



Deciding to Call the PCT

If your loved one's mental health seems different from their usual baseline, it is okay to reach out. You do not need to be certain it is a crisis before asking for support. When you are caring for someone with a serious mental illness, it is normal to feel worried, overwhelmed, or unsure about what to do next.

You can call the NS Provincial Crisis Team if you are concerned about psychosis, suicidal thoughts, deep depression, self-harm, unsafe behaviour, or changes that feel difficult to manage. A trained clinician can listen, help you understand the level of risk, and guide you through possible next steps.

It is better to call early than to wait until the situation becomes unmanageable. Even if the PCT does not need to intervene directly, they can help you sort through the concern, identify risk, and decide on a safer plan.

Note: For caregivers supporting someone in the Halifax Regional Municipality, the team may also be able to send the Mobile Crisis Team for in-person support when appropriate.

Before You Call

Before calling, gather any **collateral information** you can share about your loved one:

1. Person's name, age, location, and phone number
2. Let the PCT know whether this is a **first episode** or an **escalation of an ongoing condition**.
3. Describe how long the changes have been happening, how severe they seem, and how they differ from your loved one's usual baseline. Include dates and times.
4. Share symptoms you have noticed, such as isolation, agitation, or changes in sleep patterns.
5. Mention daily functioning concerns, such as not eating, poor hygiene, or not taking prescribed medication.
6. Share any immediate safety concerns, including weapons, threats, symptoms of psychosis, overdose risk, or urgent medical concerns.
7. Provide information about current medications, diagnoses, and service providers, if known.
8. Highlight what has helped, or made things worse, during past crises.

Information you provide can be an important part of how the PCT decides what steps to take next. Be sure to include any details about risk to self or others.

What to Expect

A crisis clinician will listen and document the information you are able to provide. They will ask questions, assess risk, and review any other information available to them.

The clinician may discuss options with you right away, or they may call you back after reviewing your loved one's history or chart more thoroughly.

Here are some good questions to ask:

1. What should I do if things get worse?
2. Should we go to the emergency dept.?
3. When should I call back?
4. Can you suggest services for follow-up care?

The team will collaborate as much as possible to support the safest and most appropriate care for your loved one.

Note: The PCT generally aims to use the **least intrusive intervention** that is appropriate for the situation. They may use information from health records, police, family, and friends to triage each call.

If you are unsure what happened after your call, you are welcome to call back a few days later to ask for an update. The PCT responder may be able to tell you whether the team contacted your loved one.

Remember: you are important too.

Caring for someone with a serious mental illness, especially during a crisis, can be incredibly difficult. PCT also welcomes calls from caregivers. Clinicians are trained to respond to your concerns and can suggest resources to support you.

Service Limitations

The PCT cannot share details from your loved one's health record without their consent. However, any collateral information you provide may be added to their health record and used to help assess risk and plan next steps. If you call back a few days later, the PCT **can** tell you whether they were able to make contact by phone or in-person.

The PCT is not an emergency response service. If there is immediate danger, active violence, active self-harm, or a suicide attempt in progress, call 9-1-1. The PCT cannot complete a wellness check if your loved one's location is unknown.

The PCT may also be unable to complete wellness checks for people staying in shelters if responders are not permitted access.

After the Call

After the call, take a few minutes to record:

1. The responder's name.
2. The date and time of your call.

Write down the plan clearly:

3. What the responder recommended.
4. What you agreed to do next.
5. What to watch for and when to call back if the situation changes.

Key Numbers:

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line:

1-888-429-8167

Mental Health Mobile Crisis:

902-429-8167

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week across NS. You can call for yourself or because you are worried about someone else.

If there is immediate danger:

Call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency department

Caregivers Nova Scotia:

1-877-488-7390

Support for caregivers, including help with how to share concerns with healthcare providers

211 Nova Scotia:

Call 2-1-1 for help finding community, social, and health-related supports

