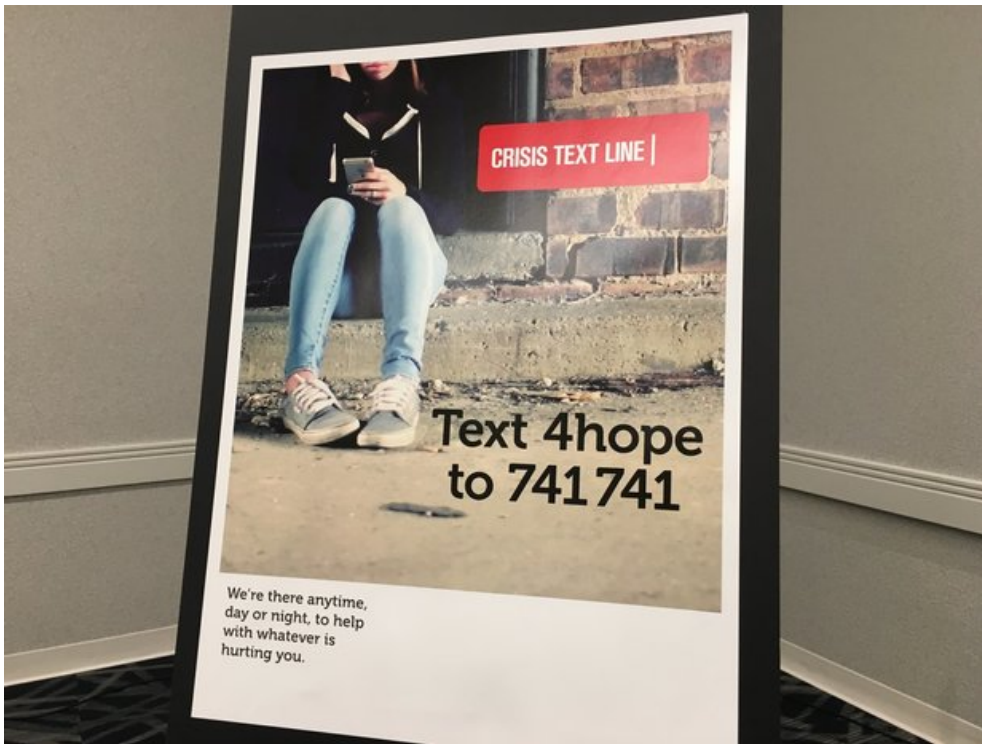


Crisis texting hotline has been successful in Ohio, officials say



Ohio officials have launched a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the national Crisis Text Line among Ohio youth and adults dealing with depression, abuse and other stressful situations. *(Jackie Borchardt, cleveland.com)*



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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- A statewide partnership with the national Crisis Text Line has resulted in 243 "active rescues" of Ohioans in danger of harming themselves or others, state and local mental health officials said Wednesday.

The Crisis Text Line pairs people in stressful situations with trained crisis counselors via text message. In Ohio, people can text "4HOPE" to 741741 and will receive a response within 5 minutes. Texts that mention suicide or other keywords are bumped ahead in the queue.

"Some people aren't willing to talk about these issues, but they are willing to text a confidential number," Cheri Walter, CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, told reporters at a Wednesday news conference.

The counselor works to move the texter from a "hot moment" to a "cool calm," and will call local authorities in emergency situations. Counselors have fielded 33,000 messages from Ohio in the past three years, mostly from people younger than age 25.

Nancy Lublin, founder and CEO of Crisis Text Line, said the service was aimed at younger people but is open to everyone. There are no texting charges for plans with the four major cell carriers, Lublin said, and the exchanges won't appear on phone bills.

Text 4HOPE to 741741 to reach a counselor through the Crisis Text Line.

"We want our texters to feel safe and have safety or money not be a reason they read out for help," Lublin said.

Crisis Text Line, a privately funded nonprofit, offers its service for free nationwide. It collects aggregated data, without personally identifiable information, to find general trends from people seeking help.

In Ohio, the top three text subjects are depression, suicidal thoughts or behaviors and stress. Lublin said bullying, friend issues and physical abuse are more prevalent in Ohio than other states.

The Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board piloted the service in 2014 through a state grant. State officials began working with Crisis Text Line in September and has since launched a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the free service.

"This is something where people took a step and it was able to be brought to a greater scale," Tracy Plouck, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, said.

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