

Holding the virtual frontline: Ensuring young people have unwavering access to judgement-free support

At the start of 2020, troubling news stories including wildfires in Australia and a distant conversation of a deadly virus in China were causing concern amongst the young people reaching out to Kids Help Phone through phone, text, chat and web sessions. People of all ages were experiencing unparalleled feelings of anxiety and fear. Then, a pandemic was declared, and we immediately saw a surge in demand across all services.

When we needed support to meet the growing needs of youth, you answered the call. You are the reason that no young voice goes unheard during this unimaginable time.

Holding the virtual front line

We were built for moments like these. We did not have to create new services in response to the onslaught of crises we have experienced this year. We adapted immediately, and are working tirelessly and nimbly to scale our virtual solutions for youth, with proven efficacy. Thank you for putting your trust in Kids Help Phone.

We are pleased to share a few innovations in our service model since mid-March that donor support made possible, to ensure barrier-free access to our services:

- **8,500 people applied** to become volunteer Crisis Responders
- **20 new counsellors** on-boarded in just 2.5 weeks
- Launched Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone **for all ages (text 741741)** across Canada
- Published **up-to-the minute, expert-informed, COVID-19 resources** on our website – receiving over 2 million visits already this year
- **Youth who speak Arabic** can now access our phone counselling service through a pilot program



We are answering **400 phone calls daily** from kids, teens and young adults, with a wait time of **under four minutes**. Trained and passionate volunteer Crisis Responders are answering upwards of **500 texts each day** in recent months, and responding to **91 per cent of texting conversations** in **under five minutes**, with the most critical being answered in **under 40 seconds**.

We continue to emphasize the importance of high quality counselling and crisis response – reaching an average **quality score of 90.6 per cent** according to our service users. We are performing an average of **10 active rescues** every day, engaging emergency services for young people in immediate danger. The data shows – your support is changing and saving lives.

88% of texters felt better after their conversation

78% of texters said they would not have reached out to anyone else

58% shared something with us that they have never shared with anyone else

Unrelenting Crisis, Unwavering Support

As an ally to young people for more than 30 years, we are also vigilant to additional troubling news stories, severely impacting those already experiencing intensified levels of distress. As youth absorb the impacts of a global pandemic, alongside other tragic local, national and international events, they have a safe and trusted place in Kids Help Phone.

After the recent shooting in Nova Scotia, demand on our texting platform doubled in the province. Almost all of those conversations discussed COVID-19, showing how much trauma youth in the region are facing. The majority of all service-users shared they would not have spoken to anyone else after the shooting had we not been there – without us, where would they have gone? In the weeks since the incident, we see a 50 per cent increase in young people reaching out from Nova Scotia sharing feelings of grief – at a time when people are home, isolated from their support systems, and yearning for contact with friends and family.

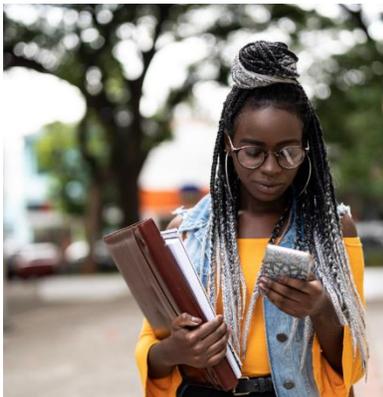
Thanks to you, these young people were never alone.

Since George Floyd's tragic death, texting conversations about racism and/or discrimination doubled from seven per cent to 17 per cent. Some of the most distressed texters reaching out to Kids Help Phone are young people who have experienced racism – second only to those who fear being harmed in their own homes. And of those texters who experience racism, they are also the most likely to discuss suicide with us when they courageously reach out for help.

Thanks to you, we are there for youth – today and every day.

As COVID-19 lockdown restrictions are gradually lifted, so too are the floodgates of uncertainty and anxiety among youth about the coming school year. Students of all ages face new unknowns as they approach the next chapter of their education in a changed world. Back to school does not mean back to normal. At Kids Help Phone, we are concerned about how the prospect of returning to school at this time is impacting mental health. As the leading experts on the issues young people face, we are working quickly to ensure we are their go-to for trusted resources and support during this exceptionally erratic and unsettling time.

Thanks to you, we are always there.



We're just getting started.

The pandemic is far from over. With the extraordinary measures our country continues to take in response to this life-altering pandemic – and with or without a vaccine – the impact on youth mental health will be felt well into the future.

Your investment will continue to ensure youth can access the support they need in the moment they need it, expand service offerings along continuum of virtual care and save more young lives. With thanks to your generous support, we look forward to continuing to walk with young people so they know they are never alone.

"Whoever you are. You are a hero. I mean it. I hope you look at yourself in the mirror and know you are saving lives. I mean that. I'm still feeling upset. But this made me know that there are people for me. Thank you so much."

-Kids Help Phone service user
