

# Media release



Friday 8 May 2020

## KIDS HELPLINE: CHILDREN IN CRISIS, AN EMERGING REALITY OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown**, says contacts about child abuse and suicidal concerns have spiked in the past four months during the coronavirus crisis.

**yourtown** Chief Executive Officer Tracy Adams, revealed counsellors actioned an increased 43% emergency 'duty of care' interventions, in the period 1 January to 30 April 2020, where counsellors had to contact emergency services or another agency to protect children and young people who were at imminent risk of significant harm, when compared to the same period last year.

Since the start of 2020, there has also been a 17% increase in emergency 'duty of care' interventions in response to a young person's immediate intent to enact suicide.

"Disturbingly that's 138 Suicide prevention interventions in the first four months of 2020 vs 118 in 2019; Child Abuse Duty of Care interventions sit at 136 vs 95 for the same period last year," said Ms Adams.

Child abuse, of all duty of care interventions in 2020, has overtaken suicide concerns as the number one reason Kids Helpline counsellors enact 'duty of care' emergency interventions. Highlighting the vulnerability of children and young people during a time of community stress and change.

"The intensity of support required by young people contacting Kids Helpline for counselling is increasing. Nationally, the demand for Kids Helpline during the month of April was 49% higher with 37,672 attempts (phone, web, email) than in April 2019.

This level of demand in April 2020 has spiked since our 40% increase in demand registered in March 2020," said Ms Adams.

"Whilst it remains unclear when the surge in demand might ease, Kids Helpline has sought to increase its capacity to respond through partnership with Governments and the Community. This has directly enabled increasing the number of counsellors available as well as the development of additional self-help resources. We have been safeguarding children for the past 29 years and we remain committed to supporting children and young people not only through these turbulent times but into the future," said Ms Adams.

If young people want to talk to someone they can call Kids Helpline free on **1800 55 1800**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or use email or web counselling services at [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au). Facebook: @kidshelpline, Insta @kidshelplineau, Twitter @KidsHelplineAU.

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**yourtown Corporate Communications & Media Advisor: Marea Reason-Cain** Phone 0423 843 786 OR  
mreason-cain@yourtown.com.au