

# **TXT4LIFE**

## **Crisis Counseling Program**

Adolescence can be a very turbulent time with pressures from friends, family and expectations in school.  
Teens connect and communicate through text messaging.

Teens have told us:  
**“You are out of step with today’s Youth.”**

***HSI-Crisis Connection decided to meet Teens where they are...  
with the TXT4LIFE Crisis Counseling Program***

### Know the Facts

#### ***Teen suicide in Minnesota is a real problem.***

- *Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for youth in Minnesota.*
- *Twenty-five percent of public school 9th graders in Minnesota have thought about killing themselves.*
- *1 in 65,000 children ages 10 to 14 commit suicide each year.*
- *Fifty-three percent of young people who commit suicide abuse substances.<sup>1</sup>*

### Why Use Text Counseling?

Cell-phone texting has become the preferred channel of basic communication between teens and their friends.<sup>2</sup>

- Some 75% of 12-17 year-olds now own cell phones, up from 45% in 2004.
- Fully 72% of all teens -- or 88% of teen cell phone users -- are text-messagers. That is a more than half of teens (54%) are daily texters.
- One in three teens sends over 100 texts a day, or 3000 a month.

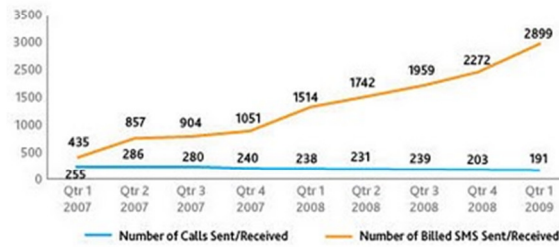
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<sup>1</sup> [www.SAVE.org](http://www.SAVE.org)

<sup>2</sup> Pew Internet & American Life Project  
April 20, 2010

## The Average Number of Teen Texts Increased 566%

Average Number of Monthly Texts and Phone Calls—U.S. Mobile Teens 13–17



Source: The Nielsen Company

Text messaging can be a very effective way to reach young people. Projects such as National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition’s Text4Baby, National Safe Place’s TXT 4 Help, and RealTalkDC, from the Washington nonprofit Metro Teen AIDS, emphasize that texting provides a level of anonymity that encourages honest inquiries. The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign of North Carolina launched a texting program in 2009 and quickly had to add staff to address the high utilization by teens in their state.

## How Text Counseling Works

HSI-Crisis Connection uses the same communication procedures, policies and goals that have made telephone crisis support successful over the years. Youth text into the line using the six-digit number (TEXTME: 839863) and a specific keyword (e.g. “Listen”, “Life”) listed on social marketing materials. Trained volunteers and staff manage text communications using a secure, web-based application and standard computer workstations. On a voluntary basis, demographics about the person texting, his/her issues of concern, and outcomes of the text conversation are captured by the counselor and input into our call center data management system for reporting purposes.

## History and Background

A number of years ago, the Nevada Crisis Call Center realized the growing need for youth-centered programs and initiated a collaboration to develop a text counseling program. The system was piloted in four urban, two rural and one American Indian middle/high school in Northern Nevada. Different keywords were assigned to each school, which provided information on the effectiveness of the marketing materials and the receptiveness of youth to the program. Demographic information, issues reported and text conversation outcomes also were recorded by the counselors. HSI-Crisis Connection has worked with the Nevada Crisis Call Center and its partner, Educational Message Services, Inc., to develop a similar program for Minnesota. The program is currently being piloted in one region of the state, with plans to expand as resource capacity is available to support the program.



Whatever the program need, we want to work with organizations and the community to incorporate the text component seamlessly, utilize existing funding where possible, and collaborate together to find new funding where needed.

## Where to Get More Information

Visit our website at [www.crisis.org](http://www.crisis.org) to find out more about our services. To find out more about text counseling from HSI-Crisis Connection, please contact Traci Chur at 612-852-2206 or [tchur@hsicrisis.org](mailto:tchur@hsicrisis.org).