

Module 12: Psychiatric Crisis Response Teams



Students may experience psychiatric crises that require immediate, specialized intervention. These situations often involve significant emotional distress, safety concerns, or a disruption in the student's ability to function at school.

Supports are available countywide and may be accessed even when a student is not currently connected to behavioral health services. School staff play a vital role in ensuring student safety by identifying warning signs and initiating an appropriate response.

Note: Emergency response procedures vary by school district. This module provides resources and reminders to help school staff respond effectively to behavioral health emergencies.

What is a Psychiatric Crisis?

Behavioral health crises can include symptoms not limited to:

- Thoughts of hurting self or others
- Active suicide ideation
- Extreme paranoia (e.g., irrational belief that someone/thing is going to cause harm)
- Dissociation (e.g., feeling that surroundings are unreal, not feeling body or other sensations)
- Active visual or auditory hallucinations directing the student to harm self or others

Common Signs

- Changes in mood or behaviors that cause concern
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- Sudden changes to hygiene and self-care practices
- Unusual thoughts, sounds, or visions that cause fear or distress

Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT)

Behavioral Health Crisis Response in Schools

The Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) is a countywide, non-law enforcement service that provides in-person crisis intervention for individuals of all ages experiencing a behavioral health or substance use crisis. MCRT is available county-wide by contacting 988. Additionally, MCRT can respond to public, charter, and adult schools through a dedicated process made available to schools starting November 2024.

How can MCRT help schools?

Depending on the situation, MCRT can:

- Provide assessments
- Utilize crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques
- Initiate and transport a 5585* (5150) hold when there is a *not a safety concern*
- Make connections to appropriate behavioral health services and resources, provide initial coordination for treatment services as needed, and follow-up for up to 30 days after initial service

Mobile Crisis Response
Team (MCRT)
Presentation for Schools

When to call MCRT

MCRT may be contacted when a student or anyone on a school campus is experiencing a behavioral health crisis that cannot be safely managed by school staff but **does not require immediate law enforcement or medical intervention**. This may include significant emotional distress, suicidal ideation, or acute mental health symptoms.

To be eligible for MCRT response, the following **safety criteria** must be met:

- No weapons present
- No immediate threat of violence to self or others
- No physical injuries or medical emergencies

If any of these conditions are present, staff should follow district emergency protocols and contact 911 to request the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT).

How can schools access MCRT?

During school hours:

- For schools in *Carlsbad, Oceanside, Pendleton, San Dieguito, and Vista*: School personnel should call the direct phone number for **Exodus MCRT: 760-292-8288**.
- For schools in *all other areas of San Diego County*: School personnel should call the direct phone number for **Telecare MCRT: 619-831-6890** (Passcode: 939690).

Please note, these numbers are for school staff only and not intended for the public.

During after-school hours or for community response or emergency services:

- Call the San Diego Access & Crisis Line (ACL) at 888-724-7240 or 988.

911 / Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT)

Dispatched through 911, the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) provides compassionate crisis intervention and linkage services to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. PERT's mission is to deliver high-quality crisis response to help stabilize the situation and connect individuals to the most appropriate services.

Each PERT team includes a licensed mental health professional and a specially trained law enforcement officer. Together, they respond on-scene to individuals in crisis who have come to the attention of law enforcement. The clinician leads the mental health assessment, and the team works collaboratively to ensure safety and provide a warm handoff to ongoing care.

How can PERT help schools?

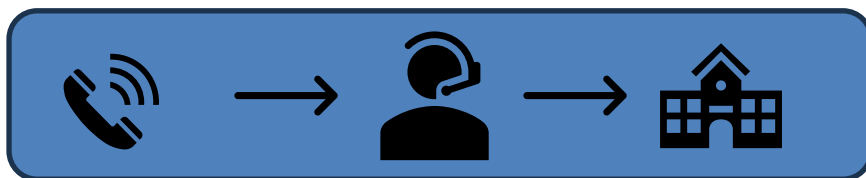
PERT can support schools in situations that involve behavioral health concerns along with potential safety risks, such as when a student may need to be assessed for an involuntary hold or when law enforcement presence is necessary. PERT is dispatched through 911 and includes both a licensed mental health clinician and a specially trained officer.

△PERT is typically contacted when a student's behavior presents a clear risk of harm to self or others, or involves weapons, aggression, or medical emergencies.

- Provide assessments in collaboration with law enforcement
- Use crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies in situations with safety concerns
- Initiate and transport a 5585 (5150) hold when clinically indicated
- Support coordination with school staff and caregivers and connect students to appropriate behavioral health services

How can schools access PERT?

Call 911 requesting PERT ➡ Dispatcher assigns PERT unit ➡ PERT is dispatched



Consent for Treatment

Parental Consent: crisis response teams are trained on all laws related to providing mental health treatment to minors in the State of California, including [Family Code 6924](#), [Health & Safety Code 124260](#), and [Welfare & Institution Code 5585](#). Crisis Response Teams make every effort, when clinically appropriate, for the licensed clinician to notify and involve parents/guardians in treatment in accordance with Family Code 6924.

5585 (5150):

When clinically appropriate, the licensed clinician will make several attempts to notify the parent/guardian that the student has been placed on an involuntary psychiatric hold for evaluation and the facility that the youth will be taken to.

- Inability to obtain the consent of the minor's parent or legal guardian shall not preclude the involuntary treatment of a minor who is determined to be gravely disabled or a danger to themselves or others.



While SchoolLink services focus on supporting Medi-Cal and unfunded students, MCRT and PERT are available to anyone in the community experiencing a psychiatric crisis - County Crisis Services

Key Terms

Behavioral health services: A continuum of prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery support services for mental health and substance use.

County-funded: Services funded through the County of San Diego's Health & Human Services Agency's Behavioral Health Services Division.

Provider: Unless otherwise specified, a County-funded behavioral health provider.

Administrative Information

For administrative information or to provide feedback about the [SchoolLink training program](#), please email BHSContaktUs.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov with subject line: SchoolLink