



You are not alone.

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## Ohio Unveils New Tool to Help Ohioans in Crisis Receive Help Quickly Crisis Text Line Offers Free, Confidential Help from Trained Counselors

COLUMBUS – Ohio is making it easier for individuals who are experiencing a stressful situation to find immediate help, 24/7 with the launch of a free, confidential, statewide Crisis Text Line. Starting today, any Ohio resident who needs help coping with a crisis can now text the keyword "4hope" to 741741 to be connected to a crisis counselor.

"Crisis Text Line is not a replacement for counseling, but when one feels completely overwhelmed, lost and alone, it's a point of connection and a way to get to a more stable frame of mind," said Tracy Plouck, director for the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS). "Crisis hotlines have been used successfully for decades, but technology is changing, and we need to be sure to meet Ohioans where they are in order to get them the help they need."

The Crisis Text Line is an outgrowth of an ongoing "Strong Families, Safe Communities" partnership between the OhioMHAS and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities to fund innovative projects to assist families and youth who are at-risk.

"We are pleased this accessible method of communication is being made available to people with developmental disabilities who may be experiencing a crisis in their life," said Ohio Department of Developmentally Disabled Director John Martin.

Trained crisis counselors are on stand-by to provide a personal response and information on a range of issues, including: suicidal thoughts, bullying, depression, self-harm, and more. The specialist helps the user stay safe and healthy with effective, secure support and referrals.

"The addition of the Crisis Text Line will bring up-to-date technology to Ohio, so that in times of crisis another option is available for those in need," said State Rep. Marlene Anielski (R-Walton Hills), a leading advocate in the State Legislature for suicide prevention. "I am proud with the 'out -of –the-box' thinking from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and look forward in continuing our partnership in providing additional services to all Ohioans."

The keyword "4hope" was developed by the Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery (StarkMHAR) board, which piloted a crisis text line for youth and young adults as part of a statefunded grant program.

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"The Crisis Text Line is a vital and creative way to reach young people struggling with depression and suicidal ideation," said StarkMHAR Executive Director John Aller. "When talking with young people—while they are not comfortable phoning a crisis hotline, we have found they are very comfortable interacting by text to obtain needed support."

The Crisis Text Line launch is the latest in a series of strategies to strengthen and promote suicide prevention efforts in Ohio. In April, state officials unveiled a \$2 million suicide prevention initiative focused on reducing suicides through workforce development, expanded resources for survivors of loss, research, public awareness and stigma reduction. Persons who aren't comfortable texting can still talk to a live individual by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1.800.273.TALK (8255).

On average, Ohio loses between 1,200-1,500 people annually to suicide. While the state's suicide rate dropped last year to its lowest point in more than a decade, it still accounted for 10.8 deaths per 100,000 people. Nationwide, more than 41,000 people died by suicide – roughly one death every 13.7 minutes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Suicide now ranks as the second leading cause of death among Americans aged 10 to 34, and is the tenth leading cause of deaths overall.

For more information on what Ohio is doing to prevent suicides, visit <a href="http://mha.ohio.gov/suicideprevention">http://mha.ohio.gov/suicideprevention</a>. If you or someone you know is an imminent danger to themselves or someone else, go to the nearest ER or call 911.

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