

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”***

When: Saturday, 13 April 2024, 9:00 AM to 4 PM

Where: Canadian Mental Health Association  
311 McArthur Avenue, Ottawa, K1L 8M3

Panelists: 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

**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 (a) the needs of caregivers when making the decision to make a 911 call and (b) what first responders need from caregivers who make a 911 call in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome for all

**OUR RESPONSE - A EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN TEMPLATE**

We are currently developing a draft emergency preparedness plan 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 DETAILS**

The workshop included the presentation of a 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 including:

- Being prepared when a 911 call involves paramedic and/or police services, a visit to hospital emergency room and a discussion around voluntary and involuntary treatment
- The possibility of apprehension or arrest, the role of mental health and drug courts and access to legal and related supports
- Accessing resources for caregivers and persons they care for seeking mental health and/or substance use disorders supports, programs and services