

This document describes steps to assist a person who is in psychiatric crisis and needs help. A psychiatric crisis includes but is not limited to: suicidal or homicidal thinking and/or behavior, acute psychotic symptoms, sudden change in mental status and violence. The steps progress from help for a person who is cooperative, to getting an emergency evaluation, to involuntary admission to a hospital.

My relative/friend/neighbor is in a psychiatric crisis and is cooperative. What should I do?

If the person has a health care provider such as a doctor, case manager, or other mental health worker, call that professional for assistance. If the health care provider recommends a non-hospital crisis bed or hospitalization, then the health care provider will try to convince the person to seek an evaluation for voluntary admission.

If the person does not have a provider, check with your county's mental health core service agency about the local services available. Encourage the person to go to an emergency room, a mental health clinic, walk-in crisis center, or a psychiatric hospital. If possible, go with the person and provide as much information as possible regarding the individual's illness and behavior to the evaluating doctor or mental health worker.

My relative/friend/neighbor is in a psychiatric crisis, refuses voluntary placement, and his health care provider recommends hospitalization. What should I do?

A physician, licensed clinical social worker, licensed clinical professional counselor, county health officer or designee, or law enforcement officer can file a petition for emergency evaluation for possible involuntary hospitalization without getting a judge's approval. The law requires that the petitioner has personally examined the individual, though a specific time period is not stated. These professionals must give the petition to a law enforcement officer. If the petitioner cannot go in person to a law enforcement station, a law enforcement officer will sometimes go to the petitioner's office.

What are the criteria for filing a petition for emergency evaluation?

A petition for emergency evaluation (EP) can be made only if the petitioner has reason to believe that the individual:

- Has a mental disorder **and**
- The individual presents a danger to the life or safety of the individual or others.

(Note: The criteria to grant an emergency petition for evaluation does not require that the dangerous behavior be "imminent" to the life or safety of the individual or others.)

My relative/friend/neighbor is in a psychiatric crisis, and cannot or will not seek help and has no health care provider. How can I get the person medical attention?

If there is a mobile crisis team in your area, call them. A mobile crisis team is a group of mental health workers who are trained to evaluate people in crisis and can file an emergency petition.

What if there is no mobile crisis team available and the person refuses to go to the hospital, doctor, or any place where he/she could get treatment?

You have two choices:

1. **File a petition for emergency evaluation:**
Any interested person (friend, relative, neighbor, or health professional) may file a petition for emergency evaluation for review by a judge. District and Circuit Court hours are M-F from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Prince George's, Montgomery, and Baltimore City can handle emergency petitions 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The EP process may take several hours. When a petition for emergency evaluation is granted, the person to be evaluated is taken by law enforcement to an emergency room (ER). The person will then be evaluated for possible hospital admission.
2. **Call 911:** If the situation requires immediate intervention then you may have to call 911. If you call 911, a law enforcement officer will respond and evaluate whether the person meets the EP criteria (defined above). In making this determination, they will take into account all pertinent information including what you tell them about the person and what they observe directly. If they decide that an evaluation is necessary they will take the person to the nearest emergency room.

How do I file a petition for emergency evaluation?

- During court hours go to the nearest District Court. (District Court phone numbers are listed above. There are some Circuit Courts that will also do this.) In Montgomery or Prince George's County or Baltimore City, call a police station to find out which station will accept an EP during non-court hours.
- Take a list of all medications the person is taking or was prescribed. Take medical records, such as hospital admissions, discharge reports or diagnoses, if readily available. Ask for a **petition for emergency evaluation** form. The form is also available online at <http://www.courts.state.md.us/courtforms/joint/ccdc013.pdf>.
- **Try to give detailed and specific answers to the questions.** If possible, give one or more locations where the person may be found. Concentrate on what is presently happening. Add a statement requesting that the evaluatee be assisted in bringing his medications and money with him to the evaluation. Attach additional pages, if necessary.

The judge can grant a petition only if, "The court finds probable cause to believe that the emergency evaluatee has shown the symptoms of a mental disorder **and** that the individual presents a danger to the life or safety of the individual or of others." Please be aware that there are criminal and civil penalties for making fraudulent statements in a petition.

Mobile Crisis Team Numbers by County	
Anne Arundel County	410-768-5522
Baltimore County	410-931-2214
Baltimore City	
Adult	410-433-5255
Child/Adolescent	410-433-5175
Eastern Shore	888-407-8018
Frederick County	301-662.2255
Harford County	410-638-5248
Howard County	410-531-6677
Montgomery County	240.777.4000
Prince George's County	301-927-4500

What happens when a petition for emergency evaluation is granted?

You may be required to take the petition to a law enforcement station to be interviewed. Law enforcement will locate the individual in crisis and take him/her, often in handcuffs, to the nearest emergency room for evaluation. It is sometimes possible to request a specific hospital. Occasionally there is a long delay before law enforcement arrives. **If during the wait the situation requires immediate intervention, call 911 and leave the scene if you are at risk.**

At the emergency room (ER), the law requires a psychiatric evaluation by two physicians or a physician and a psychologist within six hours. **Make every attempt to be there to talk to the doctors.**

If possible, have the person's treating doctor/therapist call the Emergency Room physician. Find out from law enforcement when the petition will be served, so that you can go to the ER (**preferable**) or call the ER. Give the ER physician the information relating to the criteria for involuntary admission, particularly behavior demonstrating that the person presents a danger and any history of mental illness. Let the ER physician know if you are unwilling to accept the person back in your home in his present condition or if he is otherwise homeless. Give the ER physician information on the patient's present medication changes, along with the providers contact information. Tell the ER physician if the treating physician wants to talk to him.

What are the criteria in Maryland for involuntary admission to a psychiatric hospital?

Maryland law allows involuntary admission to a hospital when:

- The individual has a mental disorder; and
- The individual needs inpatient care or treatment; and
- The individual presents a danger to the life or safety of the individual or of others; and
- The individual is unable or unwilling to be voluntarily admitted to the facility; and
- There is no available less restrictive form of intervention that is consistent with the welfare and safety of the individual; and
- If the individual is 65 years old or older and is to be admitted to a State facility, the individual has been evaluated by a geriatric evaluation team and no less restrictive form of care or treatment was determined by the team to be appropriate.

What happens if the person is certified in the ER for involuntary hospital admission?

By law, an evaluatee may not be kept in an emergency facility for more than 30 hours. If the examining physician is unable to have the person admitted to an appropriate facility, the Maryland Department of Health is required to provide for admission within 6 hours of notification.

A person involuntarily admitted to a hospital will have a hearing with an administrative law judge (ALJ), within 10 days of admission, to determine if he still meets the requirements for involuntary admission. The person has the right to change to a voluntary admission status any time before the hearing decision, if the hospital psychiatrist finds the person able to understand and agree to treatment. Voluntary status allows the person to sign out of the hospital unless the psychiatrist determines that the person again meets the criteria for involuntary admission and re-certifies him.

The hospital must give the parent, guardian, or next of kin notice of the hearing time, date and place, so that they may testify. Other interested people can notify the hospital that they would like to testify at the hearing, in person or by telephone. If the ALJ finds that the person meets the

standard, the person will be involuntarily admitted for up to six months. (Average stay in a general hospital is currently about 5 days and is about 9 days in a private psychiatric hospital.) If the person does not meet the standard, he/she can leave immediately, but may be re-petitioned under new circumstances.

The admitted person must be released when the person does not need inpatient care to protect the individual or another, would not endanger the individual or the person or property of another, and can care for himself or will be cared for properly by a responsible person who is able and willing to care for the individual.

Involuntary hospitalization is not a long-term solution, but might be the best chance for a person to start to stabilize, and to avoid a tragic outcome.

What happens if the person is not certified in the ER for involuntary hospital admission?

The evaluatee is immediately free to leave; however, you can request that the ER staff discuss with the evaluatee a referral to a voluntary residential crisis bed or other appropriate services. The person may be re-petitioned under new circumstances.

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District Courts

Check <http://www.courts.state.md.us/district/directories/courtmap.html> for hours, addresses, and directions to Maryland's District Courts.

County	Phone Number
Allegany County	301-723-3100
Anne Arundel County	
• Annapolis	410-260-1370
• Glen Burnie	410-260-1800
Baltimore County	
• Catonsville	410-512-2500
• Essex	410-512-2300
• Towson	410-512-2000
Baltimore City	
• Fayette & Gay Street	410-878-8900
• East North Avenue	410-878-8500
• East Patapsco Avenue	410-878-8300
• Wabash Avenue	410-878-8000
Calvert County	443-550-6700
Caroline County	410-819-4600
Carroll County	410-871-3500
Cecil County	410-996-2700
Charles County	301-932-3300
Dorchester County	410-901-1420
Frederick County	301-600-2000
Garrett County	301-334-8020
Harford County	410-836-4545
Howard County	410-480-7700
Kent County	410-810-3360
Montgomery County	
• Rockville	301-279-1500
• Silver Spring	301-563-8500
Prince George's County	
• Hyattsville	301-699-2766
• Upper Marlboro	301-952-4080
Queen Anne's County	410-819-4000
Somerset County	410-845-4700
St. Mary's County	301-880-2700
Talbot County	410-819-5850
Washington County	240-420-4600
Wicomico County	410-713-3500
Worcester County	
• Snow Hill	410-713-3500
• Ocean City	410-219-7830