



GLEN EIRA
CITY COUNCIL

Mental health fact sheet

Support for dealing with someone experiencing a mental health crisis in a public setting

One in five Australian adults experiences a mental health problem or mental illness in any given year.¹

Mental illness includes a wide range of conditions that affect how we feel and think. Like many physical illnesses, mental illnesses are thought to arise from the interaction of genetic vulnerability and stresses in life.

Mental illnesses includes the more common conditions such as Anxiety and Depressive disorders, as well less common but often more severe conditions such as Schizophrenia and other forms of psychotic illness. These illnesses vary in how long they affect people from a single episode to sometimes a lifelong condition.

How can you tell if someone is going through a mental health crisis?

If a person is showing any of the following behaviours they are likely to be experiencing a mental health crisis:

- suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- non-suicidal self-injury (sometimes called deliberate self-harm)
- panic attacks
- traumatic events
- severe psychotic states
- severe effects from alcohol or other drug use
- aggressive behaviours.

What to do when someone is going through a mental health crisis?

If you believe someone is going through a mental health crisis and is exhibiting a range of behaviours including aggression or threatening violence, you should report it to the police immediately: **call triple zero (000) for emergency services**. The emergency service staff have the expertise to deal with these situations.

When unexpectedly confronted by someone experiencing a mental health crisis it can be hard to know how to support them. Recognising if someone is struggling with mental health is important however it is also important **not to** engage with the person if you do not know them or they are being aggressive and unpredictable in their behaviour.

¹ www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1-facts_figures.pdf

There are some simple strategies that may help you if you know the person and your safety is not at risk. Although you may feel a sense of crisis too, it's important to stay calm yourself.

- Introduce yourself calmly and clearly
- Give the person space
- Be polite and non-threatening
- Listen to what they are saying in a non-judgmental way
- Avoid confrontation
- Do not attempt physical contact, except if it is safe for you to prevent serious assault or suicide attempts

It's not always easy to start or even keep a conversation going when someone is in crisis. You can find extra tips to start a conversation with someone at the [R U Ok](#) website. If they say they are not okay, you can follow the steps to assist them and to access other support and assistance.

Do not put your own safety at risk. If things are getting worse, leave the situation.

If you are not in an emergency situation but you need immediate help, call one of the following helplines that offer crisis support and counselling over the phone:

- Lifeline – call 13 11 14 for this free, 24-hour Australia-wide crisis support and suicide prevention service, they offer immediate mental health support and counselling.
- Suicide Call Back Service – call 1300 659 467 for this free service if the person is threatening or displaying suicidal behaviour.
- SuicideLine – call 1300 651 251 for free and anonymous support 24 hours a day, seven days per week.
- Contact NURSE-ON-CALL (call 1300 60 60 24) for mental health advice, information and referrals.
- Chat live with a SANE Help Centre Counsellor (Available Monday-Friday, 10am-10pm AEST).

If the person appears to be under the age of 25 you can also call **Headspace**. Headspace provides confidential phone, online and support services for young people aged between 12 to 25. 1800 650 890.

Local Headspace Centres include Bentleigh 9076 9400 and Elsternwick 9076 7500
<https://headspace.org.au/covid-19>

Support after the incident

It is important that you seek support after the incident when you need it. Debriefing is a voluntary discussion aimed at putting an abnormal event into perspective. It offers clarity about the critical incident you have experienced and assists you to establish a process for recovery. It is normal to feel unsettled and a bit worried about the incident. If you feel you need to seek additional support, there are organisations offering professional support. Lifeline – 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services. 13 11 14 or online web chat

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

Beyond Blue Provides information and support to help everyone in Australia, whatever their age and wherever they live. 1300 22 4636 or online chat <https://www.beyondblue.org.au>

Suicide Call Back Service is a nationwide service providing professional 24/7 telephone and online counselling to people affected by suicide. 1300 659 467 or online web chat <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/>

