

Safer Practice Notice

Date: June, 2019

Topic: Receiving a crisis call in Health PEI

Situation:

- There have been a number of cases where staff has received a call from a member of the public in a crisis (i.e. caller stating they are having suicidal ideation and/or thoughts of harm to themselves or others).
- Some staff members are unsure what to do when they take a call from a member of the public in a crisis situation.
- Sending an email to a healthcare professional or trying to contact family members are not appropriate methods of dealing with a crisis situation.

Background:

- A crisis call is any call that indicates there is a difficult or dangerous situation that requires serious, often immediate, attention (e.g. threats of suicide, threats to others, medical emergencies, etc.).
- **Suicide or other crisis calls should always be taken seriously.**
- In accordance with the Mental Health Act, there is an obligation to inform the police when a caller is threatening suicide and/or harm to others.
- There are resources within the health system and community which can assist with managing these calls (see attached Appendix).

Assessment:

- Appropriate steps to take in the event of a crisis call can be found in the attached Appendix.
- Crisis response resources can be accessed through 911.
- Staff who may be faced with a crisis call should be familiar with methods for managing the call, their obligations and resources which can assist those in crisis.

Recommendation:

- If you feel that the person is in immediate danger to themselves or others, you should ask for their contact information so you can alert the police by calling 911.
- Remain calm and non-judgmental; demonstrate empathy; be professional and supportive; and express your concern. Engage with the caller and try to get them to tell a bit of their story; ask them if they are alone or if there is someone there or close by. If so, ask to speak to them. If the caller is in trouble, they need someone who is friendly, supportive, and approachable to state they are concerned for their safety.
- Ask open-ended questions like, "How may I help you?". Remain professional and give resources rather than advice.
- Inform the caller that we take all threats of suicide and harm to others seriously and are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities if necessary.
- For less urgent situations, you can call the local police department to do a wellness check. Inform the caller of your concern for their safety and that you will be reaching out to the police to check in on them (**Note: you do not require the caller's permission to request a "wellness check" from the police.**)
- A crisis call should be recorded in the Provincial Safety Management System (PSMS) under *Behaviour Event*.

Safer Practice Notices are issued by the Quality and Patient Safety Division of Health PEI to communicate recommended changes as a result of events that have been reported and investigated through the Provincial Safety Management System (PSMS). For more information please see the attached Appendix and/or contact:

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902-438-4092 or eapizio@gov.pe.ca

Appendix

How to respond to a caller in crisis

The following guidelines are intended to help with a crisis call and provide appropriate steps to take in the event of a crisis call.

- Always treat suicide or other crisis calls as serious until determined otherwise.
- **Remain calm and non-judgmental.** Be professional and supportive. If the caller is in trouble, they need someone who is friendly, supportive, and approachable.
- Ask open-ended questions like, “How may I help you”? Remain professional and give resources rather than advice.
- Inform the caller that we take all threats of suicide and harm to others seriously and are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities if necessary.
- Provide the caller with information about resources such as ***The Island Helpline at 1-800-218-2885 a 24-hour service that provides free, confidential emotional support and crisis intervention to Islanders of all ages or contact information for one of the Mental Health Walk in Clinics (on Page 2).***
- Don't be afraid to express personal empathy to the caller. The following are example statements to open a dialog.
 - I'm glad you connected with us today.
 - That must be so hard. How may I help?
 - I'll do my best to get the information you need.
 - Let's work together to figure something out.
 - I might have resources to help you.
- If you feel that the person is in **immediate danger** to themselves or others, you should ask for their contact information so you can alert the police by calling 911.
- For less urgent situations, you can call the local police department to do a wellness check. Inform the caller of your concern for their safety and that you will be reaching out to the police to check in on them. (**Note: you do not require the caller’s permission to request a “wellness check” from the police).**

Non-Emergency Phone Numbers

RCMP (902) 566-7112	Charlottetown Police Services (902) 629-4172
Summerside Police Department (902) 432-1201	Kensington Police Department (902) 836-4499

Mental Health Walk-In Clinics

Mental Health Walk-in Clinics offer immediate support to help with anxiety, as well as life events causing stress and other mental health issues.

Will I need an appointment?

- No appointment or referral is required. You will be able to see a registered mental health therapist for 45-60 minutes. There is no cost for this service.
- The walk-in clinic therapist can refer you to community-based mental health services, special programs such as Strongest Families, or the Behavioral Support Team.

Mental health walk-in clinics are offered in Queens, Kings and Prince Counties at the following locations: (for times call specific clinic)

Charlottetown Richmond Centre (for individuals 16 and older) Telephone: (902) 368-4430 1 Rochford Street	Charlottetown McGill Centre (for individuals 16 and older) Telephone: (902) 368-4911 55 McGill Avenue
Summerside Prince County Hospital Telephone: (902) 888-8180 65 Roy Boates Avenue	Lennox Island Health Centre (for Lennox Island residents only) Telephone: (902) 831-2711 15 Eagle Feather Trail
O’Leary Health Centre Telephone: (902) 853-8670 14 MacKinnon Drive (adjacent to Community Hospital)	Elmsdale Westisle High School (for students, age 16 and older at this school only) 39570 Western Road, Elmsdale NOTE: Walk-In Clinic not open on days when the school is closed
Montague Community Mental Health (for people aged 16 and over) Phone: (902) 838-0960 126 Douses Road	



The Island Helpline
1-800-218-2885
 Ligne d’écoute de l’Î.-P.-É.

The Island Helpline, if you need help please call 1-800-218-2885 or Kids HelpPhone at 1-800-668-6868

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toll Free • 24 Hour Service • 365 Days A Year • Confidential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual (French/English) • Non-Judgmental • Supportive
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If you are experiencing a crisis and require immediate assistance, please call 911 or go to your nearest Hospital Emergency Department