



Crisis Text Line: How to Save a Life Using the Phrase “4Hope”

In the age of smart phones, it seems that people, particularly youths, are fixated on text messaging as a means of communication. Despite having many hotlines to help young people cope with a mental health crisis, you traditionally have had to call into these services. Courtesy of Crisis Text Line, Ohioans of any age can text the phrase “4Hope” to 741741 and receive a response from a live, trained volunteer within 5 minutes (“Code Orange” – more severe texts – are handled in an average of 1.8 minutes). Volunteers can then help the texter move from a moment of crisis to a calmer place.

How Does Crisis Text Line Work?

When a person texts “4Hope” to 741741, an algorithm immediately codes the language in the text using a triage-based system. This allows for those in more severe crisis to move to the front of the line. Once a message has been coded, it is passed, completely anonymously, to a volunteer. These volunteers have received 34 hours of training on how to help a person experiencing a mental health crisis. If a person indicates a need more severe than the volunteer is equipped to handle, it is given to the shift supervisor – a full-time, paid Crisis Text Line staff member with a higher degree in psychology, social work, or another related field. The only time a texter’s location is used is if Crisis Text Line must activate “active rescue” protocol. Active rescue allows the supervisors to contact local law enforcement in the texter’s area to notify them that a suicide attempt is imminent. Though Crisis Text Line can implement this procedure, they always first encourage the texter to reach out to emergency services on their own. Confidentiality is of utmost importance for Crisis Text Line. Texters and volunteers do not learn each other’s names. Further, the phrase “Crisis Text Line” never shows up on a phone bill and there are no charges for data.

CRISIS TEXT LINE |

What Can You Do?

Spread awareness in your schools, homes, and communities. Crisis Text Line offers a battery of free materials for publicity, find the toolkit (including logos, posters, and tear-off flyers) http://www.oacbha.org/docs/Crisis_Text_Line_School_Toolkit.pdf. Crisis Text Line also has an informational one-pager to give to community members:

http://www.oacbha.org/docs/Crisis_Text_Line_One_Pager_FINAL.pdf

On the Ground: Posters/Flyers – You can put posters, stickers, and flyers in your school. You can use what you find in the toolkit (link above), or make your own! You can post flyers and posters in counseling offices, libraries, bathrooms, classrooms, student centers, and other high-traffic areas of the school. **Giveaway Items** - Add the keyword and number (Text 4HOPE to 741741) to items that you give to all of your students, such as wristbands, lanyards, planners, and even student IDs. **Distribute Information** – Inform teachers and parents about Crisis Text Line and give teachers one-pagers of information and a stack of cards with the number on it. Instruct teachers to distribute information to their students. **Events and Activities** – Put up a banner with the number on it at school events or put the number in the program at school events, sports games and tournaments, etc. **Online: Listservs & Email Newsletters** – Include information in email blasts to campus groups, clubs, parents, and students in order to provide information to these groups. **Website** - Feature Crisis Text Line prominently on your website, on a home page scroller or in a resource listing. **Emergency Protocol** – Any messaging that goes out to students in the event of emergency or crisis (campus death, assault, natural disaster, etc.) should include information about reaching out to Crisis Text Line for support. **Publications** – Publicize Crisis Text Line in student publications, blogs.

The Project AWARE Ohio team includes partners in 3 county ESCs. If you are from those local areas and want more information about Project AWARE services, please contact:

Cuyahoga County ESC: Mary Wise; (216) 901-4201; mary.wise@esc-cc.org

Warren County ESC: Vycki Haught; (513) 379-2310; vycki.haught@warrencountyesc.com

Wood County ESC: Angela Patchen; (419) 354-9010 x228; apatchen@wcesc.org

For information about Project AWARE in other regions of the state, please contact:

Emily Jordan: emily.jordan@education.ohio.gov

Cricket Meehan: meehandc@miamioh.edu

Kathy Oberlin (Ohio Mental Health Network for School Success): oberlink2@gmail.com