



Dear Families and Caregivers,

A Parent and Caregiver Guide to Helping Your Family Before, During, and After a Crisis was developed by parents, like you, in collaboration with behavioral health professionals and law enforcement. The Guide provides tools, practical advice and steps you can take *before* a mental health crisis occurs. Most families only receive crisis planning support *after* a crisis.

Caring for a child with mental health or behavior issues can be scary, confusing, and challenging – especially when there is a possibility of police involvement. Using this guide will help you:

- Know who to call when things feel out of control.
- Increase your family's ability to handle a crisis.
- Effectively advocate for your child, especially if first responders become involved.
- Allow you to prepare, identify resources, assess how you might respond, and understand what it means to work with local police.

Using the tools in the Guide, such as "*A Crisis Action Plan*" and "*A Crisis Worksheet*," will help you feel more confident and in control, increasing your ability to keep your child and other family members safe if a crisis does occur.

The Guide also provides a way for you to work with your child's behavioral health providers, pediatrician, school guidance counselors, and other trusted people in your family's lives. These may include other family members, neighbors, or clergy. You can ask them to help you use the guide. Sharing your crisis plan will help them know how best to support you and your family.

We are providing this Guide to local police departments, emergency rooms, mental health centers, and others who often see families in crisis. It helps them to understand what you are experiencing and to increase their sensitivity when working with your child and family.

A Parent and Caregiver Guide to Helping Your Family Before, During, and After a Crisis is available in electronic format by visiting: <https://jbcc.harvard.edu/resources>. For more information please contact Kim Smith at ksmith@jbcc.harvard.edu.