

Examining the Experience of Teen-to-Teen Crisis Line Work for Adolescent Volunteers: A Pilot Study

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Introduction

- Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are high and increasing among youth.¹
- Crisis lines are one of the oldest downstream approaches to suicide prevention and have demonstrated effectiveness for adults and preliminary effectiveness for youth.²
- Teen-to-teen (t2t) crisis lines are a unique resource where adolescent volunteers help their similarly-aged peers (through texts, chats, calls, and emails). However, these crisis lines have not been systematically evaluated.
- The goal of this pilot study is to begin to evaluate the experience of t2t crisis lines for the youth volunteers.

Participants

- Adolescent volunteers ($n=20$) were recruited from two of the largest crisis lines in the U.S. – Teen Line and YouthLine. Volunteers were recruited at any point during their time working on the t2t crisis line.
 - Ages 15-20, 90% cisgender female, 80% White, 70% from YouthLine, 30% from Teen Line

Procedure

- All volunteers on the t2t crisis lines were eligible. Enrolled volunteers were assessed up to five times over the course of one year
 - Baseline
 - 3-month follow-up
 - 6-month follow-up
 - 9-month follow-up
 - 12-month/1-year follow-up
- Enrolled volunteers completed questions assessing positive/helpful experiences, negative/unhelpful experiences, and motivations for joining the t2t crisis line.

Results

Table 1. Motivations for Joining the Crisis Lines

Most Common Reasons	%
Help others and give back to the community	95
Given my own or close others lived experience	40
Gain new skills or experiences	40

Results (continued)

Table 2. Most Common Positive/Helpful Experiences

Category	%
Work is a good match with my skills and values	100
Skills learned (knowing “what to do” in a crisis)	100
Greater empathy	100
Improved listening and communication skills	100

Table 3. Most Common Negative/Unhelpful Experiences

Category	%
Stressful work	70
Increased pressure to support others	65
Emotionally drained	60
Negative impact on my own mental health	35

- On a scale from 0=*Not at all positive* to 4=*Extremely positive*, volunteers rated their experience as $M=3.61$ ($SD=0.49$).
- On a scale from 0=*Not at all negative* to 4=*Extremely negative*, volunteers rated their experience as $M=0.57$ ($SD=0.50$).

Discussion

- This pilot study is the first to examine the experience of t2t crisis lines on youth volunteers.
- Preliminary results indicate that all volunteers reported some positive aspects of the t2t line experience, and many reported some negative aspects as well.
- Limitations of this pilot study include a small sample size, lack of diversity in participants, and included volunteers at any point during their crisis line work.
- Future research should address the above limitations by aiming for a larger and more diverse sample, and longitudinally examining these experiences from the start of a volunteer’s crisis line experience.

References

- ¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). *WISQARS (web-based injury statistics query and reporting system)*. Injury Center/CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved September 9, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/> <https://doi.org/10.1093/epirev/mxn002>
- ²Gould, M. S., Chowdhury, S., Lake, A. M., Galfalvy, H., Kleinman, M., Kuchuk, M., & McKeon, R. (2021). National Suicide Prevention Lifeline crisis chat interventions: Evaluation of chatters’ perceptions of effectiveness. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 51(6), 1126–1137. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12795>