

Media release



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Kids Helpline Annual Insights Report records a 109% increase in emergency cases in 2021

New statistics by Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown**, highlights the escalating need for mental health support for children and young people in Australia continues to grow in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

“Kids Helpline plays a crucial role in supporting children and young people during disruptive times,” said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams.

Key findings in the Kids Helpline 2021 Insights report highlight Kids Helpline’s professional counselling workforce provided almost 100,000 counselling sessions during 2021 for children and young people, of which nearly 70% specifically related to mental health, emotional wellbeing or suicide related concerns.

“Kids Helpline continues to be Australia’s safety net for our national child and youth mental health system. These 100,000 free counselling sessions represent the highest annual volume over the past 20 years”, said Ms Adams. ‘Our counsellors work around the clock, 24/7, to provide this vital support across multiple channels.

“Whilst the numbers are confronting, we acknowledge the courage, capacity and resilience of young people in their help seeking.

“The ongoing mental health and wellbeing concerns of children and young people is an important national issue. We call on all governments, to make children’s mental health and suicide prevention an urgent priority.

“Far greater investment is needed across sectors which support children and young people’s mental wellbeing.

“**yourtown** largely self-funds Kids Helpline and other services to children, young people and families and support from governments is appreciated, however we are not able to meet the current demand from children and young people for counselling and other support.

“We know that poor mental health in children and young people can be a factor leading to suicide or suicide attempts. The Kids Helpline report highlights that in 2021, more than 16% of the concerns young people raised with Kids Helpline counsellors were related to suicide. Suicide is the leading cause of death of children and young people in Australia accounting for more deaths than motor vehicle accidents. Accepting this statistic is simply not an option.

“Our counsellors are saving the lives of children in absolute crisis every single day.

“Kids Helpline counsellors worked with police, ambulance and child protection to rescue young people in imminent danger by providing emergency intervention assistance 16 times a day on average in 2021. This was an increase of 109% compared to 2020. Emergency interventions increased from 2,783 in 2020 to 5,823 in 2021.

“Of these emergencies, 38% were related to suicide attempts and self-injury, 37% were related to child abuse, and almost 10% were related to sexual assault.

“Extended lockdowns and restrictions, especially in Sydney and Melbourne were a major driver of this increase in help-seeking from children and young people who were isolated from traditional support networks such as schools and peer groups.

“Children only have one chance at childhood. We call on all governments to work with us and other counselling and support services for children and young people to ensure no child or young person is not able to get the support they need when they need it”, Ms Adams concluded.

Kids Helpline is Australia’s only free, private and confidential 24/7 counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. FREE call 1800 55 1800 or www.kidshelpline.com.au

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