

Report on What we Heard

A workshop supporting caregivers caring for persons living with mental illnesses and/or substance use disorder when making the decision to call 911

“Being prepared while addressing the uncertain and unknown”

BACKGROUND

The Mental Illness Caregivers Association (MICA) has developed an 8-step model that provides a summary of thoughts, feelings, experiences, and expectations of caregivers supporting a loved one living with mental illness and/or substance use disorder and/or substance use disorder while in crisis: from making the 911 call straight through to discharge and on-going mental health care. MICA shared the model with caregivers and organizations in the Ottawa area and beyond and asked them to provide comments on how we might improve the model.

Among the many comments we received we consistently heard that more needed to be done to better understand the needs of caregivers when making the decision to make a 911 call.

OUR RESPONSE - A EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING TEMPLATE

We are currently developing a draft emergency preparedness planning template (template) for caregivers supporting a person living with mental illness and/or substance use disorder in crisis - a 911 call is often just the beginning of a journey along an uncharted path of uncertainty, unknowns, and difficult challenges ahead

WORKSHOP

MICA hosted a workshop on 13 April 2024 that included the presentation of the draft template to be used by caregivers to prepare an emergency preparedness plan unique to their needs supported by panelists speaking to what to expect along the way and the role of the caregiver in supporting persons they care for in crisis

The workshop was attended by caregivers caring for persons living with mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders and representatives from Ottawa Paramedic Service, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Hospital (Mobile Crisis Team and Psychiatric Emergency Services), Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario-211 East, Distress Centre Ottawa and region, Ottawa Public Health, Canadian Mental Health Association, Crown Attorney's Office and John Howard Society

WHAT WE HEARD

The Emergency Preparedness Planning Template - a second draft of the planning template that has been updated to include the content presented by the panelists. It should be noted that the template is a 'work-in-progress' and it is our intent to share it more broadly as we seek feedback from as many folks as practical in the weeks ahead – see supporting documents

BURNOUT, COMPASSION FATIGUE AND DEBUNKING OF MYTHS – burnout and compassion fatigue and some of the myths around mental illness, substance use and suicide were also discussed – see supporting documents

NEXT STEPS

Based on the planning template present a sample emergency preparedness plan – “One family's emergency preparedness plan” for review and comment by workshop participants