

Who to Call



If things get difficult for the person you care about, it can be confusing knowing who to call or what to do first.

Call your Doctor - when the situation is not an emergency but you are worried about the health of someone. You can either convince the person to go to the doctor or try to get them to go with you. Some doctors offer a home visit, although this is expensive. An example of a situation when the doctor might be a good choice is when someone is seeing things or hearing voices, but they are not frightened, are not hurting anyone or themselves and you don't think there is a risk that they will. The doctor will be able to offer you more information and help sort out what needs to happen next.

Call Police - when there is threat, violence or damage to property. **They come quicker than most other services** and are used to dealing with these problems. They will call the CAT team (Crisis and Assessment Team) if they need to. Police can take someone to a hospital for further assessment.

Call a Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team (CAT team) - when a person is: threatening to seriously harm themselves or others, hearing or seeing disturbing things that aren't there, or having disturbing beliefs or thoughts. CAT teams are mental health specialists and will come if there is a real risk.

Call an Ambulance - if you are very worried about a person who is seriously ill, unconscious, bleeding or physically hurt.

When you call the CAT team they will decide if they should come or not. It is important to be clear about why you are calling and what you are seeing. The sort of information you would give to the CAT worker would include:

- a) Why you are calling: Briefly let them know what you are concerned about.
- b) Identifying the Person: name, age, address, appearance.
- c) Emotions: How the person seems at that moment. If their moods are changing quickly or if they have been like that for awhile. For example, are they depressed? Very happy? Blank and not reacting?
- d) Behaviours: Describe any that are strange or alarming.

- e) Thoughts/Speech: Include examples of what they are saying and how they are saying it. For example, are they talking very quickly/slowly? Is it hard to understand what they mean? Are they saying very odd things? Are they making threats?
- f) Background Information: How do you know the person? Where do they live? What do you know about their mental health history, other information you think is relevant.

If you are worried that the person you care about is in immediate and serious danger of harming someone, it is important to be clear to the CAT team worker why you believe that. The CAT team has limited resources and is best called only when people are very mentally unwell. If they agree to come, ask for advice about how to talk to the client in the meantime. If the CAT team cannot come, ask what you would need to see or know before you should call them again.

Make sure you ask who you are speaking to and ask them to write down the name of the person you are worried about. It is important for you to write down the CAT team person's name, the day and time you called them. It can be helpful to have a record of your call, whether the team comes or not.