

The Human Case for Building a Crisis Service System



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Today I Called The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

A lady who never met me and I will never meet saved my life.

by [Ashley Wen](#) University of California at Berkeley | Apr 26, 2016

≡ odyssey

*"It wasn't a matter
of needing to be led
through the procedure.
IT WAS A MATTER OF HAVING SOMEONE
who was there - someone who,
HEART TO HEART, HUMAN TO HUMAN,
could reassure me that
THEY WERE THERE TO LISTEN
to me no matter how idiotic I
FELT OR SOUNDED OR ACTED."*

ASHLEY
WEN





“Many a suicide might be averted if the person contemplating it could find the proper assistance when such a crisis impends.”

Clifford Beers, 1908, *A Mind That Found Itself*
Founder of America's Mental Hygiene (Reform) Movement

Continuum of Mental Health/Wellness

Centre for
Mental Health



Mental health spectrum

healthy

coping

struggling

unwell

Beginnings: L.A. Suicide Prevention Center



E. Shneidman, N. Farberow, R. Litman

24/7 Hotline started in 1963
Public demand/need evident
Following Marilyn Monroe suicide

Launched **1958**, first in U.S.
NIMH Grant
Research,
Training local professionals
Treatment
Community outreach/education





WHO study: over 55,000 in 21 countries with recent suicidal thoughts/behaviors)

About half did not seek care post-discharge:

- **58% said “low perceived need” for care**
- **40% wish to handle the problem alone**

Bruffaerts et al, 2011



376 suicidal Lifeline callers from 16 centers interviewed

Of the 48% not linking to care after the call, over half said that the problem was not severe enough and could be managed on their own without treatment.

BUT THEY CALLED THE LIFELINE....

Gould, Munfakh & Lake, 2012

The Lifeline: National Public Mental Health Safety Net

The Lifeline is a network of independently operated, independently funded local and state call centers (170+)

Funded as a networking and certification grant, but not for services.

Press 1 callers to Veterans Crisis Line. All other calls routed to nearest center, with national backups.

Why Local Centers?

- Suicide prevention actions rooted in communities (training, education)
- Linkages to local resources (including crisis and emergency services)



24/7 Crisis Care: Access to Lifesaving Means



Lifeline Evaluations:
Sig. reductions in callers' emotional distress and suicidality

(Gould et al; 2007, 2013, 2017)

England and Wales:

Of the 9 recommendations implemented in NHS regions, studied, a **24 hour single point of access crisis service (with outreach teams)** had the **greatest relationship with the reduction in suicides.**

While et al, 2012

NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2018

379-1

Passed

- Signed into law August 14, 2018
- Study feasibility and impact of national 3-digit dialing code (N-1-1) for mental health and suicidal crisis**
 - **Effectiveness?**
 - **What number?**
 - **Cost-benefit analysis?**

“I believe that assigning a 3 digit number for mental health and suicidal crises will do more than anything else to erase the stigma against mental illness that denigrates, isolates and debilitates millions every year....”



Suicide prevention hotline to get three-digit phone number

FCC chairman says he will move ahead following legislation, staff report



Ajit Pai, Chair, FCC, Report to Congress, 8/14/2019

“Crisis Centers save lives.... Increasing the convenience and immediacy of access to a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline via a 3-digit dialing code will therefore help spread a proven, effective intervention. In short, we believe that designating the 988 code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system is highly likely to lower suicide mortality risk in the United States....and thus that the benefits of this action are quite likely to outweigh the costs.”



Jerome Motto

Dear John,

It has been some time since you were here at the hospital, and we hope things are going well for you. If you wish to drop us a note we would be glad to hear from you.

Best,
Susan

**Caring Letter,
post-discharge**

Caring Follow-up Contacts Save Lives

**Caring
Letters**

**Caring
Home
Visits**

**Caring
Postcards**

**Caring
Phone
Calls**



“The follow-up calls really gave me the message that they really did care, and that it wasn't just a one-time resource if I needed to turn to them again. That was really what kept me from continuing with my [suicidal] thoughts.”

What stopped me was that someone who doesn't know me had interest in me, cared about me....them calling me gave me a boost.”

Lifeline follow-up, Gould et al, 2017



“I am a person. I am not a lost cause.”

Tom Kelly, 3/2014