

## A Continuum of Behavioral Health Crisis Services

There are several different types of crisis services, and when they are brought together they create a continuum of care for individuals experiencing a psychiatric emergency. Each approach can be used individually, but a comprehensive crisis services system will include many or all of them. The primary goal of these services is to stabilize and improve psychological symptoms of distress and to engage individuals in the most appropriate treatment to address the problem that led to the crisis. SAMHSA has described five core crisis services<sup>1</sup>:

**23-hour crisis observation or stabilization** provides individuals in severe distress with up to 23 consecutive hours of supervised care to help de-escalate the severity of their crisis and need for urgent care, and to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations.

**Short-term, crisis residential stabilization** is designed to prevent or ameliorate a behavioral health crisis and reduce acute symptoms of mental illness by providing continuous 24-hour observation and supervision for individuals who do not require inpatient services.

**Mobile crisis teams** provide acute mental health crisis stabilization and psychiatric assessment services to individuals within their own homes and in other sites outside of a traditional clinical setting. Such teams' main objectives are to provide rapid response, assess the individual, and resolve crisis situations that involve individuals who have a behavioral health disorder.

**Crisis hotlines** provide immediate support and facilitated referrals to medical, health care, and community support services, and promote problem-solving and coping skills via telephone (or text or online chat) to individuals who are experiencing distress.

**Peer crisis services** are an alternative to a psychiatric emergency department or inpatient hospitalization and are operated by people who have experience living with a mental illness (i.e., peers). Services are intended to last less than 24 hours but may extend up to several days, if needed. Peer crisis services are generally shorter-term than crisis residential services.

These providers offer examples of a continuum of crisis services:

- [Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority](#) of Harris County, Houston, TX
- [Crisis Response Center](#), Tucson, AZ (click on “Services”)
- [Behavioral Health Link](#), Georgia: (click on “Products & Services”)

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *Crisis services: Effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and funding strategies*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) –14–4848. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

**January 2015**

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The Suicide Prevention Resource Center is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) under Grant No. 5U79SM059945.

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