

Kids Help Phone Jeunesse, J'écoute

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of Budget 2019

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the federal government provide funding in the amount of **\$6 million** over three years to Kids Help Phone as an essential service for all young people in Canada

Recommendation 2: That the federal government create a national registry of emergency services contacts in Canada.

About Kids Help Phone

Kids Help Phone is a national charity and global leader known for our expertise in improving the emotional health and well-being of young people through vital, innovative service offerings. Established in 1989, Kids Help Phone is Canada's only national 24-hour, bilingual and anonymous phone counselling, web counselling, referral service, online resources and most recently, texting service, for children and youth. Our service is completely anonymous and confidential – providing children and youth in Canada with the in-the-moment support in any moment of crisis or need. As we speak with young people everyday from urban, rural and remote communities - we have developed an unparalleled insight into their experiences.

In 2017, Kids Help Phone received over 190,000 contacts – over 530 per day. Similarly, there were over 990,000 website visits connecting children and youth to services, tools and community resources. Kids Help Phone maintains the largest resource database of youth services in Canada, allowing counsellors access to 29,000 community support resources to be referred to young people.

Our vision as an organization is a future where every young person in Canada will access the support they need in the way they need it most. We are committed to improving youth emotional health and well-being by using actionable data and proven, innovative solutions to provide effective support in any moment of crisis or need.



Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That the federal government provide funding in the amount of \$6 million over three years to Kids Help Phone to help remove and reduce barriers to young people accessing critical support and to allow Kids Help Phone to maintain and enhance our vital services, including:

- 24/7, bilingual professional counselling through Phone and Live Chat
- Confidential support and crisis reduction through our texting service, Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone
- Canada's largest database of local youth-serving programs and the online searchable database, Resources Around Me
- Our internationally-recognized Website, written for and with young people.

Kids Help Phone respectfully requests an investment of \$6 Million over three years to support costs associated with removing and reducing barriers to access and support among young people and creating vital, innovative and relevant new service offerings.

An investment from your government would allow Kids Help Phone to spread and scale our services efficiently while adapting to the changing needs of our service users – ensuring that young people from coast to coast get the help they need, in the way they need it most.

This investment, however, will also ensure Canada's competitiveness in several ways:

Allow for Informed policy decisions

Kids Help Phone is positioned as a global leader in youth mental health and will be hosting, for the first time in North America, the Ninth International Consultation of Child Helplines. Because we speak with young people everyday, we have developed an unparalleled insight into their experiences and we are committed to sharing this information with policy makers and the research community to help ensure Canada's competitiveness. We want

to share our data and the insights we have gained by speaking with young people everyday as a resource with policy makers and academics so that they can be used to make their efforts more effective. We can help to ensure that wheels are not reinvented to address issues on which we have unique and compelling contributions to make.

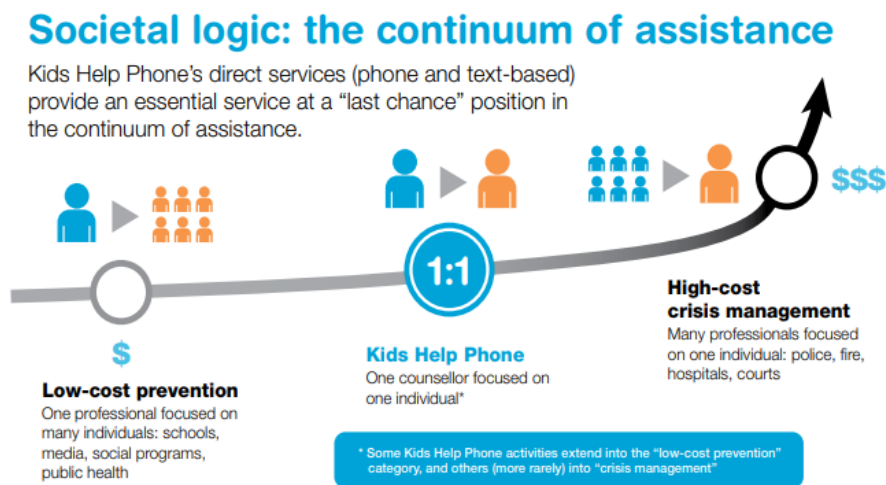
Healthy growing workforce

Over 70% of well-being and mental health disorders beginning in childhood and adolescence. In 2011, approximately 21.4% of the working population in Canada experienced mental health problems and illnesses, which can affect their productivity through absenteeism, lower productivity or under-performance due to illness or leaving the workforce altogether. The annual productivity impact of mental illness in the workplace is estimated to cost over \$6.4 billion in 2011, according to the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Kids Help Phone can provide an early intervention in childhood and adolescence that can lessen or even prevent the development of mental health problems and illnesses to ensure young people in Canada reach their full potential - the very foundation of a healthy growing workforce.

Alleviates demand for emergency services

Kids Help Phone has carved out a unique and tremendously important position in what we call the continuum of assistance, as demonstrated in the Figure 1. Our counselling services enable for children and youth to cope with their problems before they reach points of crisis or to handle crises in ways that prevent tragic and socially costly outcomes involving hospital or the justice system. This is especially true as we provide access to remote, Indigenous, rural and vulnerable youth.

Figure 1: The continuum of assistance



Our services have tremendous potential and cost-effectiveness making it important that we continue to serve our position on the continuum of assistance and reach more youth. We help to reduce the reliance on high-cost, last-resort services at moments of individual crisis – allowing Canada to conserve valuable resources and help ensure Canada’s competitiveness.

Recommendation 2:

That the government create a national registry of emergency services contacts in Canada

Kids Help Phone recommends that the government provide a registry of all 24/7 local and accessible numbers to emergency (911) dispatch centres across Canada. This will enable national service providers, such as Kids Help Phone, to make timely and direct referrals to local, front-line emergency service providers like police and ambulance services.

As a 24/7 service that hears from young people in crisis situations, such as suicide and self-harm, our professional counsellors and Crisis Responders often need to quickly connect to 911 to have emergency services dispatched to the young person’s location. Kids Help Phone’s counselling centres are located in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver – but youth contact us from across the country. Because the physical locations of our counselling centres are different from the location of a user, we cannot simply dial 911 to dispatch emergency services. Further, local police, fire and ambulance centres are often not staffed 24/7 and therefore published direct business lines do not meet the needs of young people in distress outside of regular business hours. **Services such as Kids Help Phone require a national registry of emergency service contacts that are accessible 24/7 and serve every community in Canada.**

This registry would be [lifesaving](#) and would benefit far more than just Kids Help Phone as it would help 211s, distress centres and other organizations and helplines across the country. When Kids Help Phone connects with a young people in imminent danger with emergency services, we need to ensure the connection happens quickly. Unfortunately, too often we encounter wrong numbers, numerous transfers, and sometimes, disconnections. Ensuring young people in danger receive immediate assistance needs to be a straightforward, simple process. **Without a national registry of 24/7 emergency numbers, and the support of government in creating this registry, the safety of young people seeking help is compromised.**

This type of registry already available in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom and we are asking Canada to follow suit.