



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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SAMHSA **Press Release**

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The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Network Answers Two Millionth Call

National Network of Local Crisis Centers Continues to Help More Callers in Emotional Distress or Suicidal Crisis through its Toll-free, 24-hour Hotline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Lifeline) 1-800-273-TALK (8255), a network of crisis call centers located throughout the nation, has answered its two millionth call since its launch on January 1, 2005. Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Lifeline currently responds to an average of more than 1,800 calls a day or 54,000 calls per month.

SAMHSA's support for the Lifeline is a key part of the agency's strategic initiative to promote emotional health, as well as prevent and reduce mental illness, substance abuse, and related problems, such as suicide. SAMHSA is also marking the Lifeline's achievement as part of the agency's observance of May is Mental Health Month.

SAMHSA established the Lifeline in 2005 with a grant to Link2Health Solutions, Inc., and has been working with organizations such as the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors and Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the American Association of Suicidology, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to focus public attention on the nationwide impact of suicide and to highlight ways to prevent it. The latest figures show that suicides account for 34,598 deaths per year in the United States – almost twice the number of homicides (18,361).

“Relatively few people realize how pervasive suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts are in our society – SAMHSA studies show that 8.3 million American adults seriously contemplated suicide in the past year, with 1.1 million adults actually attempting it,” said SAMHSA Administrator, Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. “Fortunately the Lifeline has made a remarkable difference in saving the lives of countless Americans by shining a light on this problem and providing a source of hope and help to those in crisis.”

Using state-of-the-art technology and a network of 147 local crisis centers across the country, the Lifeline can immediately link a caller seeking help to a trained counselor closest to the caller's location, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls to the toll-free Lifeline are confidential.

The Lifeline has continually developed new, innovative methods for reaching out to broader audiences. Through a partnership between SAMHSA and the Department of Veterans Affairs, in July 2007 the Lifeline linked up with the Veterans Suicide

Prevention Hotline to provide around-the-clock access to specialized crisis counseling for veterans and their families. Veterans or concerned family members seeking help can call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press “1” to be connected to a specialized call center run by the Department of Veterans Affairs and staffed by mental health professionals.

“The partnership between SAMHSA and the VA has allowed over ¼ million callers to be connected to the VA National Suicide Hotline. This has allowed us to access immediate care for Veterans in crisis as well as provide Veteran specific care to Veterans, families and Active Duty Service Members. It has been an honor to be able to provide these services to our Nation’s Veterans and Service Members and I know that lives have been saved through this partnership,” said Jan Kemp, the VA National Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

In addition to its own website (www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.) the Lifeline has established a strong presence on the Internet and social networks. For example, the search engine Google, in collaboration with the Lifeline, posts the toll-free phone number (800-273-TALK) near the top of the page when users search word such as "suicide," "commit suicide," or "kill myself."

The Lifeline has established sites within the MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube social networks where people can access information and help (www.myspace.com/800273TALK; www.facebook.com/800273TALK; www.youtube.com/800273TALK). Additionally, users who mention “suicide” in their postings to Help.com receive an automatic response about the Lifeline urging them to call 1-800-273-TALK.

The Lifeline also developed an innovative online site, the Lifeline Gallery: Stories of Hope and Recovery, (www.lifeline-gallery.org). The Lifeline Gallery is an interactive web site using animated avatars to raise awareness about the effects of suicide. The Gallery provides a safe place for the survivors of people who have died through suicide, suicide attempt survivors, and those in the suicide prevention field to share their stories of hope and recovery through computer-generated avatars. The web site offers those seeking help ways to contact a wide variety of suicide prevention resources – including 1-800-273-TALK.

In an effort to provide support for teens who may be contemplating suicide, SAMHSA and the Ad Council launched the Teen Suicide Prevention campaign. The *We Can Help Us* effort includes television, radio, print and interactive PSAs, as well as in-school and mall posters, directed at 13-17 year-olds. The ads were based on the understanding that teens face a myriad of problems and many are seeking effective ways to cope with them. The PSAs tell teens that they are not alone in their struggles with emotional and mental health problems, and that other teens have successfully worked through the same issues. Young people seeking help are urged to visit www.reachout.com, where they can hear success stories and strategies from teens.

Additional information about all these aspects of SAMHSA's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline can be accessed at: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>. Additional information about other SAMHSA suicide prevention programs can be obtained by visiting SAMHSA's Web site, <http://www.samhsa.gov>.

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SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.