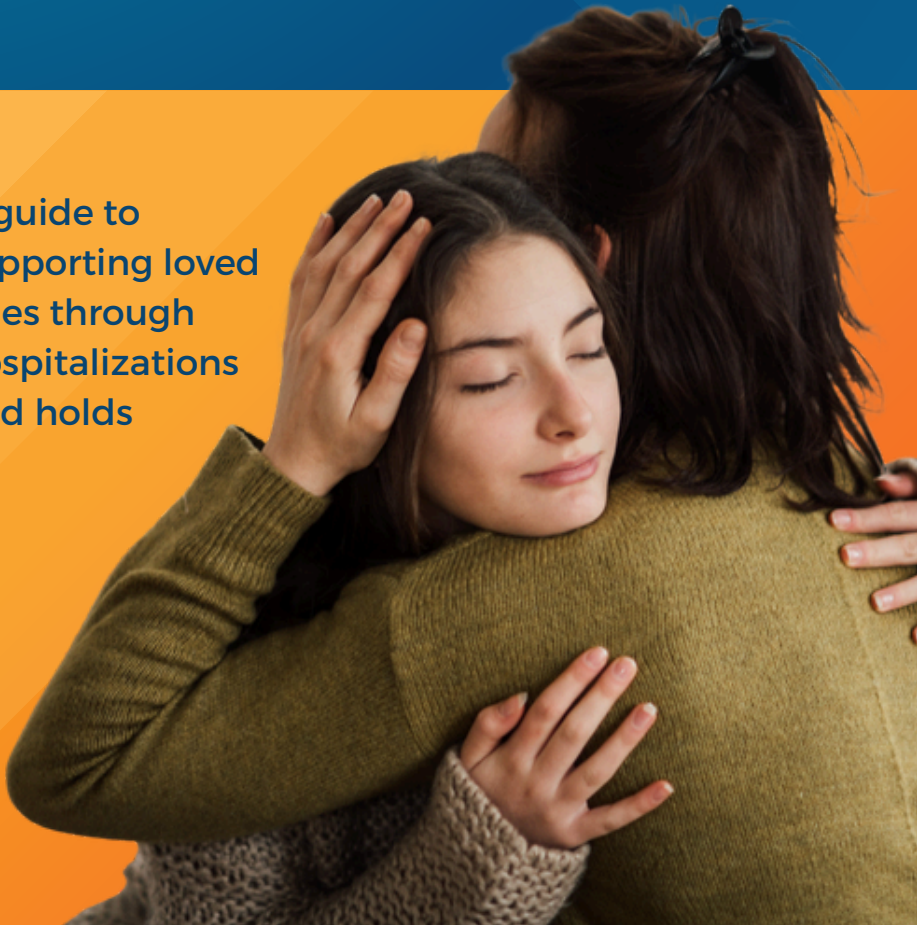




Navigating a Behavioral Health Crisis

A guide to
supporting loved
ones through
hospitalizations
and holds





Acknowledgments

This guide is made possible through funding from the Behavioral Health Student Services Act (BHSSA). It was prepared by Tri-City Mental Health Authority in collaboration with local community partners whose insights, expertise and contributions were instrumental in the development of this resource.

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Introduction

When a loved one experiences a behavioral health crisis, it can be overwhelming and difficult to navigate. Preparing in advance can help you respond effectively and supportively during these critical moments.

This guide is designed for individuals whose loved one is experiencing a behavioral health crisis that may lead to an involuntary temporary hold or hospitalization. It provides information on what to expect, how to advocate for your loved one, and resources available to support you throughout the process.

An involuntary hold is a legal intervention to provide emergency care when a person is experiencing a behavioral health crisis and may be unable to keep themselves or others safe. It offers the opportunity to begin the process of stabilization through evaluation, observation, transportation, and/or treatment, all with the goal of ensuring the individual's immediate safety and access to appropriate care.

This guide aims to help you understand the involuntary hold process, the rights of the individual, and the options available for continued care. It is not comprehensive and is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to promote the use of involuntary holds but to empower you with knowledge to make informed decisions about your loved one's needs. Every situation is unique, and your loved one's experience may vary depending on individual needs, the response team, and the facility.





If you or your loved one is experiencing a life threatening situation or immediate safety risk, **call 911** for emergency assistance.

What is a behavioral health crisis?



A behavioral health crisis is any situation in which a person's thoughts, emotions, or behaviors put them at risk of harming themselves or others, and/or they are unable to care for themselves or function in daily life.

A behavioral health crisis is just as serious and urgent as any other health emergency. It may happen suddenly or build up over time, and it can affect anyone—regardless of whether they've been following their treatment plan or using healthy coping tools. While there are sometimes triggers and signs, a crisis can also occur without clear cause or notice.

In these moments, you or your loved one may need additional support to stay safe and begin recovery. Reaching out for help is a critical step—and a sign of strength.



Hospitalization can help keep your loved one safe and provide the care they need during a behavioral health crisis.

Why might my loved one need to go to the hospital?

There are several reasons why someone may need to consider an emergency hold or hospitalization, including:

- **Expressing thoughts of suicide** or wanting to end their life, and having difficulty creating and/or following a safety plan
- **Sudden or extreme mood swings** (i.e. increased energy, racing thoughts or inability to stay still; suddenly depressed or withdrawn; suddenly happy or calm after a period of depression)
- **Increased agitation or violent behavior**, including verbal threats, out-of-control behavior, or destroying property
- **Being worried about their drug or alcohol use**
- **Being worried that they may hurt themselves or someone else**
- **Showing signs of being unable to care for themselves** due to feeling overwhelmed or emotionally distressed
- **Unable to attend work, school, or manage basic responsibilities** due to emotional distress
- **Losing contact with reality (psychosis)** or having unusual experiences, such as hearing or seeing things that others do not (hallucinations) or having beliefs or fears that are not based in reality (delusions)

Choosing support: Voluntary admission during a crisis

Sometimes, during a behavioral health crisis, a person may recognize that they need help and choose to seek support. This is called a voluntary admission—when someone agrees to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital or behavioral health facility for evaluation and care.

Voluntary admission can be an empowering step in a person's journey toward healing, reflecting self-awareness and a willingness to engage in care. People who seek help voluntarily are able to:

- Receive support in a safe, structured environment.
- Be evaluated by behavioral health professionals.
- Begin stabilization and participate in creating a treatment plan.
- Access services and resources that support long-term recovery and well-being.



What's the Difference?

- **Voluntary admission** means the person consents to receive help.
- **Involuntary holds** are used when someone is at risk of harm and may not recognize their need for care.



Understanding voluntary services and supports

Voluntary services are offered to individuals who are experiencing emotional distress, a personal crisis, or early signs of mental health challenges but are still able to make safe decisions about their care.

Voluntary services are appropriate when:

- The person is distressed but not an imminent danger to themselves, others, or unable to care for their basic needs.
- The individual is willing and able to engage with supports.
- A safety plan can be created and followed voluntarily.

Examples of voluntary supports include:

- Crisis hotline or warmline support
- Mobile crisis team response (with client consent)
- Referrals to outpatient therapy, psychiatry, or case management
- Peer support services
- Housing, food, or social service referrals
- Safety planning
- Voluntary hospital visit for evaluation

Key Characteristics of Voluntary Services:



Choice-Based Services

The individual decides whether to participate in services.



Least Restrictive Option

The person retains all civil rights and freedom of movement.



Collaborative Care

The person participates in creating a plan for support and safety.



Focus on Prevention and Stabilization

Aims to resolve issues early and prevent crises from escalating.



Understanding involuntary holds

An involuntary hold is when a person is placed in a safe, supervised setting—such as a hospital or behavioral health facility—for up to **72 hours**. This allows for emergency assessment, stabilization, and planning for ongoing care.

An authorized, county-designated professional determines that a hold is necessary due to serious concerns for someone's safety or well-being. A person, due to a behavioral health condition, may be placed on an involuntary hold if they are:

- **A danger to themselves** – They have thoughts or plans to harm themselves.
- **A danger to others** – They have thoughts or plans to harm someone else.
- **Gravely disabled** – They are unable to take care of their basic personal needs such as food, clothing, or shelter.

Both pathways to care –voluntary and involuntary– aim to ensure safety and connect individuals with the support they need.

Who can place someone on an involuntary hold?*

- Licensed clinicians (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers or therapists)
- Members of mobile crisis teams, emergency services first responders, or law enforcement officers
- Staff at facilities approved by the county for mental health evaluation and treatment such as emergency psychiatric clinics and urgent care facilities.

**Only personnel formally designated by the county are legally permitted to initiate holds.*



In California, an **involuntary hold** is called a **"5150"** (for adults ages 18 and older) or **"5585"** (for minors under the age of 18).

Both codes authorize county-designated personnel to take someone to a safe, controlled environment when an involuntary hold is believed necessary.



What happens during an involuntary hold?

During a hold, the person is taken to an emergency facility or hospital for crisis intervention, evaluation, and treatment. Before a behavioral health assessment begins, a healthcare professional determines if the person needs immediate medical attention.

Emergency care during an involuntary hold may include:

- Behavioral health assessments
- Crisis stabilization
- Transport by ambulance to an appropriate facility or hospital
- Medication management
- Medical treatment and other supportive services, as needed

A behavioral health professional will begin evaluating your loved one's medical, psychological, educational, social, financial, and legal needs to determine the most appropriate care.

The hold can last for up to 72 hours, but the person may not be held the entire time. The facility has the legal right to hold them for the full 72 hours if it is considered necessary for safety and stabilization.

By the end of the 72-hour period, one of the following outcomes will occur:

- **The person is released** if safety is no longer a concern and necessary support is in place to ensure their safety.
- **The person agrees to stay voluntarily** for continued treatment.
- A **14-day involuntary hold (5250)** is initiated if the person is still considered a danger to themselves, to others, or is gravely disabled. This extended hold is called a certification for intensive treatment.

Each outcome is designed to support an individual's safety and stabilization while connecting them to appropriate care.

Which psychiatric hospital might my loved one be taken to?

The following is a list of psychiatric hospitals in Los Angeles County where your loved one might be transported.

Depending on factors such as bed availability and insurance coverage, they might also be taken to a facility outside of the county.

All facilities listed are county-designated and licensed by the California Department of Health Care Services.

Aurora Charter Oak Hospital

1161 E. Covina Blvd.
Covina, CA 91724
(626) 966-1632

Aurora Las Encinas Hospital

2900 E. Del Mar Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91107
(626) 795-9901

BHC Alhambra Hospital

4619 N. Rosemead Blvd.
Rosemead, CA 91770
(626) 286-1191

College Hospital

10802 College Place
Cerritos, CA 90703
(562) 924-9581

Del Amo Hospital

23700 Camino Del Sol
Torrance, CA 90505
(310) 530-1151

Exodus Recovery Psychiatric Health Facility

9808 Venice Blvd.,
3rd Floor
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 237-0454

Gateways Hospital & Mental Health Center

1891 Effie St.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
(323) 644-2000

Harbor - UCLA Medical Center

1000 W. Carson St.
Torrance, CA 90509
(310) 222-2345

Kedren Acute Psychiatric Hospital and Community Mental Health Center (CMHC)

4211 S. Avalon Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90011
(323) 233-0425

La Casa Psychiatric Health Facility

6060 Paramount Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90805
(562) 634-9534
(562) 630-8672 PHF

Los Angeles Jewish Home for the Aging; Joyce Eisenberg-Keefer Medical Center

7150 Tampa Ave.
Reseda, CA 91335
(818) 774-3000
(818) 774-3200 JHA
(818) 758-5041 JEKMC

Motion Picture and Television Fund Hospital

23388 Mulholland Dr.
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
(818) 876-1888

Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA; Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center

150 Medical Plaza,
Los Angeles, CA 90095
(310) 825-0511

Star View Adolescent Center

4025 W. 226th St,
Torrance, CA 90505
(310) 373-4556

How can I help my loved one who is in an involuntary hold?



Your support can make a big difference during this difficult time.

Here are some ways you can help.



Offer emotional support

Let your loved one know you care and that they are not alone, even if you cannot be with them in person.



Coordinate with hospital staff

If possible, make arrangements to either accompany your loved one to the hospital or communicate with the hospital personnel to stay informed and involved in their care.



Provide personal items

Bring your loved one a small bag with clean clothes, comfortable shoes, and any approved personal items to help your loved one feel more at ease.




Share important information

Be ready to provide hospital staff any relevant insurance details, medical records, or mental health history that can support your loved one's treatment.



Plan for discharge

Work with the care team on a safety and aftercare plan to help your loved one smoothly transition back home or to another supportive setting.



Hospitalization
is a part of
healing.
Your support
can be too.

What can I do when my loved one is admitted to a psychiatric hospital?

You can be a source of strength, comfort, and advocacy throughout your loved one's recovery journey.

Here are some ways to stay involved:

Stay informed about their care

Family members can ask hospital staff about their loved one's care, though privacy laws may limit information. You can also share helpful details to support their treatment.

Reach out and show your support

Let your loved one know you care by calling, visiting when possible, and being an advocate for their needs.

Be part of their care— with consent

If your loved one wants you to be involved in their treatment or receive their medical records, they can sign a consent form (such as a Release of Information) to allow this.

Be patient and understanding

Your loved one may feel angry or upset. Try to stay calm, be patient, and keep reaching out. Seek your own care or emotional support, if needed.

Consult and work with the care team

Stay in contact with your loved one's behavioral health provider or social worker to help plan for discharge and follow-up care. If no one is assigned, ask the hospital to notify you when your loved one is discharged.

What rights does my loved one have while on an involuntary hold?



Your loved one has the right to:

- **Dignity, privacy, and humane care;**
- **Protection from harm**, including freedom from unnecessary or excessive restraint, medication, isolation, abuse, or neglect
- **Receive information about their treatment** and the right to participate in treatment planning;
- **Agree to or refuse treatment**, unless there is an emergency or a court of law determines they cannot consent.
- **Individualized, client-centered care** that reflects their personal goals, diverse needs, concerns, strengths, motivations and disabilities;
- **Engage in social interaction**, community activities, physical exercise and recreational opportunities; and
- **Receive visitors daily**, unless there are specific clinical or safety reasons to limit visitation.

Even while being held involuntarily, your loved one has important legal rights.

These rights must be explained in a language and manner they can understand.

These rights are protected by law and must be respected throughout the involuntary hold.



Rights can be reviewed on the **Department of Health Care Services' Patients' Rights website**.



What if I'm not happy with the care my loved one is receiving?

Psychiatric hospitals and behavioral health providers aim to provide safe, respectful, and effective care.

If you or your loved one experience care that does not meet expectations, or if you believe your rights have been violated, you have the right to speak up.

The following resources can help you file a grievance or complaint.

Ask to speak to a staff member

If you believe you or your loved one's rights have not been honored, discuss your concern with any staff member in person and/or in writing.

Ask to speak to a patient advocate

Most hospitals have a patient advocate who can help you understand your rights, mediate issues, and file complaints about the quality of care and service within the hospital system.

The patient advocate is available to both you and your family, assisting in clarifying information, supporting your rights and connecting people to the right resources.



Contact Your Local County Behavioral Health Office

If you receive Medi-Cal behavioral health services, each county has a Mental Health Plan where you can file a grievance/appeal or request a State Fair Hearing if services are denied or delayed.

Department of Health Care Services

For Medi-Cal mental health concerns.

(800) 896-4042

www.dhcs.ca.gov

Department of Managed Health Care

For those with private or managed care health plans.

(800) 466-2219

www.dmhca.ca.gov

California Department of Public Health

For complaints about hospital care or licensing issues.

(800) 236-9747

www.cdph.ca.gov

Disability Rights California

Free legal advocacy to individuals with disabilities, including those with behavioral health conditions.

(800) 776-5746

www.disabilityrightsca.org



How can I help my loved one when they are discharged?



Be part of the discharge process



If you're taking on the role of caregiver, try to be involved in all discharge discussions. Your participation can help ensure your loved one receives ongoing behavioral health care and is connected to community support services.

Collaborate on the discharge plan



Work with the care team—such as hospital providers, social workers, and case managers—to help create a discharge plan that meets your loved one's needs. This may include follow-up appointments, medication support, resources or transitional services.

Stay in touch with the care team




After discharge, stay connected with your loved one's assigned provider or social worker (if one is assigned) to help support their treatment plan and continued care.

Encourage ongoing treatment



Support your loved one in scheduling and attending regular appointments with a psychiatrist and/or therapist. Ongoing treatment is an important part of recovery.



What can I do if my loved one is assessed but not admitted to a psychiatric hospital?

An emergency room visit doesn't always lead to psychiatric admission. A healthcare provider will assess if hospitalization is medically necessary. Here's how you can help your loved one.

Promote self-care and routine

Help your loved one maintain daily routines, good sleep, hygiene, and healthy habits, while supporting their independence.

Keep communication open and be available to listen.

Stay connected and let your loved one know you are there to listen and support them.

Reach out for professional support.

Contact a mental health service provider for guidance, referrals, and resources.

Encourage connection with others

Recommend joining supportive spaces, like community or peer support groups, or help them find ones that match their interests.

Develop a safety plan.

Work with your loved one's mental health provider to create a plan for staying safe during times of crisis.

Engage support systems for additional support.

Include trusted family, friends, or neighbors to offer extra support within the safety plan.

Learn the warning signs of suicide.

Recognizing the signs can help you identify when your loved one needs immediate help.

Keep important information ready.

Maintain a record of your loved one's medical and behavioral health history to share with providers when needed.

Remember, you are not alone. Help is always available.

If your loved one needs to talk to someone, reach out to one of these trusted resources for guidance and support.

The Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

[Call or text 988.](#)

Free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Substance Abuse Service Helpline

[\(844\) 804-7500](#)

24/7 support for those seeking treatment or referral options.

CalHOPE Warm Line

[\(833\) 317-HOPE \(4673\)](#)

A 24/7 peer-run crisis hotline.

California Youth Crisis Line

[\(800\) 843-5200](#)

24/7 line for youth (ages 12-24) and families in crisis.

Trevor Project

[\(866\) 488-7386](#)

Phone, chat and text support for LGBTQ+ young people.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) HelpLine

[\(800\) 950-6264](#)

Behavioral health information, resources, and support.

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Help Line

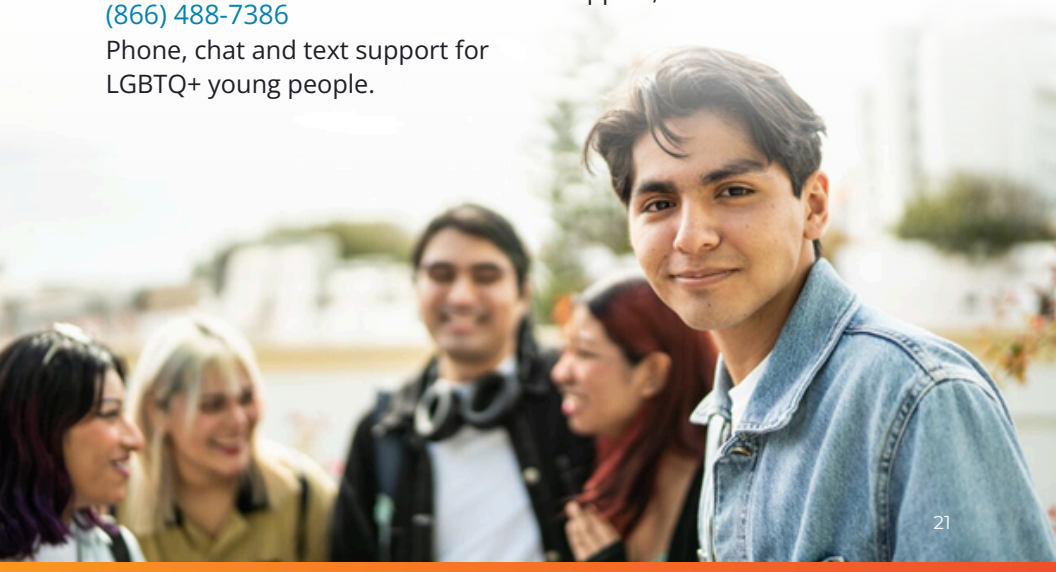
[\(800\) 854-7771](#)

Serves as a 24/7 resource for behavioral health support, crisis intervention, and referrals in Los Angeles County.

Tri-City Mental Health Authority

[\(866\) 623-9500](#)

Mobile Crisis Care is available 24/7 for behavioral health support, referrals and resources.



Safety Plan

When I am doing well:

How do you feel when things are going well in your life?

.....

.....

My warning signs of potential crisis:

What feelings, thoughts, or beliefs would help you recognize that a crisis may be starting?

.....

.....

Ways to support myself:

What are some healthy strategies, activities (hobbies, interests, etc.) you enjoy that help you focus on taking care of yourself?

.....

.....

.....

Coping skills:

What are some positive coping strategies to use in moments when you are feeling overwhelmed, or anxious?

.....

.....

.....

Safety Plan

People or social settings that provide support:

What connections do you have with family, friends, faith groups, communities, or pets? Where do you feel safe and supported? Who is the person(s) and contact(s) that you can openly talk about your crisis with?

Name/Place:

Name/Place:

Connections with professionals or agencies I can reach out to when I am in crisis:

Professional/Agency Name:

Contact Information:

Local Emergency Departments:

Phone Number:

Ways to make my environment safe:

Are there things you can remove or put away to help keep you safe?

.....
.....

Are there any firearms/weapons in your home? If so, are they stored safely? Is there someone who can support you with this?

Name:

Name:



**HOPE.
WELLNESS.
COMMUNITY.**

Let's find it together.

Our Locations

Adult Outpatient Clinic

2008 N Garey Ave
Pomona, CA 91767

Child & Family Outpatient Clinic

1900 Royalty Dr Suite 180,
Pomona, CA 91767

Tri-City Mental Health Authority

Get 24/7 help at (866) 623-9500
tricitymha.ca.gov