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CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES
of Alameda County

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www.crisissupport.org

SAVE THE DATE!
SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2014

CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES
of Alameda County

Fall 2013 Newsletter

Connecting People in Need with People Who Care

By Binh Au, Crisis Line Coordinator

I get goose bumps every time I walk through the crisis line room. The shrill sound of the phones ringing punctuates the soft murmur of gentle and soothing voices. Each phone call represents a life that is touched, a connection made. Each phone call represents a little of the world's pain erased. Hopelessness turns to hope, and powerlessness turns to empowerment. The counselors joke with each other in between calls, but their demeanor changes into that of warmth and empathy when they are talking with callers.



On a recent night, I sat in to listen to some calls. The counselors dealt with a wide range of callers and life situations. A mother was concerned about her suicidal daughter, and a middle aged man was struggling with his gambling addiction. One 32 year old woman called feeling hopeless and depressed. She had severe PTSD from an automobile accident 3 years prior. Her nightmares have made it difficult for her to take care of her 6 year old child.

We don't give advice on the phone. We listen with open hearts to hear the underlying emotions and needs of callers. In reflecting this back to our callers, we help them feel heard and connected. The young woman needed her family to know how much she was hurting. She needed their compassion and understanding. By the end of the call, she was ready to reach out to a local mental health agency to see a therapist. Our counselor encouraged her to call the crisis lines when she needed support.

Suicide is preventable. In my experience, people in suicidal crisis don't want to die. They want to get out of extreme emotional pain and an intense sense of isolation. Contrary to popular belief, people who feel suicidal are NOT weak and NOT selfish. In fact, Thomas Joiner, in his 2005 book, "Why People Die by Suicide" illustrates how people who die by suicide or make a serious suicide attempt experience a combination of all 3 of the following risk factors: 1) Intense isolation and lack of connection (I am feeling alone) 2) A perceived sense of burdensomeness on others (It would be better for everyone if I was dead). 3) Ability to die (Losing the fear of death). Suicide is not weak and often not impulsive. By intervening on one of these risk factors, we save lives.

Rarely does a crisis occur at a convenient time. Getting access to supportive services in a timely manner is key to successful intervention. Our crisis lines are one of few resources open 24 hours. Crisis lines are crucial in a community because we provide an emotional anchor and bridge to other services.

It's hard to quantify the number of lives that are saved. In Fiscal Year 2012-2013, we took over 61,000 calls on our Alameda County Crisis Lines. 128 callers had made serious attempts on their lives, or were in imminent danger and we were able to get them to the hospitals. In follow up calls, the callers are grateful and are able to connect to on-going care and resources.

This past year, 177 trained volunteers answered the crisis lines. Certified by the American Association of Suicidology and as a member of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, we adhere to the highest standard of care in helping people who are struggling with suicidal thoughts and feelings. Our counselors meet people where they are at, to provide trauma informed and client-centered care.

Our counselors bring their expertise to their own lives and in their community. Together, we make our communities stronger. With greater capacity to listen and to care for each other we work towards the goal of eliminating the tragic experience of suicide.



From the Executive Director

By Nancy A. Salamy, MFT



Dear Friends,

I am proud to announce that we have successfully finished our 10th Annual Robby Babcock Memorial Golf Tournament! Our teen programs are generously supported by the proceeds of the tournament and we couldn't have done it without our sponsors. I give a special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor, Daleo, Inc.; Platinum Sponsor, Tucker Engineering; and Dinner Sponsor, Marques Pipeline, Inc.

CSS' immediate bridge to vital resources includes our 24-hour crisis line and secure web based text counseling program— both of which are the focus of this Fall's newsletter. CSS' Teens for Life Program educates more than 12,000 youth each year, providing them with critical information such as suicidal warning signs and how to seek help not only for themselves, but also on behalf of others.

Thanks to the generosity of the Babcock family, and kind support of their friends and local community, 100% of the proceeds from the tournament help sustain these life saving programs. We couldn't have welcomed Fall on a better note!

So now, as Thanksgiving is right around the corner we ask you to think about those we service and how you can help make a difference in their lives. Extend your hand by participating in our Annual Campaign and make a donation to help us reach our goal of \$70,000. Remember that a little goes a long way. Your contribution will help remind someone that they aren't alone this holiday season. Help us be the difference.

Sincerely,

Nancy Salamy



During This Past Year—2012-2013

The Crisis Line	
Crisis line contacted.....	61,908
Emergency dispatch rescues for clients with imminent risk for self harm.....	126
Grief Counseling	
Adult grief clients served.....	70
Grief counseling sessions.....	727
School- Based Counseling	
Children & youth served.....	260
Counseling sessions.....	2,700
Senior Counseling Program	
Senior clients served.....	186
Counseling sessions.....	2,829
Teens for Life	
Middle & High School students served.....	12,146
Schools served.....	37
Classroom presentations.....	404
Community Education	
Community professionals trained.....	931
Other community individuals trained.....	1,047
Total trainings.....	55
Suicide Prevention Awareness Conferences & Events	
Conferences & events.....	18
Individuals served.....	2,967
Clinical Interns & Other Volunteers	
Clinical interns trained.....	32
Licensed supervisors.....	16
Crisis Line volunteers.....	177
Stress Counseling	
Recently unemployed persons reached.....	1,370
Stress counseling sessions.....	1,062

Text Line Helps Teens Ask for Help

By Karen Oberdorfer, MA, MFT Registered Intern, Text Line Coordinator & Clinical Program Assistant

What used to be an unusual occurrence has been happening more at Crisis Support Services of Alameda County. A teen asked for support through CSS' Text Line Program. She wrote to a CSS counselor via text message that she had a rough day and wanted to self-injure. However, at the end of the hour long text counseling session she sent "... after being clean for 4 months, I went to go and cut, but saw the number. And yeah, texted and my wrists are still healed :) "

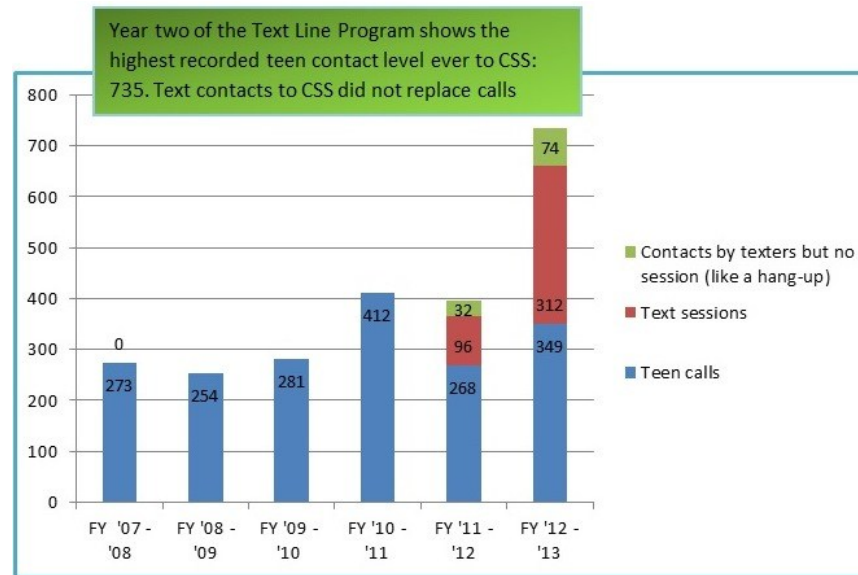
Alameda County teens can now text crisis line counselors through CSS' Text Line Program anytime between 4:00p.m. - 11:00p.m., 7 days a week. They text from their cell phones to CSS, and counselors respond as the messages appear on computer screens via a HIPAA compliant software program. CSS developed the Text Line Program to entice teens to use CSS as a support during a crisis. Historically only a tiny fraction of calls to the Crisis Line come from teens – yet we know the need is high. In a typical high school classroom, it is likely that three students have made a suicide attempt in the last year and many more suffer with suicidal ideation.

Alameda county middle and high school students learn how to reach CSS via voice call or text message during CSS' Teens for Life presentations, when they also learn how to help themselves and friends with feelings of depression and suicidality. One teen wrote during a text session that "a lady came in and talked to us about u so I decided to try it out because I used to cut myself."

Three quarters of 12 – 17 year-olds own cell phones, 75% have unlimited texting, and almost 90% use text messaging regularly. While these teens openly admit to using long message exchanges to discuss important matters, CSS creatively found a way to utilize the most basic form of communication. Text based counseling gives texters a sense of anonymity and control over the session. One teen texter wrote: "I'm not a good talker, that's y i went to texting." Cell phone plans often allow unlimited texting compared to call minutes, and can be done privately even with people nearby.

The Text Line Program launched Nov. 1, 2011. Counselors engaged in 96 text counseling sessions in the first year alone. That number more than tripled the following year, with 312 text sessions; bringing the total combined voice calls and texts from teens to the highest number ever recorded at CSS.

Teens choose to engage in text sessions with CSS counselors for many reasons. In a detailed analysis of two thirds of the 312 sessions in 2012-2013, almost half of the texters expressed disturbance in primary relationships, feelings of loneliness, isolation and anxiety. Texters mentioned self-injury in almost a third of the analyzed sessions, while a quarter expressed suicidal desire, and roughly ten percent indicated a suicide plan. Counselors, in most cases, are just an ear to listen as many texters sent messages similar to this comment: "Thank you, I just needed someone to talk... to let my feelings out."



How Far We've Come

Karen Oberdorfer, MA, MFT Registered Intern
Text Line Coordinator & Clinical Program Assistant

CSS engaged in the second fiscal year of offering crisis counseling to Alameda County teens via the text messaging program. Not only did texters respond positively to the service, but counselors who experienced text counseling were happy to take more texts. As a result, outreach for the program expanded in Fiscal Year 2012-2013.

Teens for Life gave out over 12,000 trifold cards containing Crisis Line and Text Line contact information compared to 6,000 the previous year. Teens for Life included the Text Line contact information to all Alameda County schools visited. As a result, CSS saw a great increase in text sessions by Alameda county teens.

CSS has rapidly seen an increase in the need for text counseling support and will continue to respond to young people in crisis through Text Counseling, Teens for Life, the Crisis Line, and School Based Counseling.

During Fiscal Year 2012 – 2013:

- ◆ 312 text sessions
- ◆ 177 new texters
- ◆ Average Session: 64 minutes
- ◆ 735 total teen calls & texts

During Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012:

- ◆ 128 text sessions
- ◆ Average Session: 66 minutes
- ◆ 396 total teen calls & texts

Matt- someone @ your crisis center saved my life in January of last year. His name was Andrew and we talked for 2 hours. People like you and Andrew are helping people more than you know. I didn't get the chance to thank Andrew. If you know him, please tell him thank you from me. And give yourself a thank you, too. You deserve it. I bet a lot of people would love having the chance to thank you. I've found people in crisis often forget to say thank you, but I'm sure all they want is for you to know just how amazing you are. Thank you. Love, [redacted]

Phone Angels

Binh Au, Crisis Line Coordinator

This past year, 177 volunteer crisis counselors, and 18 shift supervisors responded to over 61,000 crisis line calls from Alameda County, providing short-term intervention and referrals to callers struggling with a variety of life problems. Their kindness and compassion helped people in crisis feel heard and connected. They were in fact "phone angels" in the words of a grateful caller.

This past year CSS responded to 6,815 calls from callers who had some risk for suicide. Only 126 calls resulted in the need for contacting local law enforcement and possible hospitalization. Our crisis counselors de-escalate caller's intense emotions, explore the caller's suicide ambivalence, and create a safety plan, eliminating the need for expensive, and often times traumatic, hospitalization.

Many thanks to our recent Donors!

September 1, 2012—July 31, 2013

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