

## What to do if you have a family member or friend who is experiencing a mental health crisis

### CALL 911 IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR LIFE OR THE LIFE OF SOMEONE ELSE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

If the situation is not a matter of immediate physical danger, call Emergency Services at 757-385-0888

#### Steps to take if you call 911:

- **In order to give law enforcement accurate information so they will be able to respond effectively and safely:**
  - Try to control the volume of your voice so the 9-1-1 Operator can understand what you are saying and the information will be accurately received.
  - Try to speak as calmly and clearly as possible
- **Tell the 9-1-1 Operator the following information**
  - Your name and address
  - The person's name and relationship with them
  - That the person has a mental illness and the diagnosis (such as Bipolar Disorder)
  - Any medication being used – if use has stopped and for how long
  - Any history of violent acting out-is there a past history of fighting with police
  - Do you feel threatened
  - If the person hears voices
  - If the person fears someone
  - If there are any weapons in the house (if there are weapons, try to safely remove them before calling 9-1-1).
  - What the person is doing and saying now and where they are in the house
  - Request a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) officer who has experience in working with people who have a mental illness.
- **When the police arrive:**
  - Have all the lights in the house turned on so all occupants can be clearly visible to the arriving officers.
  - Have nothing in your hands if you come out to meet the officers.
  - Do not run up to the officers, as they have no idea who you are and anything you may be carrying could be interpreted as a weapon.
    - As calmly as possible, identify yourself
- **Tell the officers:**
  - Who you are and your relationship to the person you called about
  - What kind of mental illness the person has
  - What medication is being taken
  - If medication use has stopped and for how long
  - If the person is violent, delusional, or paranoid
  - Any history of suicide attempts
  - An attending psychiatrist's or case manager's telephone number
- **Officers responding to the crisis are very focused when they arrive on the scene. They will make the scene safe for you, the person with the mental illness, and themselves.**
  - Spend the time necessary answering all the officers' questions. Offer any advice you deem helpful. The more informed the officer is, the less likely anyone will be injured or that the situation will worsen.
  - Although it is difficult in times of crisis, being patient is essential.