



Fulfilling Our Promise

How Kids Help Phone will support
more young people in Canada
and demonstrate impact
through innovative solutions

Our strategy for 2017-2021

Kids Help Phone 

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“For some people it’s really hard to get through things and they think they are alone. But they have this place. They have these people.”

Young person,
about Kids Help Phone

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The need

Created in 1989, Kids Help Phone initially focused on the problem of child abuse, providing free, phone-based support to any young person needing help, anywhere in the country. The anonymous phone call to a professional counsellor – available around the clock, any day of the week – became emblematic of our organization’s unique approach to helping young people in Canada with their problems, whether big or small.

Over time, we expanded our scope to cover both well-being and mental health disorders, **70% of which begin in childhood and adolescence**. Since early interventions can lessen or even prevent their development, **access to support can often make the difference between a negative and a positive outcome in a young person’s life**. Over the past twenty-eight years, Kids Help Phone has grown into the most available, accessible, direct support that a young person can find independently, providing counselling and resources – as well as providing a bridge to other more specialized and local supports. We know that we can make an essential difference at both the individual and societal levels by ensuring access to support at pivotal moments, no matter when they may occur in a young person’s life.

In doing so, Kids Help Phone has carved out a unique and tremendously important position

in what we call the continuum of assistance. Our online resources play a significant role in supporting young people in the identification of issues, and our counselling services enable them to cope with problems before they reach points of crisis, or to handle crises in ways that prevent tragic and socially costly outcomes involving hospitals or the justice system. **If we weren’t already here, someone would recommend inventing us.**

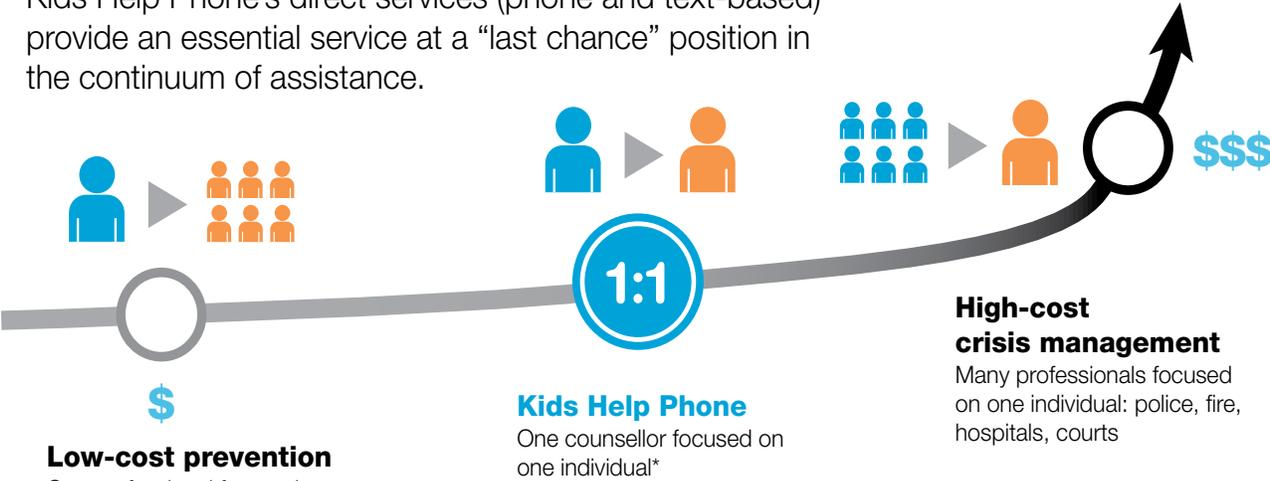
Though our scope of support has expanded and evolved tremendously since our founding, the challenges facing young people in Canada have only grown more complex – and so has their need for access to help. Technology is rapidly changing how young people interact with each other, with their parents, and with social support systems. Voice conversations by phone are now only one channel among others; digital channels continue to increase for young people as a way to get information or advice at the time they’re most needed. And it’s no secret that more change is coming.

To achieve our vision, it is critical that we focus on youth-informed digital transformation, and become the most nimble, accessible, effective access point for young people to the support they need.



Societal logic: the continuum of assistance

Kids Help Phone’s direct services (phone and text-based) provide an essential service at a “last chance” position in the continuum of assistance.



Low-cost prevention
One professional focused on many individuals: schools, media, social programs, public health

Kids Help Phone
One counsellor focused on one individual*

High-cost crisis management
Many professionals focused on one individual: police, fire, hospitals, courts

* Some Kids Help Phone activities extend into the “low-cost prevention” category, and others (more rarely) into “crisis management”



Our strategic plan

Kids Help Phone's services wouldn't be possible without donors and partners, so we are sharing our strategy as widely as possible.

In developing our plan to meet this challenge, we spoke with young people, parents, donors, volunteers, independent experts, our staff, and our board members. And then we worked from a small set of critical objectives to determine the particular initiatives needed to achieve each of those objectives, some of the indicators and metrics we'll use to measure our progress, and the funding we need to secure to make it all possible. It's an approach that emphasizes principles and outcomes over processes, and one that will provide the guidance we need to make smart decisions and trade-offs every day in the midst of a rapidly changing environment – rather than locking us into a static plan.

Kids Help Phone's services wouldn't be possible without donors and partners, so we are sharing our strategy as widely as possible. The more people that understand our role, our vision, and how we intend to move forward, the more we are able to work with sector leaders and organizations – both because they are committed to the same outcomes and also because over time, we believe, their strategies and ours will become increasingly complementary. And that means we'll get better, together, at maximizing the impact of our collective resources on the lives of young people in Canada, and at achieving our shared goals.

Through the resolve of young people who reach out for help

Through the passion and stamina of the organization's leadership to create the future for young people we envision

Through the fortitude of our counsellors in how they respond to young people

Through our role as a trusted ally for young people

Through our committed partnerships with donors, service providers, experts and stakeholders

Through our multi-disciplinary approaches to fulfil our promises



Our values **We are:**



Through our pioneering history in creating our service

Through our motivation to create new service offerings and continually adapt to meet young people's needs

Through the innovative, conscientious, and inspirational ways our counsellors work with young people



Through our compassion, kindness, integrity, authenticity and accountability

Through our commitment to those we serve — our donors, partners, and volunteers

Through the trust of young people who use our service

Through our service and its role in developing resilience in young people

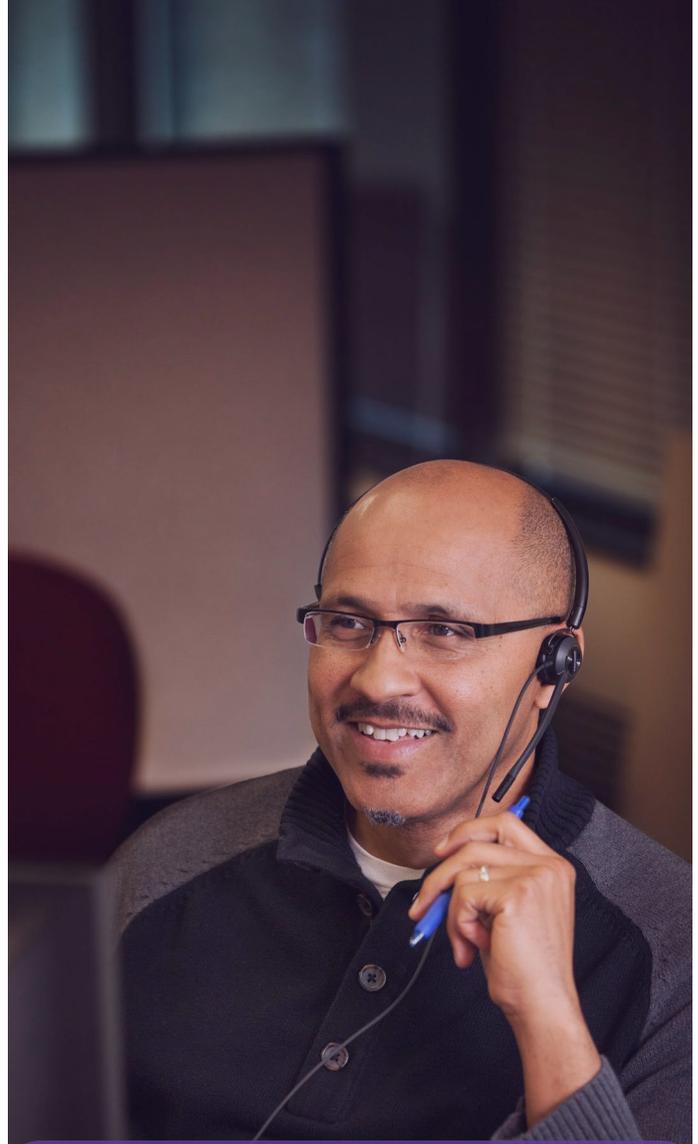
Through our determination to withstand challenges, learn, and ensure sustainability

Through forging strength as an organization, and within young people



Our vision

A future where every young person in Canada will access the support they need, in the way they need it most.



Our mission

We are always open, providing a safe and trusted place for young people in any moment of crisis or need.

Our objectives

Three strategic objectives focus our efforts, designed to fulfil our mission and to engage our organization in the wider vision. We're developing more specific "cross-cutting" strategies – for example, digital transformation, reconciliation, as well as partnerships and outreach – that will help us focus our efforts and ensure our progress is tangible and measurable.



Maximizing Access

For almost three decades, young people have been reaching out to Kids Help Phone for the support they need – but for every person we've been able to help, others have been unable to access our services. That's why one of our three strategic objectives is to remove and reduce barriers to access and support, and to create vital, innovative, and relevant new service offerings.

To accomplish this, we are focusing on five priorities:

We are **improving access to our services** across traditional and digital/mobile channels, communicating with young people where and how they prefer, and we are implementing strategies to improve access for remote, indigenous, rural, and under-served youth.

We are **re-inventing our offerings**, to connect with our users in ways relevant to them.

“Kids Help Phone is providing support to some of the most under-served and potentially vulnerable youth in Canada. By building on youth's personal strengths, Kids Help Phone is effective in reducing distress and isolation, even for those living in more remote, isolated areas with few options for support.”

Debbie Delancey

Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services, NWT

We are **finding new ways to act as a bridge** to the additional support young people may need, and will continue to evaluate and improve the quality of our services and the positive outcomes they help to create.

We are **removing our upper age limit** for service delivery, embracing a more inclusive definition of youth that accounts for today's more diverse life paths.

And finally we are **extending the awareness of our services** through new channels and partnerships, aiming to ensure that all young people know about the support we can offer them, and know how easy it is to obtain.

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Achieving Resilience

Achieving our goals for improving both our services and the ability of young people to access them whenever they need will require an organization that is stable and efficient yet also nimble, flexible, and responsive. Building on our recent initiatives to make Kids Help Phone a more financially sustainable and effective organization, we are investing our upcoming efforts in five priorities. We are **transforming our revenue model** to emphasize long-term growth. We are making our organization **more agile and more results-focused** through changes like cross-disciplinary teams and values-based leadership, and we are supporting this by developing an **integrated planning system** to maximize our effectiveness and to track how well we're achieving our priorities.

As it does with individuals, an organization's resilience comes not only from inside but from outside too. To benefit from the talents and experiences of young people, we are deepening **our national youth engagement strategy** – from service insights to community participation and programs – and we are strengthening ties across Canada through **a community engagement framework** that improves youth awareness levels and mobilizes parents, schools, and workplaces to support, fund, and champion our work.



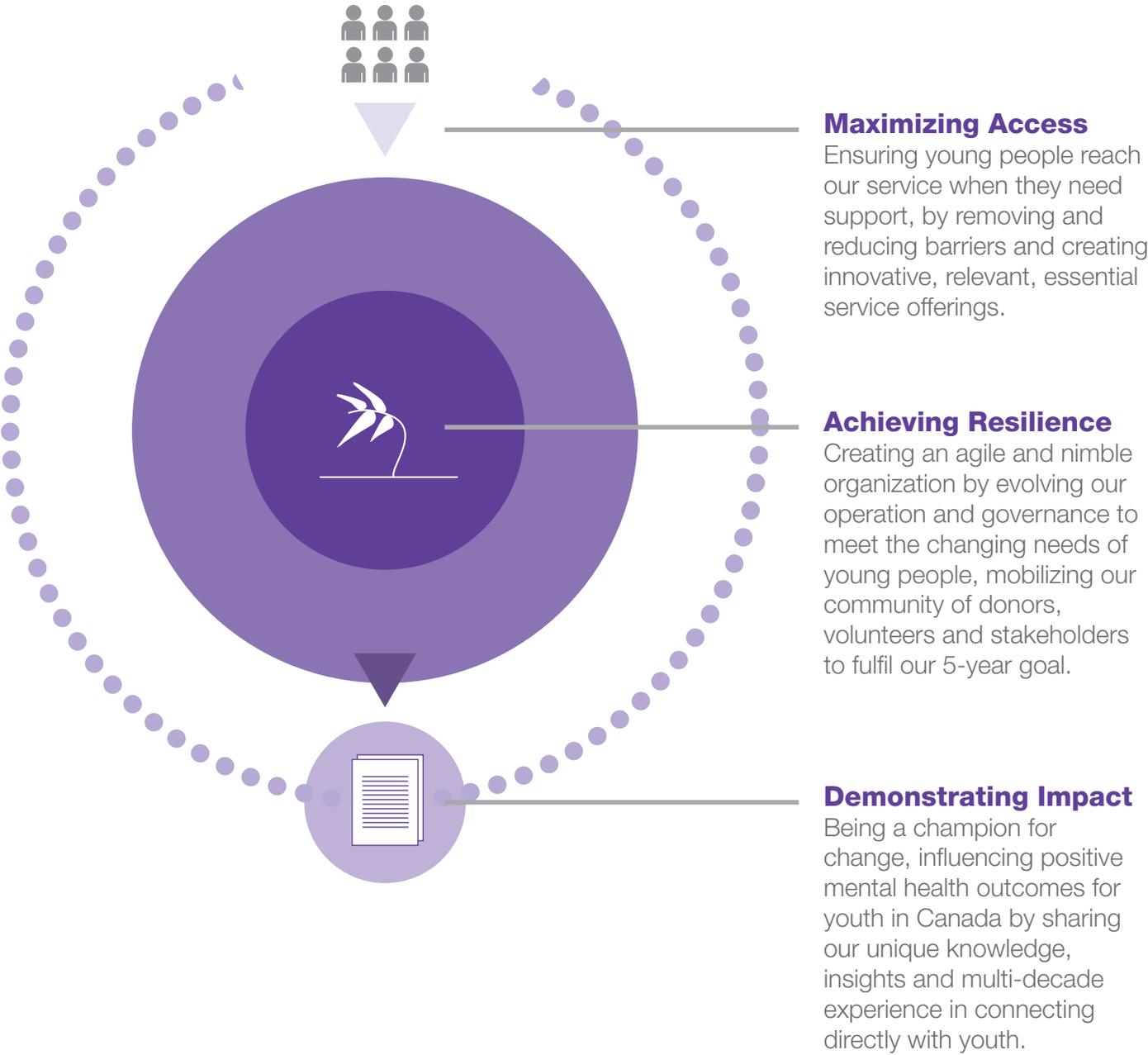
“Having first joined Kids Help Phone as a counsellor in 1990, I’ve witnessed many waves of change sweep through the organization, and my role has evolved along the way. Now, with our multi-disciplinary teams, powered by our unique data, intelligence, and the expertise of passionate advisors and task forces, we will drive continuous innovation to realize our long term goals.”

Ted Kaiser

VP, Innovation and Technology,
Kids Help Phone

Kids Help Phone's **5-year goal** is to be the most nimble, accessible, effective access point for young people to the support they need.

Kids Help Phone's Strategic Objectives



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Demonstrating Impact

... and influencing positive health outcomes for youth in Canada. Improving access and outcomes and strengthening our organization are critical objectives – but we can do more. With our unique and multi-decade experience in connecting directly with youth, Kids Help Phone has **the responsibility to play a major role in assisting policy makers and the research community**, both in Canada and globally, in their search for insights and answers about youth mental health and well-being. In addition, too few people understand the tremendous potential and cost-effectiveness of our services, and the importance of our position in the continuum of assistance. We must initiate, and participate in, national and international conversations representing the direct needs of young people, attract funders on the basis of our track record and vision, and ensure that wheels are not reinvented to address issues on which we have unique and compelling contributions to make.

To achieve this, we are **turning our data and our experience with young people into resources** that policymakers and academics can use to make their efforts more effective. We are developing **a dedicated research program** to generate and share new knowledge based on our service data and insights. We are seeking to **partner with governments, non-profits, and corporations** to establish new services that support the mental health and the well-being of youth. And finally, we are seeking to **increase the understanding of the unique role we play** – because the more effective we can be at what we do best, the less that society will have to rely on high-cost, last-resort services at moments of individual crisis.

“Kids Help Phone can play an extraordinarily important role by contributing its deep expertise and knowledge about the challenges and needs of children and youth to public policy actors in government, in educational institutions, and elsewhere. Good public policy requires the best quality of information. Because of Kids Help Phone’s unique expertise, it is especially well-placed to help public policy actors make the best decisions.”

Mahmud Jamal

Litigation Partner,
Osler Hoskin & Harcourt LLP

Intervener on behalf of
Kids Help Phone to the Supreme
Court of Canada, resulting
in a landmark decision on
cyberbullying, September 2012



Going forward

As we pursue these objectives, we are adding to the momentum we have already built. We are exploring the possibility of white-labelling one or more of our services as a means of reaching more people more efficiently through other organizations. We've developed a business case for a 24/7 text-based service and have completed the plan for our digital renewal. And we have identified ways for our services to reach specific youth populations through innovative approaches to branding and service design. We are excited to share with our current and prospective donors and partners these new opportunities to work together.



Making it happen

We are enhancing the process to develop key performance indicators to allow us to make decisions and track our progress toward these objectives, we are embedding them in our plans, and we are reporting on them annually to all of our supporters and our board of directors.

By 2021 we intend to be the most nimble, accessible, and effective access point, in Canada, for young people to the support they need.

Over the next five years we'll achieve our goals, and we'll make our long-term vision real. We know this because we're already doing so many of the things we need to do *today* – but now we need to do them at greater scale and with broader reach, delivering them efficiently while learning to adapt to the changing needs of our service users, and using what we learn to collaborate in new ways with our allies and partners in the achievement of these essential goals.

We're excited to be at the next stage in a journey that touches every young person in Canada, and we hope you'll be part of it – by sharing our strategy with your colleagues and peers, by contributing your ideas and financial support or by volunteering your own time, skills, and resources.

We have built something unique in the past twenty-eight years: an organization trusted by partners, experts, and, most importantly, young people from coast to coast to coast to provide counselling and resources when they can do the most good. Our strategy is aimed squarely at the promise implicit in that trust, and with the help of our donors, volunteers, and friends, we are continuing to keep it.

A large, solid blue circle is centered on a white background. Inside the circle, there is a quote in white text. The quote is: "I decided to become a donor because I remember how tough it is to be a kid. The evolution of the services and resources shows Kids Help Phone is adapting with the needs of young people. It feels good to be able to contribute to help the organization transform."

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Former Kids Help Phone
service user

KidsHelpPhone.ca

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