

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Crisis services and autism: 988, MiCAL, mobile crisis, EmPATH

Michigan has more than one number to call in a crisis, and knowing which one to dial, and what to hand the responder the moment they arrive, changes the outcome more than almost anything else you can control.

BY JIM PALASTY · 13 MIN READ · PREPARING FOR THE CALL BEFORE YOU NEED TO MAKE IT

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POINTS OF ENTRY INTO CRISIS CARE

988, MiCAL, mobile crisis, and EmPATH units all exist in Michigan. Knowing which one to call is the hard part.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Crisis hits without warning

There's rarely time to research which number to call while it's happening.



STEP 2

You have four entry points, not one

988, MiCAL, mobile crisis, and EmPATH units each serve a different situation and severity level.



STEP 3

Preparation done in advance changes the outcome

A crisis communication card and an existing relationship with your local team both work in your favor before anything happens.

Prepare before a crisis

Crisis card	A one-page autism-specific communication summary, ready to hand over
Crisis plan	Built with your supports coordinator, before you need it
Existing relationship	Contact your local mobile crisis team before a crisis, not during one
Know your numbers	988 and your regional MiCAL number, saved and visible
Document after	What happened, who responded, and what worked or didn't

THE CARD THAT CHANGED THE RESPONSE

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Layla had built a crisis communication card months before her son's first serious crisis, describing his communication style, sensory triggers, and the specific phrases that calmed him. She handed it to the mobile crisis team the moment they arrived. The responder read it standing in the doorway and adjusted her whole approach before saying a single word to him.

THE CARD TOOK TWENTY MINUTES TO WRITE, MONTHS IN ADVANCE. IT CHANGED THE FIRST NINETY SECONDS OF THE RESPONSE.

What matters, at a glance

MICHIGAN SPECIFIC

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

National phone, text, and chat access to crisis counselors, not Michigan-specific and not autism-specialized by default.

MiCAL

Michigan Crisis and Access Line connects callers to local crisis services and mobile crisis teams in your specific region.

Autism competence varies widely

Most crisis responders receive limited autism-specific training. Response quality depends heavily on which specific team gets dispatched to your address.

Mobile crisis teams

Dispatched to your location for on-site assessment and intervention, often the least disruptive option if your area has coverage.

EmPATH units

Emergency Psychiatric Assessment Treatment and Healing units offer crisis stabilization designed to be calmer than a traditional emergency room.

Crisis residential vs. hospitalization

Crisis residential settings are less restrictive and often more appropriate than psychiatric hospitalization when either is offered as an option.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

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| ☐ A printed and digital crisis communication card | ☐ A written crisis plan on file with your supports coordinator |
| ☐ Saved contact information for 988 and your regional MiCAL line | ☐ A current medication and diagnosis summary |
| ☐ A post-crisis documentation template | |

YOUR MOVE

When you're preparing for the possibility of a crisis, here is the order that helps

- 1 Build a one-page crisis communication card.
- 2 Develop a crisis plan with your supports coordinator.
- 3 Contact your local mobile crisis team before a crisis occurs.
- 4 Save 988 and your regional MiCAL number where you can find them fast.
- 5 Hand the crisis card to any responder immediately on arrival.
- 6 Document what happened after every crisis, for the next one.

You cannot control whether a crisis happens. You can control how much information the responder has in the first ninety seconds.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

michiganallianceforfamilies.org · <https://michiganallianceforfamilies.org>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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