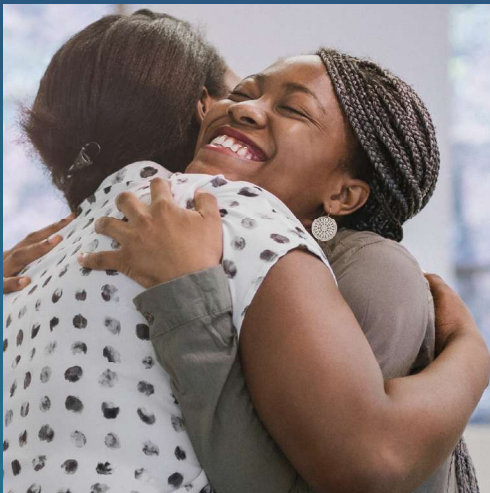


# Crisis Can't Wait

## Resource Toolkit



 **nami**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

**CHEA**  
COMMUNITY HEALTH  
EQUITY ALLIANCE



# Crisis Can't Wait



## Inside this Toolkit

This curated toolkit brings together critical crisis response resources tailored for Black/African ancestry communities. It confronts systemic disparities and the compounded effects of stigma, under-insurance, and cultural mistrust. By spotlighting culturally resonant support, this toolkit aims to reduce barriers and save lives when every moment counts, because a crisis can't wait!

### Know the Signs

Black/African ancestry individuals living with serious mental illness experience significant disparities with access to crisis response. Only one in three Black adults with serious mental illness receives treatment.\* It is critical that Black/African ancestry communities learn to recognize the signs of a serious mental health condition. Recognizing the signs of potential mental health challenges is crucial for providing timely support and encouraging early intervention.

### Know the 988 & Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Preventing suicide within the Black/African ancestry community is a priority. Stigma and other barriers to care prevent access to timely and compassionate support. By knowing the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, YOU can help ensure that you or a loved one receives a humane response that reduces reliance on law enforcement, and facilitates appropriate and timely care. Learn more about the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).

### Know Your Crisis Intervention Plan

The lack of access to mental health crisis intervention in Black/African ancestry communities can result in more individuals with serious mental illness experiencing a crisis without the appropriate support. Having a crisis intervention plan can help! A crisis intervention plan serves as a roadmap for guiding you or a loved one through moments of mental health distress. Be ready when a mental health emergency strikes, and know your crisis intervention plan.

### Know Your Care Journey

Understanding your mental health care journey is important because it allows for better self-awareness, more effective treatment, and ultimately, improved well-being. It empowers you to actively participate in your care, recognize your progress, and advocate for your needs.

\*Source: [Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)



The Crisis Can't Wait Campaign was created to improve access to care for people experiencing serious mental health conditions in Black/African ancestry communities. To learn more visit [nami.org/chea](https://nami.org/chea).



# Crisis Can't Wait



## Know the Signs

Black/African ancestry individuals living with serious mental illness experience significant disparities with access to crisis response resources. Only one in three Black adults with serious mental illness receives treatment.\* It is critical that Black/African ancestry communities learn to recognize the signs of a serious mental health condition. Recognizing the signs of potential mental health struggles is crucial for providing timely support and encouraging early intervention.

### Common behaviors that may be a clue that a mental health crisis is developing:

- Inability to perform daily tasks like bathing, brushing teeth, brushing hair, changing clothes
- Rapid mood swings, increased energy level, inability to stay still, pacing; suddenly depressed, withdrawn; suddenly happy or calm after period of depression
- Increased agitation, verbal threats, violent, out-of-control behavior, destroys property
- Isolation from school, work, family, and friends
- Abusive behavior to self and others, including substance use or self-harm; cutting is one example
- Loses touch with reality (psychosis); unable to recognize family or friends, confused, strange ideas, thinks they're someone they're not, doesn't understand what people are saying, hears voices, sees things that aren't there, unreasonably suspicious

### Common warning signs of suicide include:

- Giving away personal possessions
- Talking as if they're saying goodbye or going away forever
- Taking steps to tie up loose ends, like organizing personal papers or paying off debts
- Making or changing a will
- Stockpiling pills or obtaining a weapon, preoccupation with death
- Sudden cheerfulness or calm after a period of despondency

## It is a sign of strength to seek help

\*Source: [Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides a 24-hour confidential connection with a trained crisis counselor.



**CHEA**  
COMMUNITY HEALTH  
EQUITY ALLIANCE

The Crisis Can't Wait Campaign was created to improve access to care for people experiencing serious mental health conditions in Black/African ancestry communities. To learn more visit [nami.org/chea](https://nami.org/chea).



# Crisis Can't Wait

## Know the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Preventing suicide within the Black/African ancestry community is a priority. Stigma and other barriers to care prevent access to timely and compassionate support. By knowing the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, you can help ensure that you or a loved one receives a humane response that reduces reliance on law enforcement and facilitates appropriate and timely care.

### What is 988?

- The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a free, three-digit number that anyone can call to receive anonymous, confidential, and compassionate support when experiencing a suicidal, mental health, and/or substance use related crisis.
- The Lifeline can also be reached by texting “988” and by chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).
- 988 is available nationwide, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and during holidays.
- 988 Lifeline Black Mental Health offers additional crisis resources with an equity lens. [988lifeline.org/help-yourself/black-mental-health](https://988lifeline.org/help-yourself/black-mental-health)

### When do I use 988?

- Use 988 when you, a loved one, or anyone else is in need of immediate compassionate care and support for any mental health, or substance use-related condition, distress, or crisis.
- Use 988 when a trained crisis counselor is needed to provide an initial assessment and screening, preliminary counseling, share information about community mental health and crisis services, and, if necessary and available in your area, dispatch a mobile crisis team for onsite assessments and referrals.

### Why is sharing this information so important?

- 988 provides lifesaving support, can prevent crises from escalating, and is an alternative to law enforcement response.
- 988 provides access to care in communities impacted by systemic inequities, historical trauma, mental health disparities, treatment gaps, and stigma.
- Visit NAMI's Reimagine Crisis for more information about 988 and how you can get more involved in advocating for a comprehensive crisis response system in every community at [reimaginecrisis.org](https://reimaginecrisis.org).

**Call 911 if you or others are in immediate danger.**

Source: [NAMI's Navigating a Mental Health Crisis Guide](#)





# Crisis Can't Wait



## Know Your Crisis Intervention Plan

The lack of access to mental health crisis intervention in Black/African ancestry communities can result in more individuals with serious mental illness experiencing a crisis without the appropriate support. Having a crisis intervention plan can help! A crisis intervention plan serves as a road-map for guiding you or a loved one through moments of mental health distress. Be ready when a mental health emergency strikes. Know your crisis intervention plan.

### Having a crisis intervention plan can help.

#### Personal Information and Health History

##### Identifying Information

- Name, address, date of birth

##### Current Health Details

- List any current mental health diagnoses and medications.
- Note any history of suicide attempts, drug use, or psychosis.

##### What Works and What Doesn't

- Document strategies and treatments that have worked in the past.
- Share what helps to create a sense of calm or reduce symptoms.
- List any actions or people that may make the situation worse.

#### Emergency Contacts and Support Network

##### For Immediate Help

- List addresses and contact information for nearby crisis centers or emergency rooms.
- Provide safety plans that include when to contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, 911, or other crisis services.

##### Health Care Professionals

- Include contact information for health professionals (name, phone, and email).

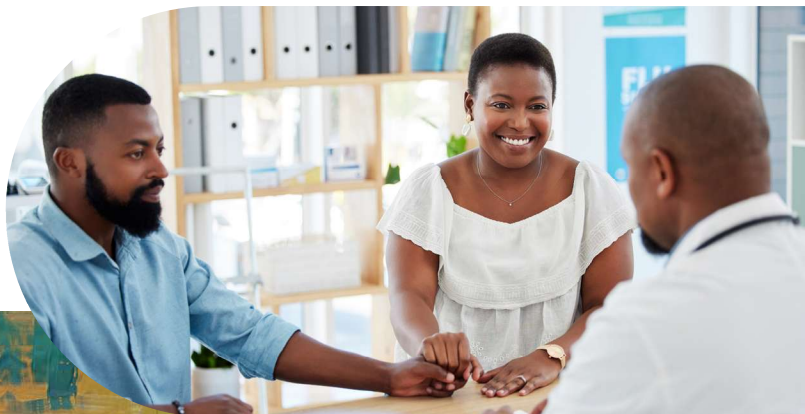
##### Trusted Supporters

- Share contact information for trusted adult relationships, such as neighbors, friends, family members, favorite teacher or counselor at school, people in faith communities, or work colleagues.

#### KEEP YOUR PLAN HANDY

Store your information on a cell phone, wallet sized card, small notebook or planner you always carry.

\*Source: [NAMI's Navigating a Mental Health Crisis Guide](#)



The Crisis Can't Wait Campaign was created to improve access to care for people experiencing serious mental health conditions in Black/African ancestry communities. To learn more visit [nami.org/chea](https://nami.org/chea).



# Crisis Can't Wait

## Know Your Care Journey

Understanding your mental health care journey is important because it allows for better self-awareness, more effective treatment, and ultimately, improved well-being. It empowers you to actively participate in your care, recognize your progress, and advocate for your needs.

### Destination: Wellness!

#### 1. Acceptance Is Empowerment

A mental health diagnosis isn't the end; it's the beginning of healing. While stigma exists, knowledge is power. It connects you to resources and support systems you choose, helping you thrive! Find support and education at [nami.org/support](https://nami.org/support).

#### 2. Stick To The Script(s)

Just like a fitness plan boosts physical health, creating and following a treatment plan supports overall mental well-being. Whether it includes medication, therapy, or specialized care, sticking to your plan helps manage symptoms and keeps you connected to the people who care about you. Learn more about care plans at [nami.org/Treatments](https://nami.org/Treatments).

#### 3. Assemble Your Support Squad!

A diagnosis doesn't mean you're alone or that life can't be managed. There will be ups and downs, but with a strong support squad (your care team, family, and friends) you'll have people to lean on, guiding you through challenges and helping you forward. Learn more about finding your support squad at [nami.org/mhprofessionals](https://nami.org/mhprofessionals).

#### 4. Your Story Can Make a Difference

Sharing your experiences helps you understand your journey and identify the support you may need. Though stigma can be stronger in Black/African ancestry communities, vulnerability fosters connection, healing, and understanding, for you and others. Learn more about community conversations at [nami.org/sharinghope](https://nami.org/sharinghope).

#### 5. Be Your Own Best Advocate

This is YOUR care journey, and you deserve the best support to manage symptoms and stay on track. Be your own advocate: ask questions; share what hasn't worked; and work with your care team on a plan that respects your goals, culture, and values. Learn more about living with a mental health condition at [nami.org/your-journey](https://nami.org/your-journey).

\*Source: [NAMI's Navigating a Mental Health Crisis Guide](#)



The Crisis Can't Wait Campaign was created to improve access to care for people experiencing serious mental health conditions in Black/African ancestry communities. To learn more visit [nami.org/chea](https://nami.org/chea).

