

## Kids Help Phone sees increase in calls related to suicide

Suicide and suicide-related topics were the most discussed issue by Alberta youth in counselling sessions with Kids Help Phone, according to 2017 Alberta-specific statistics released by Kids Help Phone.

The statistics identify both counselling issue and demographic trends, nationally and provincially, through Kids Help Phone's 24/7 phone and Live Chat professional counselling services. 2017 findings indicate that Alberta youth called Kids Help Phone 10,200 times and participated in 1,484 chat counselling sessions over the year. As an organization offering a critical lifeline of hope and support, Kids Help Phone has developed an unparalleled insight into the experiences of young people.

"Kids Help Phone understands the challenges young people are facing and their unmet needs, as well as the difficulties facing provinces looking to meet these needs" says Alisa Simon, VP, Counselling Services and Programs, Kids Help Phone. "We use data and proven, innovative solutions to provide effective support to young people in the province in any moment of crisis or need."

The challenges facing young people have grown more complex and so has their need for access to the supports that are most relevant to them. People needing help are often deterred by the complexity of Alberta's health and social services systems, as outlined in the Government's *Valuing Mental Health Next Steps* report; the need for easily-accessible professional counselling services for youth is crucial. Kids Help Phone is Canada's only national service offering professional counselling, information and referrals by phone, Live Chat and the Always There chat app, through its free, and anonymous service.

Currently Live Chat is available in Alberta only five nights a week, from 4 p.m. to midnight and the service is in such high demand that wait times can be half an hour or more. As one of the only 24/7 professional counselling services available to youth on demand in Alberta, it is critical that this be expanded.

"With additional resources from government and generous donors, Kids Help Phone wants to help Alberta youth access the support they need, in the way they need it most," says Katherine Hay, President & CEO, Kids Help Phone. "We have plans to make Live Chat available 24 hours a day and would like to bring other new innovations to the province, including post-secondary support through our Good2Talk program, mental health and well-being awareness through our Counsellor in the Classroom program, and, texting support to enable youth even in rural communities to access service more easily."

While suicide is a significant concern, other topics that ranked amongst the top five most discussed by young people in Alberta include:

1. Suicide/Suicide-Related issues
2. Mental/Emotional Health related to anxiety
3. Mental/Emotional Health related to depression
4. Family Relationships related to getting along with a parent/guardian
5. Mental/Emotional Health related to self-injury

“As a young person who’s lived in Alberta all my life, I have insight into many of the barriers and struggles my peers and friends experience every day,” says Meहुल Gupta, Kids Help Phone National Youth Council member. “As a province, we need to invest in mental health resources, especially valuable organizations like Kids Help Phone, that speak to Alberta’s young people every day and know the struggles that many youth in our communities are going through.”

Additional findings of the 2017 provincial data include that 16 per cent of all counselling sessions between a counsellor and young person in Alberta included crisis intervention (when a young person presented with an issue that posed immediate harm to themselves or others) - slightly higher than the national average – and those who received counselling in Alberta were typically younger than the national average.

The full Alberta statistics from Kids Help Phone are available at <https://kidshelpphone.ca/alberta/stats>.

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## **ABOUT KIDS HELP PHONE**

[Kids Help Phone](https://kidshelpphone.ca) is Canada’s only 24/7 national service offering professional counselling, information, referrals and volunteer-led text-based support (available nationwide by the end of 2018) for young people. Kids Help Phone’s free, anonymous services are available in both English and French. Kids Help Phone is a registered Canadian charity, and we raise the majority of our revenue from individuals, foundations, corporations, and community fundraising.

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