

How to find help with food, shelter, & other social services

- If you are homeless, behind on rent or food insecure, call 211. A 211 operator can connect you with basic resources that serve your area.
- 211 operators are on duty from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. Mondays–Fridays. If you need shelter, it is best to call early in the day.
- If you are in need of emergency resources outside of business hours, especially if it's impacting your mental health, call 988.

Resources for behavioral health crises

- Alcoholics Anonymous: aa.org
- Narcotics Anonymous: na.org
- Treatment Options: findtreatment.samhsa.gov

If you don't know the person well, don't intervene unless there is a serious physical health concern.

Mission

The Mental Health Project is a Seattle Times initiative focused on covering mental and behavioral health. The project illuminates a growing mental health crisis in the Seattle region, Washington state, and beyond. It explores the many types of mental illness people experience, spotlights promising treatments and research, and examines actions by government agencies, nonprofits, and health providers to address the problem.

The project is funded by Ballmer Group, a national organization focused on economic mobility for children and families. Seattle Times editors and reporters operate independently of our funders and maintain full editorial control over all coverage.

CONTACT US

✉ mentalhealth@seattletimes.com

🌐 st.news/mentalhealth

🐦 [@STMentalHealth](https://twitter.com/STMentalHealth)

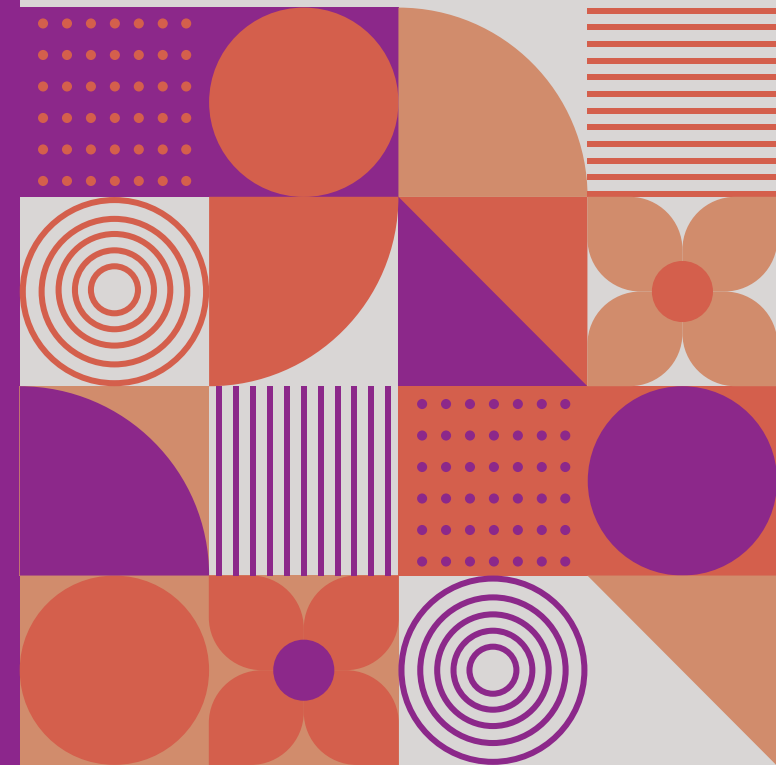
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MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

HELPING SOMEONE IN A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN WASHINGTON

WHAT TO KNOW



What is a crisis situation?

A situation that has escalated to the point where there is immediate risk of serious harm or death to the person in distress or those around them. The person could be a friend, family member, neighbor, or a stranger.

What should you do in a crisis?

- Assess potential for imminent harm.
- If there is an immediate threat to life or safety, call 911.
- If a situation reaches crisis, get a mental health professional's help by calling 988.
- Stay at the scene if safety allows. Make sure you have time available to talk with responders, and know that you won't be able to help everyone.
- If there are no urgent physical health needs, calling 911 could threaten a person's safety or stability by putting their living situation at risk.

Note: Someone sleeping or talking to themselves is not considered an emergency.

When to call 911

- The person in crisis needs medical help (i.e. is unconscious, has difficulty breathing, or has discoloration of skin).
- Threat of immediate self harm or harm to others
- Weapons are involved.

When to call 988

- You or someone else is feeling depressed, anxious, sad or lonely.
- You or someone else has a substance use disorder need.
- You or someone else is experiencing suicidal thoughts or psychosis.

Note: Operators for both lines communicate with each other and may transfer you depending on need.

How to talk to dispatchers

- Introduce yourself, explain that a person is having a mental health crisis, and give their name, location, and description.
- Explain your goal: for them to be helped, not harmed or arrested.
- You can request a Crisis Intervention Team-trained police officer.
- Tell the dispatcher whether the person has made threats of violence or self harm, has weapons, or has drugs.
- If you can, mention triggers that could escalate the situation and suggestions to prevent tension.

What to expect in an emergency room

- Emergency rooms (ERs) treat life-threatening crises, like suicidality or self-harm; long-term mental health conditions like depression will typically be redirected outside the ER.
- Be prepared to wait as social workers will conduct a mental health assessment that could take a few hours.
- Hospitals can decide to keep someone in care involuntarily, even if the person was admitted voluntarily.
- Respect a person's choice not to get help, especially if you don't know them well.

Other numbers, free & 24/7

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline: 800-662-4357
- Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255 (option #1)
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 800-985-5990; or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-4673
- Washington Warm Line for peer support: 877-500-WARM (9276)

