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Ohio launches system for those in crisis to text for help

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Posted by Cleveland 19 Digital Team [CONNECT](#)

CLEVELAND, OH (WOIO) - Ohio has launched a system allowing people in stressful situations to text counselors for help, day or night.

The program, which began Thursday, allows people to text the keyword "4hope" to 741741 to speak with a volunteer counselor. Trained crisis counselors will be available to respond and share information on a range of issues, including thoughts of suicide, bullying, depression and self-harm.

The volunteers are supervised by staff with a degree in social work, psychology or a related field. They must be over 18 and go through a background check and web-based training before beginning their volunteering.

Tracy Plouck, director of the [Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#), says the program doesn't replace counseling but allows for people feeling completely overwhelmed to connect with someone.

"It is a human response during a time of need," says [a release](#) for the help line.

Plouck says that while crisis phone lines have been used successfully for decades, technology is changing and it's important to offer other ways for Ohioans to get help.

The keyword "4hope" is a state-specific version of the national Crisis Text Line designed to "broaden the options available through current community crisis hotlines." People in other states can text the word "HELLO" or their area specific keyword to 741741 for help in all area codes in the United States.

If you are uncomfortable texting or want to talk to a counselor over the phone, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK. You can volunteer to work with the help line at [crisistextline.org](#).

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