

## What to Do When Arriving on a Mental Health Crisis Scene

Arriving on the scene with little or no information, the first responder must immediately establish a calm and quiet atmosphere. Individuals not involved must be removed from the area for their own safety. Those with knowledge of the situation must be asked to provide as much information as quickly and accurately as possible. Make sure the area is safe while contact is made, but do not attempt to disarm a subject. Establish why the person is acting the way they are.

### Dealing with Persons Experiencing Acute Mental Illness

<u>Do</u>	<u>Don't</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continually assess situation</li><li>• Be respectful</li><li>• Maintain space</li><li>• Be calm</li><li>• Give firm, clear directions</li><li>• Respond to needs</li><li>• Focus on Feelings, not delusions</li><li>• Be Helpful</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Join in disordered thinking/behavior</li><li>• Stare at subject</li><li>• Confuse subject</li><li>• Give choices</li><li>• Whisper, joke or laugh</li><li>• Deceive subject</li><li>• Touch Subject</li></ul>

The first few minutes of a situation can give trained personnel a wealth of information that can be vital to a successful end to an otherwise tragic outcome.

Never leave a person who has attempted suicide alone. You can help protect a patient by doing the following:

- Transporting the patient to an emergency room where he or she can be kept under observation and further evaluated.
- Helping the patient's family, friends, or caregivers develop a plan so that someone is with the patient at all times.
- Helping the patient's family, friends, or caregivers make sure that lethal means, especially firearms and medications, are not available to the patient.

#### Sources:

- Slides courtesy of International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators [www.iaclea.org](http://www.iaclea.org)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2005). Customized Information: First Responders. Retrieved Nov. 1, 2007 from [http://www.sprc.org/featured\\_resources/customized/first\\_responders.asp](http://www.sprc.org/featured_resources/customized/first_responders.asp).
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2005). Customized Information: Law Enforcement Personnel. Retrieved Nov. 1, 2007 from [http://www.sprc.org/featured\\_resources/customized/first\\_responders.asp](http://www.sprc.org/featured_resources/customized/first_responders.asp)
- Interview with Campus Safety Personnel, Regis University.