

Documenting What Happened

Detailed notes regarding your family member/friend's mental health needs and care, and threatening or aggressive incidences are very important. These notes will provide useful information for the individual's treatment team and/or police. Sharing this information will not only increase your safety, it can help to ensure that your family member/friend is connected to appropriate mental health services, instead of jail. You can use these notes to refresh your memory if you are interviewed by the police, if you talk to a lawyer, or if you're asked to testify in court at a later date. These notes will help you provide information as clearly as possible.

Please note that these notes can also be used to inform a restraining order against your family member/friend or used as evidence during police investigation and/or a court process, without your consent.

Here are some suggestions on how to document what happens:

- Document all information pertaining to your family member/friend's mental illness and treatment plan. This can include:
 - Diagnosis and/or symptoms (e.g. hallucinations or delusions, cognitive impairments, mood swings,).
 - History of substance abuse (drugs and alcohol), problem gambling or other addictions.
 - History of trauma (e.g. abuse, tragic life experiences, immigration/refugee experience).
 - Preferred method of communication (e.g. how does your family member/friend prefers to talk, share information; under what circumstances; to whom; are there any accommodation needs).
 - Coping mechanisms and stressors.
 - Contact information for the treatment team/healthcare providers (family doctor, psychiatrist, case manager, employment counselor, occupational therapist, peer support worker).
 - Prescribed medication (include all, not just the ones prescribed to treat the mental illness).
 - Previous thoughts of and/or attempts to self-harm.

- Previous thoughts of suicide and/or suicide attempts.
 - Preferred treatment modalities and/or favorite service provider.
 - Preferred hospital or hospital where they previously received care.
 - What helps when your family member/friend is feeling and doing well (e.g. formal and informal supports, hobbies, activities, medications).
 - Hospital records (you should request these as soon as your family member/friend is discharged).
 - Any other information that can provide others with a better understanding of their needs and circumstances.
- Keep notes in a safe place.
- When incidences occur, try to make careful notes of what happened, including times, dates, names, and what everyone said or did. If you were threatened, but not physically assaulted, write down exactly what was said to you and describe the situation. If threats were made toward others, write this down too.
- If you were injured, write down all the details including:
- Exactly where you received your injuries (e.g. your left arm or the back of your neck).
 - How you were hurt (e.g. with open hand, shoe, or book).
 - How many times you were hurt.
 - How severe your injuries were (e.g. bruises, cuts requiring stitches, or broken bones).
 - What lead up to this incident.
 - If there were witnesses, and if yes, their names.
- Whenever possible, keep any evidence of the injury and/or threatening behaviors such as:
- Photographs of your injuries.
 - Recordings of threats (including any voicemail, text messages, social media posts).
 - Torn clothing or property that was damaged.



- Bank and/or credit card statements (in instance of financial abuse).
- Names and contact information of witnesses.
- Your medical and other personal records.