

Crisis Prevention Plan Aid

A parent's guide to creating a crisis prevention plan

Crisis Prevention Plans (CPP) are intended to help children/adolescents and their caregivers prevent minor problems from escalating into crisis events. CPPs provide an opportunity for the child/adolescent and the caregiver to logically think through situations by identifying the cause of distress, understanding and discussing options for minimizing difficult situations, and encouraging coping skills to help decrease the distress.

Key components of a CPP include understanding triggers, identifying warning signs, and helping to facilitate interactions that will decrease the possibility of further difficulties. A thoughtful and carefully constructed CPP can help families make choices and take actions to diffuse difficult situations.

Steps for creating your own Crisis Prevention Plan:

- **Discuss triggers** — Triggers are things that cause distress for the child/adolescent. Common triggers include peer conflict, homework, chores, feeling sad or angry, and being told “no” or being unable to get their way. The child/adolescent and caregiver should be honest and explicit about the triggers for what is currently causing them the most difficulty.
- **Identify early warning signs** — Warning signs are physical clues the child/adolescent does (sometimes without their knowledge) that show others that they are upset or distressed. Common warning signs include blushing/flushed face, clenching fists, pacing, yelling, or withdrawing/becoming quiet.
- **List interventions the caregiver can do to help the child/adolescent calm down** — Discuss what the child/adolescent would want, and how the caregiver could provide that for them. Examples include giving the child/adolescent space to calm down, reminding them to use a coping skill, talking with them, or offering a hug.
- **List things the child/adolescent can do to help calm themselves** — This typically includes coping skills such as listening to music, talking a walk, doing deep breathing exercises, taking time to themselves (include a mention of how long to let the child/adolescent “cool off” before being expected to reengage with the family), writing, drawing/coloring, or other relaxation techniques.
- **Identify other supports if the above interventions aren't helpful or are unavailable** — for instance, list three people the child/adolescent can contact, beside the caregiver, when distressed. Examples include peers who would have a positive influence, relatives, older siblings, therapists, or teachers/coaches. The child/adolescent and caregiver should agree who are a good resource. Also identify and list the crisis line where you live. A teen hotline such as Teen Link (1-866-833-6546 or <http://866teenlink.org>) is also helpful.

Christina Clark, MD

Crisis Prevention Plan

My triggers are:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

My early warning signs are:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

When my parents/caregivers notice my early warning signs, they can:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

Things I can do when I notice my early warning signs:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

If I am unable to help myself I can call:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

- Your County Crisis Line Phone Number:
(you can look it up here:
www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/division-behavioral-health-and-recovery/state-mental-health-crisis-lines)
- Teen Link Hotline: 1-866-833-6546 or <http://866teenlink.org>
- The National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-784-2433

This Crisis Prevention Plan was created to give your family strategies you can use in your home to help calm your child during an escalation before they reach a crisis point. We do not advise using restraint, such as holding your child down, because you or your child could get hurt. Please call 911 if you or your child is in imminent danger.

General Home Safety Recommendations After a Child Crisis Event

The following safety tips may help to keep things safe right now after an escalated crisis event, and help to reduce further escalations/crises:

1. In the home environment, maintain a “low-key” atmosphere while maintaining regular routines
2. Follow your typical house rules, but pick your battles appropriately, for example:
 - immediately intervene with aggressive or dangerous behaviors
 - if your child is just using oppositional words, it may be wise to ignore those behaviors
3. Provide appropriate supervision until the child’s crisis is resolved
4. Make a crisis prevention plan by identifying likely triggers for a crisis (such as an argument), and **plan with your child** what the preferred actions would be for the next time the triggers occur (such as calling a friend, engaging in a distracting activity or going to a personal space)
5. Encourage your child to attend school, unless otherwise directed by your provider
6. Make sure that you and your child attend the next scheduled appointment with their provider
7. Administer medications as directed by your child’s medical or psychiatric provider
8. Go into each day/evening with a plan for how time will be spent — this should help prevent boredom and arguments in the moment
9. Secure and lock up all medications and objects your child could use to hurt him/herself and/or use to attempt suicide. When locking up items, ensure your child does not have knowledge of their location, the location of the key, or the combination to any padlock used to secure them. This includes:
 - Sharp objects like knives and razors
 - Materials that can be used for strangulation attempts, such as belts, cords, ropes and sheets
 - Firearms and ammunition (locked and kept in separate/different locations from each other)
 - All medications of all family members, including all over the counter medicines. If your child takes medication of any type, you should administer it for the time being (unless instructed to stop it by your care provider)

In the event of another crisis, please do the following:

- If you believe that you, your child, or another person is no longer safe as a result of your child’s behavior, call 911 to have your child transported to the emergency department closest to your home
- Consider calling your local county crisis hotline, which are listed at www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/division-behavioral-health-and-recovery/state-mental-health-crisis-lines
- Consider calling the national suicide hotline: 1-800-784-2433

This resource page is now available in Spanish at www.seattlechildrens.org/pal