

When a person is having a mental health emergency that threatens the safety of themselves or someone else, they should be immediately connected to mental health emergency services to receive assessment and treatment. This typically takes place at the hospital, but in Chicago it can also take place at a community triage center.

**Treatment for a mental health emergency should be voluntary if possible.** If the individual's emergency has created an unsafe environment for themselves or others and are unwilling to consent to treatment, involuntary treatment can be a last resort.

**Individuals experiencing a mental health emergency have legal rights that must be respected.** Specific rights for people subject to an involuntary treatment order are explained [here](#).

## Criteria for Involuntary Treatment

An individual must meet **ONE** of the below criteria to receive short-term involuntary mental health treatment.

1. The individual presents a risk of harm or danger to either themselves or someone else.
  - If this is the case, seek emergency services by calling 911 and ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer to respond.
2. The individual is unable to independently provide for their basic physical needs or guard themselves from harm.
3. An individual who refuses treatment, and because of their illness is unable to understand the need for treatment. In addition, based on their behavioral history, it can be reasonably expected that their condition will deteriorate, leading to one of the above criteria.

Under Illinois law, any adult can petition the court for an individual to be involuntarily evaluated. For more information on this process, call NAMI Chicago's Helpline at 833-626-4244.

## What to expect when arriving at the hospital

Every hospital has its own procedures in place to help individuals experiencing a mental health emergency, whether they arrive voluntarily or involuntarily. In general, you can expect the following:

- The person will be examined by a psychiatrist.
- The psychiatrist may decide to admit the person for inpatient psychiatric care, or they may decide inpatient treatment is not necessary.
- Being admitted involuntarily does NOT mean that a person can be made to take medication that they are refusing. To learn more about rights and involuntary treatment, [click here](#).