

# NAMI Homefront Mental Health Resources

## for Military Service Members, Veterans and Their Families

### Calling 911 and Talking with Law Enforcement

If a situation escalates into a crisis, you may have to call law enforcement. There are a few things you can do to keep the situation as calm as possible.

#### On the Phone

Share all the information you can with the 911 dispatcher. Tell the dispatcher that your loved one is having a mental health crisis and explain his/her mental health history and diagnosis. If the police who arrive aren't aware that a mental health crisis is occurring, they cannot handle the situation appropriately. Many communities have crisis intervention team (CIT) programs that train law enforcement, and other first responders, to handle and respond safely to psychiatric crisis calls. Not every officer, sheriff or deputy is trained in a CIT program, but you should request that a CIT be sent if possible.

#### During a Crisis

Law enforcement personnel are trained to maintain control and community safety. If you are worried about law enforcement overreacting, the best way to ensure a safe outcome is to stay calm. When an officer arrives at your home, say "this is a mental health crisis." Mention you can share any helpful information, then step out of the way. Yelling or getting too close is likely to make the officer feel the situation is escalating.

Be aware that your loved one may be placed in handcuffs and transported in the back of a car. This can be extremely upsetting to witness, so be prepared.

#### What Can Law Enforcement Do?

- Transport a person who wants to go to the hospital. A well-trained CIT officer can often talk to a person who is upset, calm them down and convince them to go to the hospital voluntarily.
- Take a person to a hospital for an involuntary evaluation. In certain circumstances, law enforcement can force a person in crisis to go to the hospital involuntarily for a mental health evaluation. Laws and statutes vary from state to state.
- Check on the welfare of your loved one if you are worried and can't reach them. Call the non-emergency number for the police department or sheriff's office in your community and explain why you are concerned. Ask them to conduct a welfare check.

Notes: