

**CRISIS TEXT LINE |**

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**Kids Help Phone** 

## **SUPPORT IS JUST A TEXT AWAY FOR ALL YOUTH ACROSS CANADA** *Kids Help Phone Releases Results of 24/7 Texting Service Pilot Launch And Expands Nationally*

**TORONTO (November 6, 2018)** Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone is being rolled out nationally in both English and French making access to mental health support just a text away for all youth in Canada.

Research has uncovered that 42 per cent of young people would rather write than speak about their problem and 71 per cent of young people prefer a non-verbal form of communication such as texting. Since February 2018, when **Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone** was service-tested in Manitoba and select provinces, more than 13,000 texting conversations have taken place.

“Kids Help Phone has been speaking with young people every day, in every community across Canada since 1989, adapting and innovating to provide them with the mental health support solutions that suit them best,” says Katherine Hay, President and CEO of Kids Help Phone. “With our pilot of **Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone**, we set out to meet youth where they need us most, and the response has shown us that this is a vital support service for young people in Canada.

Following the pilot’s promising results and through a partnership with Canada Health Infoway, along with the support from generous donors, the free, 24/7 texting service is accessible immediately to youth anywhere in Canada by texting **TALK to 686868** to reach an English-speaking Crisis Responder and **TEXTO to 686868** to reach a French-speaking Crisis Responder on any text/SMS enabled cell phone.

“As we move forward with the national rollout, we are again boldly changing the landscape in virtual care knowing the Canada of tomorrow is depending on how we deal with the mental health needs our youth are facing today,” adds Hay. “Over the coming months, we will focus on sustaining **Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone** with additional funding and resources.”

“**Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone** will give young people across Canada access to a much-needed and first of its kind texting support service,” says Michael Green, President and CEO of Canada Health Infoway. “We are proud to partner with Kids Help Phone to usher in this new dawn in mental health support service delivery.”

To meet the growing demand for talking through text, Kids Help Phone introduced the texting support option through a service partnership with U.S. based helpline and technology pioneer, Crisis Text Line. The service is provided by trained, volunteer Crisis Responders who engage

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in empathetic listening to help bring a texter from a hot moment to a cool calm. Paid, professional Texting Supervisors monitor the texting platform and are ready to step in should a situation escalate.

**Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone** requires no data plan, internet connection or app. For many young people, (especially in rural and remote communities) lack of privacy, unreliable internet bandwidth, and limited data plans make it difficult for them to communicate by phone, thus the need for reliable, accessible communication.

Pilot results showed that the most common issues that young people addressed through their texting conversations with a volunteer Crisis Responder were related to anxiety, relationships and feelings of isolation. Twenty-four per cent of texters connected with a volunteer Crisis Responder because of suicidal thoughts. At times, crisis intervention was a factor in the texting interaction requiring a professional Supervisor to step in to conduct between one and two active rescues daily; this is seen as one to two lives being saved every day.

Some other key findings derived from surveys completed by respondents after their texting support sessions include:

- **Reduction in Stress Levels:** 86 per cent of participants reported a meaningful reduction in stress after finishing a texting conversation with a Crisis Responder.
- **Improved Mood:** 87 per cent of respondents reported feeling at least one of the following categories after having communication with a Crisis Responder: less alone, less distressed, less upset, more hopeful, more confident and more in-control.
- **Increased Confidence:** 52 per cent of respondents said that they felt confident that they could now cope with their situations after a texting conversation.
- **Service Satisfaction:** 83 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied with the service they received, and 81 per cent said they were likely to recommend the texting service to a friend.
- **Early Intervention:** 78 per cent of respondents said had they not engaged in a texting support session they would have done one of the following: managed the issue on their own, not spoken to anyone; ignored the issue and hoped it got better or went away. Additionally, 7 per cent of users said they would have gone to the emergency room.

With 70 per cent of mental health issues being known to begin in childhood and adolescence, early intervention can lessen or prevent a worsening of the issue. **Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone** is seen as an essential mental health resource for young people providing a place where small issues can be addressed before they become larger ones.

Kids Help Phone's phone and Live Chat counselling services remain core, vital services, where anonymous and confidential professional counseling is provided.

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A group of leadership donors to Kids Help Phone helped to underwrite the majority of the costs to develop the new service including: Bell Let's Talk, BMO Financial Group, Boston Pizza Foundation Future Prospects, Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life, RBC Foundation, The Co-operators Group Limited, TELUS, Shail Silver and three anonymous donors.

With the national rollout of **Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone**, additional bilingual Texting Supervisors and volunteer Crisis Responders are especially needed. Those interested in volunteering, donating to support Kids Help Phone or wanting more information on **Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone** are encouraged to visit [kidshelpphone.ca/text](http://kidshelpphone.ca/text).

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#### **ABOUT KIDS HELP PHONE**

Kids Help Phone is Canada's only 24/7 national service offering professional counselling, information, referrals and volunteer-led text-based support for young people. Since 1989, Kids Help Phone has offered kids, teens and young adults a critical lifeline of hope and support through our free, anonymous and confidential services – which are available in both English and French. Kids Help Phone is a registered Canadian charity, and we raise the majority of our revenue from individuals, foundations, corporations, and community fundraising.

#### **ABOUT CANADA HEALTH INFOWAY**

Infoway helps to improve the health of Canadians by working with partners to accelerate the development, adoption and effective use of digital health across Canada. Through our investments, we help deliver better quality and access to care and more efficient delivery of health services for patients and clinician. Infoway is an independent and not-for-profit organization funded by the federal government.

#### **ABOUT CRISIS TEXT LINE**

Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7 support for people in crisis via text. [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

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