

**CAREGIVERS MAKING A 911 CALL IN SUPPORT OF THE PERSON THEY CARE FOR
LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IN CRISIS**

BACKGROUND

In 2022 the Mental Illness Caregivers Association (MICA) developed an 8-step model that provided 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 911 call involving the police, including reducing the risk of violence when police interact with people living with mental illness and/or substance use disorder.

OUR RESPONSE – A TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR CAREGIVERS

On 10 September 2022 MICA hosted a *Workshop on Strategies for Reducing the Risk of Violence When Police Interact with People Living with Mental Illness and/or Substance Use Disorder*.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss strategies to ensure a positive outcome when a 911 call is made and to ultimately develop a *Tips and Strategies for Caregivers* guidance document of actions for caregivers to promote/enhance the possibility for a positive outcome for all.

On 09 March 2023 MICA hosted a second workshop utilizing a co-design effort involving police services, first responders and mental health service providers from Toronto along with caregivers from Hamilton, Ottawa, and Toronto with the objective to continue the development of the *Tips and Strategies for Caregivers* guidance document.

OUR ASK

We invite you to review the final draft of the document and to share any comments, suggestions or questions. You will also find a first attempt at the development of a one-page version of the document based on an approach developed for nursing – SBAR (situation, background, assessment, and risk) – again any comments, suggestions or questions you may have would be most welcome.

WHAT NEXT - A PILOT PROJECT

In response to ‘what we heard’ on 09 March we are exploring the possibility of a pilot project involving Ottawa police services, first responders, caregivers, organizations that support caregivers and persons living with mental illness and others as appropriate.

As a first step we have developed a draft template for an emergency preparedness plan for caregivers supporting a person living with mental illness and/or substance use disorder. It is more comprehensive in its approach by applying what we have learned to date while acknowledging that a 911 call is often just the beginning of a journey along an uncharted path of uncertainty, unknowns, and difficult challenges ahead

Over the next several months we will continue to develop the emergency preparedness plan with the intent of hosting a workshop later next year to share a final draft of the plan with the caregiver community. Stay tuned – our goal is to do so early 2024.

Supporting document:

Tips and Strategies Guidance Document
Tips and Strategies Guidance Document (one pager)