

Home Safety Strategies

What safety steps can I take at home?

Use the strategies below to help keep your child safe at home. The ongoing safety of your whole family is an important concern. Your job as a caregiver is to do your best to prevent another escalation or crisis.

Safety Proofing the Home (see back for additional suggestions)

Secure and lock up objects your child could use to hurt themselves or others, such as:

- ☐ All medicines, drugs, alcohol – including over-the-counter medicines
- ☐ Toxic chemicals – like bleach, cleaning products, yard products, and pest poisons
- ☐ Sharps – such as knives, razors, or other blades
- ☐ Items that could be used for strangulation – such as belts, cords, ropes and sheets
- ☐ Firearms and ammunition – be **triple safe** by keeping firearms unloaded and locked, and ammunition locked separately from firearms
- ☐ Items that may be easily broken or used as a weapon, if your child has destructive or aggressive behaviors

Make sure that your child does not know where the locked items are hidden.

Supporting your Child following a Crisis

- ☐ Structure and routine are one of the most useful tools in the home to manage severe behaviors
- ☐ Use your child's safety plan to help them manage difficult emotions and problem solve using skills.
- ☐ At home, maintain a “low-key” atmosphere and keep your regular routine.
- ☐ Follow your typical house rules and pick your battles. Safety is your greatest concern.
- ☐ Encourage your child to attend school, unless told not to by your child's provider.
- ☐ Give medications following your child's medical or psychiatric provider's instructions.
- ☐ Supervise your child as needed until the current crisis is over. This may require increased supervision for several days.
- ☐ Go to the next clinic visit with your child's provider. At this visit keep working on your Crisis Prevention Plan. Discuss these strategies with your child's outpatient mental health provider.

What should I do if there is another crisis?

If you believe that your child presents a danger to themselves or others, take your child to the closest Emergency Department (ED). If you are unable to safely transport your child in your own vehicle, call mobile crisis or 911 to have them taken to the ED. You can also use your county crisis line to help problem solve for you and your family.

What resources are available?

National Hotlines:

- National Suicide & Crisis Hotline: 9-8-8

Online/Digital Support (Social Media)

If you are worried about someone on social media, you can contact safety teams, who will reach out to connect the user with the help they need.

<https://988lifeline.org/help-someone-else/safety-and-support-on-social-media/>

District of Columbia:

Crisis Hotline & Mobile Crisis: 888-793-4357

Child & Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Service (ChAMPS): 202-481-1440

Crisis Hotline: 202-481-1450

→ Access Helpline: 202-561-7000

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What resources are available?

Maryland:

- Maryland's Helpline: Call 2-1-1, or text your zip code to TXT-211 (898-211)
- Crisis Hotline: 1-800-422-0009
- Anne Arundel County Mobile Crisis: 410-768-5522
- Baltimore County:
 - Baltimore Child & Adolescent Response System (B-CARS) Crisis: 410-752-2272
 - Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. , Here2Help Hotline: 410-433-5175 (MD Relay Dial 711); Office: 410-433-5255
 - Baltimore County Crisis Hotline & Mobile Crisis: 410-931-2214
 - Baltimore County Family Crisis Service (domestic violence): 410-889-0840
- Fredrick County Mobile Crisis: 301-624-4682
(funding for child and adolescent emergency service ends 6/11 but adult services will continue)
- Harford County Mobile Crisis: 410-638-5248
- Howard County Mobile Crisis: 410-531-6677
- Montgomery County Crisis Hotline & Mobile Crisis: 240-777-4000
(includes domestic violence; have Spanish speaking staff available)
- Prince George's County Mobile Crisis: 301-927-4500
(includes domestic abuse; Spanish speaking staff from midnight to 8am)
- Prince George's County Family Crisis Service (domestic violence): 301-731-1203
- St. Mary's County: 301-475-8008 (sheriff)
- The Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy Crisis Hotline: (240)-925-0084

Virginia:

- Arlington County Crisis Hotline & Mobile Crisis: 703-228-4256
- Fairfax County Crisis Hotline & Mobile Crisis: 703-573-5679
- Loudon County Crisis Hotline & Mobile Crisis: 703-777-0320
- Prince William County Crisis Hotline & Mobile Crisis:
- Western Prince William County: 703-792-7800
- Eastern Prince William County: 703-792-4900

SAFETY PLAN

- Your child will have a personal safety plan. This is a plan that helps them stay safe. A safety plan is a list of coping strategies and sources of support that your child can use before or during a self-harm or suicidal crisis.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD

- Let your child know you are there to listen. Be there when they would like to talk about their thoughts or feelings.
- Make time to learn about suicidal urges or behaviors and self-injury.
- Sometimes children aren't able to explain the reasons they have for self-harm. Be aware of how your child is feeling. Let them know that you're there to support and help them.
- Your child will likely have the chance to have a deeper discussion about these thoughts, urges, and behaviors with a mental health counselor.
- Use the support systems and coping strategies you have learned.

Adapted from Seattle Children's Patient and Family Education, Nationwide Children's and Children's Hospital of Orange County

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KEEP YOUR HOME SAFE

Use the chart below as a starting point for keeping your home safe. Check all areas of your home including the garage, basement, toolshed, your child's backpack, and their car.

MEDICINE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Over-the-counter (OTC) Examples: Benadryl, aspirin, ibuprofen/Advil, acetaminophen/Tylenol, antihistamines, cold/cough medication, etc.)Prescription medicationsVitamins	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Use a locked container to store and secure all medicine (lock box, locked cabinet, safe, etc.).Do NOT store in a bag or other container that can be easily broken into or try to hide objects somewhere that is not locked.Get rid of any medicine that is expired, no longer being taken, or not needed.Keep track of how much medicine you should have.
GUNS (FIREARMS)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Firearms/GunsAmmunition	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Do not keep firearms in the home.If you own firearms, keep them in a secure gun safe (and ensure your child does not have access to the key or combination).Keep ammunition stored separately from firearms.Store firearms Unloaded.
SHARP OBJECTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">KnivesScissorsRazors (box cutters, shaving and/or eyebrow razors, Exacto blades)Safety PinsNailsNeedlesPencil Sharpeners	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Do a thorough sweep of your entire home (garage, youth's room, living room, bathrooms, kitchen, other bedrooms, toolshed, etc.)Lock up all sharp objects (lock box, locked cabinet, safe, etc.)Do NOT store in a bag or other container that can be easily broken into or try to hide objects somewhere that is not secure.

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OTHER POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ITEMS OR SPACES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ropes• Alcohol• Extension Cords• Belts• Drugs• Cleaning Products(bleach, ammonia, etc.)• Second-story (or third, etc.) windows• Access to rooftops | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lock up all of these items. Making sure your child can't get to them is not enough to keep them safe.2. All family members need to check for these items.3. Think about removing them from the home entirely.4. Lock all high-level windows and access to rooftops. |
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Additional tips to ensure the safety of your child who experiences the urge to harm themselves

While means restriction is one of the most effective ways of ensuring child safety, it is not foolproof. In addition to restricting access to these objects, here are some additional tips for caregivers of youth who experience urges to harm themselves:

- If your child has accessed one of the above listed objects and has seriously harmed themselves, **immediately call 911 or take your child to the nearest hospital emergency room (ER)**. Even if there does not appear to be serious harm, if your child has ingested any medication, toxic cleaning supplies, or other substance to harm themselves, take your child to the nearest ER as effects of the ingestion may not be apparent until it has caused serious harm.
- If the harm is not serious (for example, if your child began to scratch their skin with a sharp object but stopped themselves before doing serious harm), consider contacting your child's outpatient mental health team first for guidance before going to the ER.
- If your child is still able to access one of the objects listed above, review how to secure or dispose of these items with other members of your household and do an additional sweep of your home to remove any objects left out or change the locks of any cabinets or boxes that the youth may have gained access to.
- If your child struggles with thoughts of self-harm or suicide, it is important to connect your child to a therapist and/or psychiatrist. Therapy can address the underlying mental health concerns that may be causing or exacerbating these symptoms. Medication can also help in the management of mental health symptoms.

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All Maryland Counties:

Anne Arundel County Crisis Services	410-768-5522
Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. (Baltimore City)	410-433-5175
Baltimore Child and Adolescent Response System (Baltimore City)	410-433-5175
Baltimore County	410-931-2214
Calvert County	1-877-467-5628
Carroll County	800-422-0009
Frederick County	301-662-2255
Harford County Crisis Teams	410-638-5248
Howard County Crisis Teams	410-531-6677
Montgomery County Crisis System	240-777-4000
Prince George's County Crisis System	301-429-2185
Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office	301-475-8008
Wicomico County	410-749-2924
Worcester County	Call 911