

Kids Help Phone

The current outbreak of COVID-19 is a significant public health challenge facing all Canadians and the world. We know that your government is committed to a guiding principal of collaborating with all levels of government and stakeholders, such as Kids Help Phone, to work together in partnership to produce an effective and coordinated response.

We are seeing an enormous increase in volumes and also spikes that relates to distressing news reports, which is quite frankly relentless.

We are actioning our business continuity plan to ensure our staff are safe and cared for, our service remains 24/7 bilingual and national, our corporate and government partners have the tools they need to support their staff/constituents, and our financial stability remains reasonably sound.

In response to this outbreak, I write to you today with an update - so that you know that you can rely on Kids Help Phone for service, and data, as you manage the many complexities of the public health emergency unfolding. We stand as your partner to support the government's efforts to mitigate the impacts of this pandemic - particularly on the mental health and wellness of everyone in Canada.

In a nutshell, we will do the following:

- Increase our texting service to manage the bulk of volume increases, mobilize our 1900 trained volunteers to increase our active crisis responders, re-deploy counselling managers to texting supervisors, and move professional counsellors to remote work (which requires enormous logistics and technology). Currently we field 1,500 calls/texts daily, we will plan for 2,000 daily initially and expand as needed.
- We are concerned about suicide prevention, noting we continue to see 20% of our service related to suicide and conduct more than 10 active rescues per day. We will heighten our diligence and work with our RCMP partners in advance of any potential (and likely) spikes in suicide.
- We are also particularly worried about domestic violence and abuse spikes during this crisis, particularly as people have to isolate themselves.
- We have asked our administrative staff to begin working remotely as of today.

We are also working with our partners (Bell, Bell Media, BMO, Cisco, Canada Health Infoway as examples) to ensure we have the connectivity, pan-Canada communications, technology support (for professional counselling specifically) and so on.

Please reach out to us for what you need and how we can help. For now, this is simply to keep you informed on how we are supporting all Prince Edward Islanders and all Canadians, and their mental health through this crisis.

We stand as your partner in this challenging time.

Best regards,

Carole Cooley

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