



## **Mobile Crisis Teams: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is a Mobile Crisis Team (MCT)?**

An MCT is a small team that can travel to provide on-site help to a person in crisis. MCTs use face-to-face interventions with the person in crisis, as well as their family or other support systems, to de-escalate crises and engage, assess and connect people to the most appropriate services. Most MCTs include both professional and paraprofessional staff (for example, a master's-level clinician and a peer support staff person).

MCTs share the following goals:

- Assisting people in crisis and helping to resolve the crisis when possible
- Providing intervention in a setting where the person in crisis is most comfortable and the intervention is least restrictive (which is often the person's home or another place in their community)
- Providing appropriate care and support without involving law enforcement, emergency departments or hospitalization when possible
- Linking people in crisis to medical and behavioral health services that can help resolve the situation and prevent future crises

### **How do I access MCT for myself or someone I am concerned about?**

Any person concerned for themselves or someone else can call or text 988 or chat online at [nyc.gov/988](https://nyc.gov/988). 988 counselors will assess the situation and provide an appropriate intervention. If the person is eligible for MCT services, 988 will send the referral to the most appropriate MCT, generally depending on the person's age and location.

Health care providers, including mental health care providers, may also make a referral Monday through Friday, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., using 988's online referral tool at [nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/crisis-services/mobile-crisis-teams](https://nyc988.cityofnewyork.us/en/crisis-services/mobile-crisis-teams).

### **Does 988 provide MCT services?**

988 provides referrals to MCT services, but 988 does not operate MCTs. MCTs are operated by hospitals with state-licensed Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs (CPEPs) or psychiatric emergency rooms or by community-based organizations designated by the New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Each borough has one MCT that serves children and young adults (all people younger than age 21) in that borough. There are 19 MCTs for adults that serve people age 21 and older across the five boroughs.

988 also provides 24/7 crisis counseling, information and referrals to other behavioral health services via phone, text or online chat.

### **How quickly will an MCT respond to a referral via 988?**

MCTs aim to respond to all referrals as quickly as possible. They generally respond within several hours of receiving the referral. Factors that may impact response time include:

- Information from the referral source about the best time to engage the person in crisis
- Triaging among multiple requests received at the same time
- Traffic
- Difficulty gaining entrance to the home or other location

### **Do MCTs respond on holidays?**

Yes, MCT services are available 365 days per year.

### **What hours are MCT services available?**

MCTs provide services between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., seven days per week.

### **Who is eligible to receive MCT services?**

People eligible to receive MCT services must be:

- In NYC
- Experiencing or at risk of a behavioral health crisis
- At potential risk of harming themselves or others, disoriented or out of touch with reality, functionally compromised (unable to perform usual tasks of daily living), or otherwise agitated and unable to be calmed down
- In a crisis that could result in an emergency if untreated
- Unwilling or unable to seek or adhere to behavioral health care on their own or with the aid of a family member, caregiver or friend or need short-term supports until behavioral health services are available

A behavioral health crisis is defined as a non-life-threatening situation in which a person experiences an intense behavioral, emotional or psychiatric response that may be triggered by a precipitating event.

### **Do MCTs work with people experiencing street homelessness?**

MCTs generally do not work with people experiencing street homelessness, who more often benefit from Homeless Outreach Services. These teams are designed to canvas neighborhoods and are more likely to find and engage people experiencing street homelessness successfully.

People experiencing street homelessness should be connected to a Homeless Outreach Mobile Engagement and Street Action Team (HOMESTAT) by calling **311**.

### **Do MCTs work with people living in shelters or supportive housing?**

Yes, MCTs will respond to referrals for people living in a shelter or supportive housing. If the person lives in a place that has on-site mental health clinicians, those staff members may be more familiar with the person and their needs and therefore may be better situated to provide crisis intervention. It can also be difficult for people from outside these settings to be allowed to enter a facility. For these reasons, close collaboration with the shelter or supportive housing provider is helpful to promote a successful MCT intervention.

### **Do MCTs work with people on Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Forensic ACT (FACT), Shelter Partnered ACT (SPACT) or Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams?**

Generally, MCT interventions are not recommended for a person who is already receiving mobile treatment services from an ACT, a FACT, a SPACT or an IMT team. These teams provide similar skills and capabilities as MCTs, so bringing in a new service provider can be confusing. However, it is important for the person in crisis and anyone providing a referral to be aware of how to reach those teams during a crisis.

### **Do MCTs charge health insurances?**

MCTs rely on a combination of public funding and insurance revenue to operate. MCTs will collect insurance information and submit claims to insurance providers for services rendered.

### **Can people receive MCT services if they do not have health insurance or if they are not a U.S. resident?**

Yes, MCTs respond to all eligible referrals regardless of the health insurance or immigration status of the person in crisis.

### **When does a behavioral health crisis require 911?**

We recommend calling **911** for emergencies and contacting 988 for urgent situations that are **not** emergencies. Examples of emergencies include:

- A person expressing thoughts of suicide with a plan, intent and preparatory behavior
- Behavior that poses an imminent risk of harm to oneself or others, such as a suicide attempt in progress or wielding a knife
- A person expressing thoughts of homicide with a plan and intent

In an emergency, **911** can send an ambulance to transport the person to a CPEP or psychiatric emergency room.

If you are not sure who to contact, call or text 988 or chat online at [nyc.gov/988](https://nyc.gov/988) to get in touch with a trained counselor who can assess the most appropriate next steps, including connection to emergency services or nonpolice crisis intervention services.