

**NYC Community Members'
Guide to Supporting
Neighbors with Potential
Mental Health Conditions**



*Although mental health conditions are common, they are often not well understood. **If you're a community member and feel comfortable with the situation and your relationship with your neighbor**, you can approach those experiencing mental health challenges in a non-judgmental, compassionate and supportive manner. This can encourage people to seek support and services, preventing situations from escalating.*

Here are some scenarios with helpful tips, action steps and resources.

SCENARIO 1. PREVENTIVE SITUATIONS

CATCHING POTENTIAL SIGNS OF A DECLINE IN MENTAL HEALTH CAN PREVENT A CRISIS SITUATION. TRYING TO PROVIDE THE APPROPRIATE SUPPORT WHEN THAT HAPPENS IS ESSENTIAL.

**Examples of what
to look for**

- Withdrawal and isolation
- Out of character and unusual behavior
- Decline in personal hygiene or maintaining living space
- Hallucinations or delusions
- Talking to oneself

Action

- Approach the neighbor privately, express concern, and offer support
 - *Say something like:* "You seem stressed or like you're struggling lately. Is everything alright? Is there anything I can do to help you?"
- Offer the following support and services:
 - **NYC 988 mental health & substance use hotline**
 - **NYC 988** (<https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/>): Mental Health and substance use hotline for anonymous, free and confidential support 24/7. People don't have to be in an actual crisis, and they can speak about stress or feeling low. People can choose to speak, text, or chat with a counselor or a peer support specialist which is a trained and certified professional who uses their experience living with a mental health and/or substance use condition to support others. Call responders can offer suggestions of types of support as well as referrals to service providers. Simply dial 988 to connect or visit the site at <https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/>.

- **The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH)** offers a comprehensive guide to mental health services via How to Access NYC Mental Health & Substance Use Services (<https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/how-to-access>)
 - To identify specific mental health provider organizations and services by geographic location, go to NYC 988 - Talk. Text. Chat. 24/7 (<https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/>).

Next steps

- Encourage the neighbor to seek help.

If the situation worsens

- If the person's behavior worsens and the person does not seem to be getting the help they need, dial 988 and speak with a counselor to discuss next steps.
- Try to document what has been going on so you can provide as much accurate information as possible.
- Depending on the situation, they may recommend sending a Mobile Crisis Team (Mobile Crisis Team Referrals - NYC 988) to visit the person. Mobile Crisis Teams are comprised of licensed mental health clinicians and peer support specialists and can be dispatched by NYC 988 to arrive to the location within several hours. More information on Mobile Crisis Teams referrals here: <https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/providers/mct-referral/>

SCENARIO 2. SITUATIONS REQUIRING A RESPONSE

IF YOU WITNESS CONCERNING BEHAVIOR FROM A NEIGHBOR AND FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH TRYING TO DE-ESCALATE THE SITUATION, HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH THE INDIVIDUAL AND TRY TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO SEEK HELP.

Examples of what to look for

- Ongoing loud noises or other disturbances reported by neighbors
- Aggressive or unusual behavior that seems out of character
- Property damage, vandalism, or unusual activity in shared spaces
- Talking to oneself loudly or appearing distressed by unseen experiences
- Action Repeated calls to the police about fears of being harassed or harmed

Note: Sometimes people with mental health conditions experience paranoia by having delusions or hallucinations and may believe that someone is trying to harass or harm them without actual evidence. Or, they may be hearing voices telling them to harm others.

NYC 988: <https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/>
 OCMH How to Access NYC Mental Health & Substance Use Services: <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/how-to-access>

Action

- Speak calmly with the neighbor privately about the complaints regarding their behavior in a compassionate, supportive and non-judgmental tone.
 - Say: "I've been concerned about loud noises and disturbances. How can I help you resolve this?"
- Offer the support and services discussed above, including NYC 988 & OCMH's How to Access NYC Mental Health & Substance Use Services here: <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/how-to-access>

Next steps

- Document interactions in case you have to call NYC 988 on their behalf for recommendations on how to resolve the situation.
- Encourage the neighbor to inform you of any support they are already receiving.

If the situation worsens

- If complaints persist, dial 988 for recommendations.
- If you feel comfortable speaking with the person, suggest short-term respite options:

Short-term Mental Health Crisis Residences Sometimes people need a comfortable and safe place to stay temporarily outside of their home when they feel they may be headed towards a crisis and want to prevent the situation from getting worse. Crisis respites are like bed & breakfasts which offer that diversion option where people can stay for a short-term (up to two weeks or more depending on the situation). People can get the support they need such as learning crisis prevention tools particularly from peer support specialists. Dial 988 to facilitate a referral.

SCENARIO 3. URGENT SITUATIONS

SOMETIMES, AN INCIDENT OCCURS WHICH NEEDS URGENT, BUT NOT IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.

Examples of what to look for

- Escalating behavior that seems harmful to the person such as talking about suicide, harmful (non-violent) behavior to someone else, such as yelling verbal threats, harassment and minor vandalism.

NYC 988: <https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/>
OCMH How to Access NYC Mental Health & Substance Use Services:
<https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/how-to-access>

Action

- **Non-Emergency:**
 - If there is no immediate danger but serious concern about behavior.
 - Dial 988 for recommendations on how to handle the situation. This is a situation where a request for a Mobile Crisis Team could be very helpful.
- **Immediate Concern:**
 - If there is an **immediate danger and safety risk present, call 911** (e.g., violent aggression, self-harm, dangerous behavior involving a weapon, **threatening suicide**).

Next steps

- Ensure safety of the person while waiting for help but avoid confrontation.
- Follow up: Check on the person's well-being post-incident and offer support in seeking services if needed. Work with the person to establish reasonable expectations and avoid future incidents. Continue offering recommendations to access mental health services from local mental health provider organizations at (<https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/>).

SCENARIO 4. EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

IF SOMEONE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OF HARMING THEMSELVES OR OTHERS, CALL 911 RIGHT AWAY.

Examples of what to look for

- Talk of a specific suicide plan with the means to act on it, particularly if the person has had previous suicide attempts.
- Violent behavior towards someone else, especially if there is a weapon involved.

Action

- Call 911 and describe the situation as accurately as possible.

Next steps

- If the person is suicidal, stay with them until the police have arrived.
- If the person is on the move in the streets, try to follow them so you can give a precise location to the police.
- Document the situation including any history of incidents you are aware of so you can provide this to the police and EMS.
- Contact the person's roommates or family members living with them if they are not aware of what has happened.
- Follow up: Check on the person's well-being post-incident and offer support in seeking services if needed as per Scenario 1. Remember, you can always dial NYC 988 for recommendations, information and advice.