

Media release



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Kids Helpline: Children in Crisis a reality of the COVID-19 pandemic

Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown**, has announced more help is being given to children and young people battling the effects of mental health issues, child abuse, self-harm and suicidality, as extra counsellors are engaged to respond to increased demand.

According to **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams, “the additional funding from federal and state governments to boost mental health services, has enabled Kids Helpline to increase counsellor capacity. During the months of March, April and May 2020 the service has responded to an additional 3,346 more counselling contacts compared to the same period in 2019.

“New data has revealed that children and young people are contacting Kids Helpline in increasing numbers regarding Child abuse, Mental Health, Self-harm and Suicidality. Statistics identified 10,749 contacts (48.4% of all contacts) were attended by counsellors in relation to March - May 2020 vs the same three-month period in 2019 which recorded 8,505 contacts (45.5% of all contacts) calling for support about these significant issues.

“As the community battles coronavirus, we have seen firsthand the repercussions that the pandemic is having on both the mental health and safety of the nation’s youngest generations.

“We recorded a demand surge of 3,346 contacts to Kids Helpline during March, April and May, with 2,244 of these contacts talking about some of the most serious child safety issues relating to Child Abuse, Mental Health, Self-harm, or Suicidality. That represents sixty percent (60%) of all additional contacts to Kids Helpline needing support around these most serious issues of Child Abuse, Mental Health, Self-harm, or suicidal thoughts,” said Ms Adams.

“We knew an increase in child vulnerability was going to occur, but this is deeper than we had expected. We are seeing some very distressed children and young people who have to deal with existing parental abuse and conflict during isolation,” continued Ms Adams.

“Child abuse, during the first five months of 2020 resulted in 188 of all duty of care interventions, where counsellors elected to contact emergency services or another agency to protect children and young people who were at imminent risk of significant harm, a 62% increase when compared to the same period last year.

“The intensity of support required by young people contacting Kids Helpline for counselling is definitely increasing,” Ms Adams said.

Kids Helpline is Australia’s only national 24/7 counselling and support service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call **1800 55 1800** or visit www.kidshelpline.com.au Facebook: @kidshelpline, Insta @kidshelplineau, Twitter @KidsHelplineAU.

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