active listening: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R-LNuf6uDc
Validation and Empathy	Validate the person's emotions and experiences by acknowledging their feelings and demonstrating empathy. Let them know that it's okay to feel the way they're feeling and that they're not alone in their struggle.
Provide a Safe Space	Create a safe and supportive environment where the person feels comfortable expressing their distress without fear of judgment or reprisal. Ensure privacy and confidentiality to encourage open communication.
Emotional Regulation Support	To help the person regain composure and focus it is important to include speaking calmly and softly, using non-threatening body language, and offering reassurance and support. This type of support helps the individual to feel more centered and grounded. This can help the individual regain a sense of composure and emotional stability, allowing them to navigate the situation with clarity and reduced distress.
Breathing and Grounding Exercises	Teach the person simple breathing and grounding exercises to help them manage intense emotions and regain a sense of control. Encourage them to take slow, deep breaths and focus on their senses to stay grounded in the present moment. Some examples of breathing and grounding exercises are box breathing, 4-7-8 breathing, 5-4-3-2-1 method, and visualization. Explore strategies the have used or do use to feel calm.

Problem-Solving and Coping Skills	Collaboratively explore coping strategies and problem-solving techniques that the person can use to manage their distress more effectively. Help them identify positive coping mechanisms and resources that can provide support during difficult times.
Assessment of Immediate Safety	Conduct a brief assessment of the person's immediate safety to determine if there is an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others. If necessary, take immediate steps to ensure their safety, such as removing access to means or contacting emergency services.
Develop a Safety Plan	Work together to develop a safety plan that outlines steps the person can take to keep themselves safe during times of crisis. Include coping strategies, support contacts, and emergency resources they can access if needed. An example of a commonly used Safety Plan is: https://bgg.11b.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Stanley-Brown-Safety-Plan-8-6-21.pdf
Follow-Up and Support	Provide ongoing follow-up and support to the person. Check in with them based on preferred methods of connection and agreed upon times to offer additional resources or referrals as needed and reinforce their strengths and resilience. It's essential to approach each person with empathy, respect, and a commitment to their wellness.

"Having someone who truly understands what you're going through can make all the difference. It's not just about giving advice, but about walking alongside you during the toughest moments."

Supportive Communication Techniques

There are several critical communication techniques behavioral healthcare workers use when engaging and supporting a person in crisis. The definitions below serve as a reminder for using communication techniques in your interactions

Communication

The process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, or feelings between individuals or groups through various means such as speech, writing, signals, or behavior.

Nonverbal Communication

The transmission of messages or information without the use of words. This can include facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, and other body movements that convey meaning.

Strength-Based Language

A positive approach to communication that focuses on individuals' strengths, abilities, and potential rather than their deficits or problems. It emphasizes what people can do and their positive qualities.

Body Language

A form of nonverbal communication that involves the use of physical behaviors, such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, and movements, to convey messages or emotions.
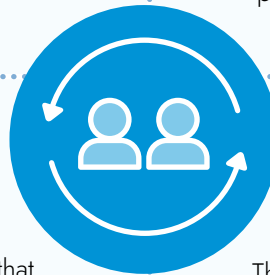
Verbal Tone

The vocal quality and intonation used when speaking. It includes the pitch, volume, and rhythm of speech, which can affect the meaning and emotional impact of the message.

It is helpful to use active listening, reflective statements, and validation to demonstrate empathy and understanding. Behavioral healthcare providers can also practice non-verbal communication skills, such as maintaining eye contact and using open body language, to convey attentiveness and warmth.

When practicing non-verbal communication techniques, remember:

Eye contact matters	Be aware of your facial expressions	Monitor your gestures	Maintain an open posture	Strive for a personal presentation
Try to maintain appropriate eye contact that makes the person feel recognized, not uncomfortable.	Utilizing positive facial expressions and avoiding expressions that convey shock or judgement make the person feel less judged	Being aware of how you move your hands and body can help to calm.	Presenting an open posture communicates approachability.	The goal is to present a professional but approachable exterior.

In your verbal communication try to always use:

Person-centered Language:

Language that focuses on who a person is rather than a diagnosis or label.

- Avoids diagnostic labels
- Avoids judgement

Strength-based Language:

Language that focuses on a person's strengths rather than their deficits.

- Focuses on what individuals CAN do
- Focuses on resources people DO have
- Focuses on individual choice
- Focuses on wellness instead of illness
- Presupposes success (ie. using when instead of if)

"Emotional support provides a sense of stability and reassurance during times of crisis. It can help individuals feel seen, heard, and valued, which is essential for wellness."

Section 4: Wellness Self-care & Supervision

This section offers strategies to promote wellness among crisis workforce staff including, defining wellness, creating self-care habits, supervisory support strategies, peer support initiatives, and organizational approaches to maintaining work-life balance. These elements aim to equip crisis staff with practical tools, resources, and guidance for prioritizing their wellness while effectively perform their role.

The Impact of Crisis Work on Wellness

Self-Care and its Importance in Managing Stress and Trauma

Self-care refers to deliberate actions taken to prioritize and maintain one's physical, emotional, and social wellness. In the context of crisis work, self-care is essential for managing the stress and trauma that come with supporting individuals in crisis. By engaging in self-care practices, crisis support workers can:

Prevent Burnout	Build Resilience	Promote Emotional Regulation	Enhance Compassion Satisfaction
Regular self-care activities help to reduce the risk of burnout by restoring emotional and physical reserves and by reducing the likelihood of exhaustion and disengagement from work.	Self-care fosters resilience by equipping individuals with coping strategies to navigate challenging situations effectively, bounce back from setbacks, and adapt to changing circumstances.	Self-care practices such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness meditation, and journaling can help regulate emotions, reduce stress levels, and prevent feeling overwhelmed.	By attending to their own needs, crisis support workers can cultivate a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment derived from helping others, known as compassion satisfaction. This positive aspect of caregiving can counterbalance the emotional toll of witnessing suffering and trauma.

In the context of crisis support work, focusing on wellness across the eight dimensions is crucial for the crisis support workforce.

Impact of Crisis Work on Wellness in the 8 Dimensions, and Addressing Compassion Fatigue and Burnout through Wellness Self-Care

While crisis work is inherently rewarding, it can also take a toll on the wellness of individuals across all eight dimensions. By adopting a holistic approach to self-care focused on all eight dimensions of wellness, crisis support workers can mitigate the risk of compassion fatigue and burnout:

DIMENSION	IMPACT	SELF-CARE
Physical	Long hours, irregular schedules, and exposure to distressing situations can lead to fatigue, sleep disturbances, and physical health issues.	Prioritize rest, exercise, and nutrition to maintain energy levels and physical resilience.
Social	The demanding nature of crisis work may limit opportunities for socializing and maintaining relationships outside of work, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness	Cultivate supportive relationships, seek peer support, and set boundaries to prevent social isolation and maintain emotional wellness.
Emotional	Constant exposure to trauma can result in emotional exhaustion, heightened anxiety, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).	Practice mindfulness, seek supervision or therapy, and engage in activities that promote emotional regulation and resilience.
Intellectual	The intensity of crisis work may leave little time or energy for intellectual stimulation and personal growth, leading to feelings of stagnation or burnout.	Pursue continuous learning, engage in stimulating activities outside of work, and seek opportunities for professional growth and development.
Spiritual	Witnessing human suffering and tragedy may challenge one's beliefs and sense of meaning, potentially leading to existential crises or spiritual distress.	Nurture spiritual practices that provide solace and meaning, such as meditation, prayer, or connecting with nature.
Financial	Low pay, lack of job security, and limited benefits in some crisis support roles can contribute to financial stress and instability.	Budget effectively, seek financial advice when needed, and advocate for fair compensation and benefits in the workplace.
Occupational	High caseloads, organizational constraints, and the emotional demands of the job can erode job satisfaction and lead to burnout.	Set realistic expectations, establish boundaries, and prioritize self-reflection and self-compassion to prevent burnout and maintain passion for the work.
Environmental	Working in high-stress environments or in communities disproportionately affected by crises can contribute to feelings of powerlessness and environmental stress.	Advocate for a safe and supportive work environment, practice eco-friendly habits, and seek opportunities for environmental activism and advocacy.

Focus on Wellness

By attending to wellness needs across all eight dimensions, crisis support workers can sustainably navigate the challenges of their work, maintain resilience, and continue to provide compassionate support for those in emotional distress.

Wellness is a conscious, deliberate process that requires being aware of and making choices for a more satisfying lifestyle.[18]

A wellness lifestyle includes a self-defined balance of health habits such as sleep and rest, eating well, productivity, participation in meaningful activity, and contact with supporters.[19]

Wellness is multi-dimensional: physical, spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual, occupational, environmental, and financial.[20]

Physical Wellness

Involves taking care of one's body through regular physical activity, taking breaks, planning nourishing food and getting adequate sleep, as well as seeking medical care when needed. In crisis support work, physical wellness is vital as it directly affects energy levels, stamina, and resilience to stress.

Social Wellness

Refers to maintaining healthy relationships and a supportive social network. Engaging in regular communication with colleagues, seeking peer support, and fostering connections with friends and family can provide emotional sustenance and a sense of belonging, which are crucial for coping with the demands of crisis work.

Emotional Wellness

Involves recognizing and managing one's feelings, coping with stress effectively, and developing resilience. Crisis support workers often face intense emotional situations, so it's essential to prioritize emotional self-care through practices like mindfulness, journaling, or seeking therapy when needed (and other self-care practice listed later).

Intellectual Wellness

Encompasses continuous learning, critical thinking, and engaging in stimulating activities. Keeping the mind active and seeking opportunities for growth and skill development can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment amidst the challenges of crisis work.

Spiritual Wellness

Involves finding meaning and purpose in life, whether through religion, nature, or personal values. Engaging in spiritual practices, such as meditation, prayer, or spending time in nature, can provide solace and perspective, helping crisis workers navigate the existential questions that may arise in their line of work.

Financial Wellness

Entails managing one's finances responsibly and planning for the future. While crisis support work may not always offer high financial rewards, maintaining financial stability through budgeting, saving, and seeking financial advice when needed can alleviate stress and contribute to overall wellness.

Occupational Wellness

Involves finding satisfaction and fulfillment in one's work while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Engaging in self-reflection, setting boundaries, and seeking professional development opportunities can help crisis support workers avoid burnout and maintain passion for their work.

Environmental Wellness

Focuses on creating a safe, comfortable, and sustainable environment. This includes both physical surroundings and broader environmental concerns. Taking breaks in nature, reducing exposure to environmental toxins, and advocating for environmental justice can contribute to overall wellness.

Wellness Self-Care Habits

The following are important wellness self-care routines and strategies that many have reported are useful for the crisis support workforce. For resources on all of the wellness self-care activities, visit: https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/wellness-in-recovery/wellness-self-care/

Take Your Wellness Pulse!

Complete the wellness inventory and check out these daily wellness planning tools to decide and track what you do each day.

➔ **Take the Wellness Inventory:**
https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/wellness-in-recovery/inventory/

Taking Time to Pause and Breathe

In the midst of crisis support work, the intensity and urgency of situations can be overwhelming. Taking regular pauses to breathe deeply allows crisis support workers to ground themselves, regulate their emotions, and approach each situation with clarity and composure. Deep breathing techniques, such as diaphragmatic breathing or box breathing, can activate the body's relaxation response, reducing stress and promoting a sense of calm.

➔ **Try out different ways to pause:**
https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/CAS-0140_Wellness_SelfCare_Pause_Handout_09.11.23.pdf

Engaging in Mindful Movement

Incorporating mindful movement and stretching into the daily routine can help alleviate physical tension and prevent burnout. Simple stretches or gentle yoga poses can release muscle tightness, improve circulation, and increase flexibility. Additionally, mindful movement practices cultivate present-moment awareness, allowing crisis support workers to stay grounded in the here and now amidst the chaos of crisis situations.

➔ **Plan out your daily self-care habits:**
https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/CAS-019_Daily_Self-Care_Plan_Interactive_07.23.22-1.pdf

➔ **Then Move!**
https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/Wellness_SelfCare_Move_2024.pdf

Nourishing the Mind with Positive Thoughts

Amidst the challenges of crisis work, maintaining a positive mindset is essential for resilience and emotional wellness. Engaging in affirmations, positive self-talk, or gratitude practices can shift perspective, promote optimism, and build resilience. By nurturing positive thoughts, crisis support workers can cultivate a sense of hope and empowerment, even in the face of adversity.

➜ **Check-in, Focus on the Breath, and Proceed with Awareness:**
https://care2caregivers.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Professional-Self-Care-Booklet-English.pdf

➜ **Then, Nourish your mind!**
https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/Wellness_SelfCare_Nourish.pdf

Nourishing the Body

Healthy food options, adequate hydration and mindful movements are important for sustaining energy levels, cognitive function, and overall health, especially during times of high stress. Nourishing the body with mindful movement and healthy foods, can help crisis support workers to optimize their performance and esnure resilience in demanding situations.

The Importance of Sleep

Quality sleep is important for maintaining cognitive function, emotional regulation, and overall wellness. Prioritizing adequate sleep by establishing a consistent bedtime routine, creating a restful sleep environment, and practicing relaxation techniques before bed is essential for replenishing energy stores, processing emotional experiences, and promoting recovery from the demands of the day.

➜ **Practice the 10 tips for Healthy Sleep:**
https://worldsleepday.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/10-Tips-for-Better-Sleep-Graphic.jpg

➜ **Plan for a restful sleep:**
https://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/Wellness_SelfCare_Sleep_.pdf

The Value of Journaling

Journaling offers a powerful outlet for processing emotions, gaining insight, and fostering self-awareness, all of which are crucial for managing the emotional toll of crisis work. By dedicating time to journaling and reflection, crisis support workers can articulate their thoughts and feelings, identify patterns or triggers, and develop coping strategies for managing stress and trauma. Journaling can also serve as a tool for celebrating successes, expressing gratitude, and tracking personal growth over time.

Crisis Outreach Checklist[21]

The following checklist for behavioral healthcare service providers can be used to prepare before, during, and after crisis outreach visits, to ensure they remain present, calm, and supportive while prioritizing personal balance and self-care needs.

BEFORE THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH VISIT

☐ **Review Crisis Response Procedures**

Familiarize yourself with the specific protocols and procedures for responding to crises in the community. Ensure you have up-to-date information on available resources and support services.

➔ **Why:** Reviewing crisis response procedures enhances your preparedness and enables you to respond effectively and efficiently to the individual's needs, minimizing potential risks or complications.

☐ **Prepare Mentally**

Take a few moments to practice deep breathing or meditation to calm your mind and ground yourself in the present moment. Visualize yourself as a source of calm and support for the individual you will be assisting. Take a few moments to center yourself and set positive intentions for the visit.

➔ **Why:** Mental preparation helps you approach the situation with a clear and focused mindset, reducing the risk of becoming overwhelmed by emotions or stress during the visit. Cultivating a calm and focused mindset helps you approach the situation with clarity and compassion.

☐ **Practice Active Listening Skills**

Practice attending (maintaining eye contact, nodding to show understanding, etc.) and active listening techniques (paraphrasing what the individual shared, reflecting the feeling, and acknowledging/affirming). Remind yourself to listen empathetically without interrupting or imposing your own agenda.

➔ **Why:** Active listening creates a supportive and empathetic environment, fostering trust and rapport with the individual and facilitating open communication. Active listening fosters trust and allows the individual to feel heard and validated.

☐ **Embrace Silence**

Allow for pauses and periods of silence during the conversation, resisting the urge to fill the gaps with words or advice. Use nonverbal cues to convey support. Allow for moments of silence during the conversation to give the individual space to process their emotions.

➔ **Why:** Silence provides space for the individual to process their thoughts and emotions without feeling rushed or pressured. It allows them to express themselves at their own pace and encourages deeper reflection and self-awareness.

Crisis Outreach Checklist[21]

DURING THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH VISIT

☐ **Provide Nonjudmental Support**

Practice empathy and compassion by withholding judgment and refraining from offering unsolicited advice or opinions. Validate the individual's feelings and experiences without imposing your own beliefs.

➔ **Why:** Nonjudgmental support creates a safe and accepting space for the individual to share their struggles and vulnerabilities without fear of criticism or rejection. Nonjudgmental support helps build rapport and creates a safe space for the individual to open up.space for the individual to open up.

☐ **Empower the Individual**

Encourage the individual to identify their own strengths, coping mechanisms, and resources to navigate the crisis. Offer support in exploring options and making informed decisions, empowering them to take control of their situation.

➔ **Why:** Empowerment promotes autonomy, self-confidence, and resilience, enhancing the individual's ability to cope with challenges and build a sense of self-efficacy. Empowerment also enhances the individual's sense of control.

☐ **Take time to Pause and Breathe**

Take time to pause and breathe at intervals during the day. Stay present and attentive to your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment. Plan a pause or time to breathe to stay grounded and present in the moment.

➔ **Why:** Taking time to pause or unplug for short intervals may reduce stress and fosters a sense of inner peace and calm in the midst of challenges to promote overall wellness.

By prioritizing wellness self-care, crisis support workers can better navigate the demands of their role, sustain resilience, and continue to provide compassionate support for people seeking crisis support services.

"Self-care empowers us to handle the challenges of our work with greater resilience and empathy."

Crisis Outreach Checklist [21]

AFTER THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH VISIT

☐ **Reflect on the Experience**

Take time to process your emotions and thoughts about the visit. Journaling or discussing the experience with a trusted colleague can help you gain insights and perspectives.

➔ **Why:** Reflecting on the experience fosters self-awareness, personal growth, and learning. It allows you to identify any areas for improvement and develop strategies for future interactions. Reflecting on the experience also helps prevent emotional burnout and allows for personal growth and learning.

☐ **Engage in Self-Care Activities**

Dedicate time to activities that promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and self-care. Reflect on your own wellness in each of the 8 dimensions often to ensure you are doing your top two to three self-care activities often, building on strengths and noticing areas to strengthen and/or areas of imbalance.

➔ **Why:** Self-care activities replenish your energy reserves, reduce stress, and prevent burnout, ensuring you maintain your wellness and resilience in demanding situations.

☐ **Seek Peer Support**

Connect with colleagues, supervisors, or support networks to debrief and share your experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Seek validation, empathy, and perspective from others who can relate to your experiences.

➔ **Why:** Peer support provides emotional validation, reduces feelings of isolation, and strengthens your sense of belonging and resilience. It allows you to process your emotions and gain insights from others' perspectives. Peer support can also help to address burnout.

"Self-care is crucial for avoiding burnout. By maintaining our wellness, we ensure that we can continue to be effective and compassionate in our work."

Wellness Self-Care Summary

Regular Wellness Self-Care Practices

By incorporating these self-care strategies into your routine, crisis support workers can effectively prepare for, manage, and recover from crisis outreach visits while ensuring personal wellness in the process.

Regular Self-Care Practices:

- Establish clear priorities between work and personal life, including designated times for work, rest, and leisure activities.
- Communicate your boundaries assertively and respectfully with colleagues and supervisors.
- Know what your priorities are by regularly taking your wellness pulse (wellness inventory) to remind yourself of your top 2-3 wellness strengths and notice areas to strengthen or areas of imbalance.

→ **Why:** Setting priorities is protective and may help you to plan activities and time to recharge outside of work. Setting priorities prevents burnout and promotes a healthy work-life balance.

Take Regular Breaks

- Schedule short breaks throughout your workday to rest, recharge, and engage in activities that bring you joy and relaxation.
- Step away from your work environment to disconnect and recharge your batteries.
- Schedule short breaks throughout the day to rest and recharge, even during busy periods.

→ **Why:** Taking breaks prevents mental and physical fatigue, improves focus, boosts productivity and creativity, and promotes overall wellness. Taking breaks may prevent burnout and support overall job satisfaction.

In summary, incorporating wellness self-care routines and strategies such as pausing to breathe, engaging in mindful movement, nurturing positive thoughts, healthy food choices and adequate hydration, prioritizing sleep, and journaling/reflection practices can significantly support the wellness and effectiveness of the crisis support workforce.

Supervisory Strategies for Supporting Staff Wellness Self-Care

Supervisory strategies play a crucial role in supporting the wellness self-care of the crisis support workforce. Here are some simple things supervisors can do, as well as commitments organizational leadership can make to support staff wellness self-care including providing training, education, and support for wellness self-care practices:

Regular Check-ins and Open Communication	Supervisors should prioritize regular one-on-one check-ins with staff to discuss workload, stressors, and self-care needs. Creating a culture of open communication encourages staff to express concerns or seek support when needed.
Modeling Healthy Behaviors	Supervisors can lead by example by modeling wellness self-care behaviors themselves. Demonstrating practices such as taking breaks, prioritizing work-life balance, and seeking support when needed sets a positive tone for the team.
Flexible Scheduling and Time Off	Offering flexible scheduling options and adequate time off allows staff to prioritize self-care and attend to personal needs outside of work. Supervisors should encourage staff to use their allotted time off and ensure adequate coverage to prevent burnout.
Providing Resources and Referrals	Supervisors should familiarize themselves with available resources for staff wellness, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), counseling services, or community support groups. Providing referrals and guidance on accessing these resources ensures staff have access to the support they need.
Promoting Peer Support Networks	Encouraging the formation of peer support networks or support groups within the team allows staff to connect with colleagues who share similar experiences and challenges. Peer support provides validation, empathy, and practical advice for coping with stress and trauma.

Organizational Leadership Commitments

Creating a Culture of Wellness	Organizational leaders should prioritize staff wellness as a core value and integrate wellness initiatives into the organizational culture. This includes fostering a supportive work environment, recognizing and rewarding staff contributions, and promoting work-life balance.
Investing in Resources and Infrastructure	Allocating resources and funding for staff wellness initiatives demonstrates organizational commitment to supporting the wellness of the workforce. This may include providing access to mental health services, wellness programs, or training opportunities.
Establishing Policies and Procedures	Developing policies and procedures that support staff wellness, such as flexible scheduling policies, telecommuting options, or wellness leave, ensures consistency and fairness in addressing staff needs.
Regular Evaluation and Feedback	Organizational leaders should regularly evaluate how well they are supporting employee wellness and seek feedback regularly from staff on their experiences and needs. Adjustments and improvements based on feedback should be made to ensure organizational practices are meeting the needs of the workforce.

Importance of Support

Building Awareness and Skills

Providing training and education on self-care practices equips staff with the knowledge and skills needed to prioritize their wellness effectively. This may include training on stress management techniques, resilience-building strategies, or recognizing signs of burnout.

Normalizing Self-Care

By incorporating self-care training into organizational practices, leadership helps to destigmatize discussions around mental health and wellness. Normalizing self-care encourages staff to prioritize their own needs without fear of judgment or reprisal.

Empowering Staff to Advocate for Themselves

Training empowers staff to advocate for their own self-care needs within the organization. Staff who are educated about the importance of self-care are more likely to proactively seek support and resources when needed, possibly leading to better overall wellness outcomes.

Enhancing Organizational Culture

Training and education on self-care practices contribute to a positive organizational culture that values the wellness of its workforce. Investing in staff wellness sends a clear message that the organization values its employees as individuals, not just as workers.

Supervisory strategies, organizational leadership commitments, and providing training, education, and support for self-care practices are essential for supporting the wellness and resilience of the crisis support workforce. By prioritizing staff wellness, organizations can foster a culture of care, enhance staff satisfaction and retention, and ultimately improve the quality of care provided to people in crisis.

Supporting Wellness Self-Care

Supporting wellness self-care among fellow crisis support workers (defined here as fellow peers) within an organization requires both proactive initiatives from supervisors and leadership and active participation from team members. Here's how supervisors, organizational leadership, and fellow peers can collaborate to foster a culture of wellness:

Establishing Formal or Informal Peer Support Programs and Support Networks

Supervisors and organizational leaders can facilitate the establishment of formal or informal peer support programs and networks, where staff can connect with colleagues who share similar experiences and challenges. This can take the form of:

- **Formal Peer Support Programs**

  Structured programs that pair individuals or small groups of all staff members together for regular check-ins, sharing experiences, and providing mutual support.

- **Informal Support Networks**

  Organic networks that develop naturally within teams or departments, where staff feel comfortable reaching out to each other for support and guidance.

- **Creating Safe Spaces for Sharing Experiences and Seeking Guidance**

  Supervisors and fellow peers can create safe spaces within the organization where staff feel comfortable sharing their experiences and seeking guidance. This can involve:

  → **Regular Team Meetings:**
  Scheduled meetings where all staff can discuss challenges, share successes, and offer support to one another in a structured setting.

  → **Peer Support Groups**:
  Informal gatherings or online forums where all staff can share experiences, seek advice, and offer support in a non-judgmental environment.

- **Encouraging Informal Peer Check-Ins and Supportive Relationships**

  Supervisors can encourage informal connections among fellow staff and the development of supportive relationships among team members by:

  → **Leading by Example:**
  Modeling open communication and supportive behavior encourages staff to follow suit and reach out to their peers for support.

  → **Encouraging Peer Mentoring:**
  Pairing more experienced staff members with newer team members for mentorship fosters supportive relationships and knowledge-sharing.

- **Role of Team Building and Collaboration**

  Supervisors can facilitate team-building activities and foster collaboration to strengthen bonds among team members and promote a sense of camaraderie. This can include:

  → **Team-Building Exercises:**
  Engaging in activities such as team retreats, group outings, or team-building workshops to build trust and cohesion among team members.

  → **Collaborative Projects:**
  Encouraging collaboration on projects or assignments fosters a sense of teamwork and mutual support among peers.

Fostering a Culture of Compassion, Understanding, and Non-Judgment

Supervisors and organizational leaders play a crucial role in fostering a culture of compassion, understanding, and non-judgment within the organization by:

- **Setting Expectations**

  Communicating the importance of compassion, empathy, and non-judgment in all interactions within the organization sets a clear standard for behavior.

- **Providing Training and Education**

  Offering training on topics such as active listening, empathy, and cultural competence equips staff with the skills needed to support one another effectively.

- **Promoting Diversity and Inclusion**

  Creating an inclusive environment where all staff feel valued and respected contributes to a culture of compassion and understanding.

Organizational Strategies for Maintaining Work-Life Balance

Organizational leadership can implement strategies to promote work-life balance among staff, such as:

- **Flexible Work Arrangements**

  Offering options for telecommuting, flexible scheduling, or compressed workweeks allows staff to better balance work and personal responsibilities.

- **Encouraging Time Off**

  Encouraging staff to take regular breaks, use their vacation time, and disconnect from work outside of office hours promotes overall wellness and prevents burnout.

- **Setting Clear Expectations**

  Establishing clear expectations around workload, deadlines, and availability helps staff manage their time effectively and avoid excessive stress.

In summary, supporting wellness self-care among peers requires a collaborative effort from supervisors, organizational leadership, and team members. By establishing formal or informal peer support programs, creating safe spaces for sharing experiences, encouraging supportive relationships, fostering team building and collaboration, and promoting a culture of compassion and understanding, organizations can prioritize staff wellness and create a positive work environment conducive to maintaining work-life balance.

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Appendix A:
Crisis Management Skills Checklist[7]

The following Crisis Management Skills Checklist may be useful to help guide your work helping to support someone experiencing a crisis.

Crisis Awareness Skills

- ☐ Clearly describe the nature of the crisis.
- ☐ Objectively describe the meaning and significance of the crisis for yourself
- ☐ Freely express feelings, such as tension, anxiety, and frustration.
- ☐ Gather information and solicit feedback from peers and supporters to enhance understanding of the crisis.

Environmental Supports:

- ☐ Access to information regarding the nature of the crisis.
- ☐ Activities that provide constructive outlets and promote exploration of feelings.
- ☐ Opportunities for feedback to enhance understanding of crisis and wellness practices.

Establishing Habits and Routines

- ☐ Organize a daily routine that includes rest, physical activity, nutrition, and social interaction.
- ☐ Engage in activities that provide constructive release for emotions arising from the crisis.

Environmental Supports:

- ☐ Activities reinforcing basic health information and wellness practices.
- ☐ Opportunities for peer interaction and support.

Planning Skills

☐ Assume responsibility to initiate a wellness plan.

☐ Initiate behavioral actions and tasks to implement the wellness plan.

☐ Exert and sustain effort in the face of obstacles and barriers.

Environmental Supports:

☐ Assume responsibility to initiate a wellness plan.

☐ Initiate behavioral actions and tasks to implement the wellness plan.

☐ Exert and sustain effort in the face of obstacles and barriers.

Control Skills

☐ Clearly identify a specific problem related to the crisis.

☐ State actions to meet the demands of the problem.

☐ Describe a daily wellness plan.

☐ Outline specific tasks and activities in sequence.

☐ Identify available resources and supplies needed for the wellness plan.

☐ Gather information on potential obstacles and barriers.

☐ Determine the relevance of information to planning for immediate and short-term goals.

Environmental Supports:

☐ Guidance on stressors and problem-solving.

☐ Activities promoting organization and resource prioritization.

☐ Shared decision-making dialogues and practical advice evaluation.

Appendix B: Crisis Outreach Checklist[7]

The following checklist for behavioral healthcare service providers can be used to prepare before, during, and after crisis outreach visits, to ensure they remain present, calm, and supportive while prioritizing personal balance and self-care needs.

Before the Community Outreach Visit

- ☐ Review Crisis Response Procedures
- ☐ Prepare Mentally
- ☐ Practice Active Listening Skills
- ☐ Embrace Silence

During the Community Outreach Visit

- ☐ Provide Nonjudmental Supports
- ☐ Empower the Individual
- ☐ Take time to Pause and Breathe

After the Community Outreach Visit

- ☐ Reflect on the Experience
- ☐ Engage in Self-Care Activities
- ☐ Seek Peeer Support

By prioritizing wellness self-care, crisis support workers can better navigate the demands of their role, sustain resilience, and continue to provide compassionate support for people seeking crisis support services.

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*"The demands of our job
can be overwhelming.
Regular self-care practices help us
recharge and maintain our passion
for helping others."*