

# Mental Healthcare Leaders Call for Parity With Physical Health Emergency Care

UNITED STATES, August 4, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) and its Crisis Now partners is joining leaders in mental health and substance use around the world to release the [Washington DC International Declaration](#), the first ever international declaration on mental health crisis care, giving healthcare leaders, governments and community organisations a blueprint for quality crisis care that must be available for everyone, everywhere, and every time.

The Declaration comes at a critical time in world history as health systems strive to respond to COVID-19,

businesses face uncertain economic futures and families and communities lose crucial social connections. However as physical distancing rules are relaxed, the focus on flattening the curve on mental ill-health is vital by ensuring mental health crisis care is available and accessible in the short and long term.

No matter the nation or territory, a comprehensive and integrated crisis network is the first line of defense in preventing tragedies of public and patient safety, extraordinary and unacceptable loss of lives and the waste of resources. Effective crisis care that saves lives and dollars requires a systemic approach. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of the core elements of systemic quality crisis care as being:

- High tech crisis call centres,
- 24/7 non-law enforcement mobile crisis team,
- Crisis stabilization centres, and
- Essential principles and practices governing care pathways.



These quality crisis systems are further enhanced by harnessing data and technology, drawing on the expertise of those with lived experience, delivering services where the person is and providing evidence-based suicide prevention. Such change also requires support from the government and partnership with stakeholders. A national policy approach will drive consistent, quality crisis care, allowing health services translate the declaration's principles into practice in their local context. Furthermore, for people in need of crisis care there must be a no-wrong-door policy with services accepting all referrals without question. Access to mental healthcare over the short and long term will be critical as the fallout from Covid-19 widens.

The mental health experts, people with lived experience, and essential partners involved in writing the declaration agree that mental healthcare must be moved out of the shadows and into mainstream care and focus on the whole person. Parity with physical health should be the norm for individuals experiencing a crisis, which means access to timely and effective care based on the person's needs.

Brian Hepburn, M.D., Executive Director of NASMHPD, the lead organisation for Crisis Now, says that when leaders from across the world met last September to develop the Washington DC International Declaration, it was to foster a much-needed shift in mental healthcare. "Our objective, no matter the nation, is for people in crisis to receive the level of care that best aligns with their needs instead of defaulting to the emergency room or jail." As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, Dr. Hepburn states that the declaration's tenets "are more vital than ever."

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CrisisNow.com

The Crisis Now partners have created this website to provide all communities a roadmap to safe, effective crisis care that diverts people in distress from the emergency department and jail by developing a continuum of crisis care services that match people's clinical needs. This reduces and prevents suicides while providing more immediate and targeted help for a person in distress. Also, it cuts the costs of care by reducing the need for psychiatric hospital bed usage, emergency department visits, and law enforcement overuse.

<https://crisisnow.com/>

Crisis Now Lead Organisation:

About the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

NASMHPD, founded in 1959 and based in Alexandria, VA, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) represents the \$41 billion public mental health service delivery system serving 7.5 million people annually in all 50 states, 4 territories, and the District of Columbia. NASMHPD (pronounced "NASH-bid") is the only national association to represent state mental health commissioners/directors and their agencies, and serves as the lead for CrisisNow.com.

<https://nasmhpd.org/>

Crisis Now Founding Partners:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Vibrant Emotional Health  
<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> | <https://www.vibrant.org/> |  
<https://twitter.com/vibrantforall>

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention  
<https://theactionalliance.org/> | <https://www.edc.org/> | [https://twitter.com/Action\\_Alliance](https://twitter.com/Action_Alliance)

The National Council for Behavioral Health  
<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/> | <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/> |  
<https://twitter.com/NationalCouncil>

RI International (d/b/a for Recovery Innovations, Inc.) <https://riinternational.com/> |  
<https://zerosuicide.org/> | [https://twitter.com/RI\\_Internationa](https://twitter.com/RI_Internationa)

Crisis Now Supporting Partners:  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
<https://www.nami.org/Home>

CIT International, Inc.  
<http://www.citinternational.org/>

Mental Health America, Inc.  
<https://www.mhanational.org/>

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