



# Teen Lifeline

## Mission

Our mission is to prevent teen suicide by enhancing resiliency in youth and fostering supportive communities in Arizona.

## Vision

We envision a world where all youth possess a sense of connectedness and hope for their future.

Peer-to-peer crisis hotline and texting service.

Prevention education, community outreach, and School ID Initiative.

Life skills training of Peer Counselors.



Teen Lifeline

2022

IMPACT  
REPORT



**1 in 3 teens feel sad & hopeless.**

**93% of teens feel better immediately  
after calling or texting Teen Lifeline.**

I had no clue what to do about this before I talked to you. I feel really safe right now, really calm.

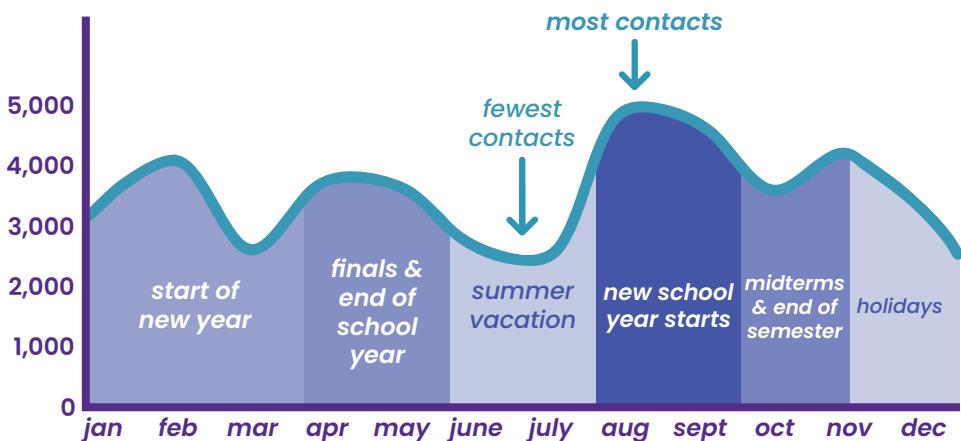
I'm glad you texted the hotline to talk about it. I know how much talking can really help!

Teen Lifeline **prevents teen suicide** in Arizona by enhancing resiliency in youth and fostering supportive communities.

Through life skills development, prevention education and outreach, and our new Caring Contacts program, our services support the vision of a world where **all youth possess a sense of connectedness and hope for their future.**



## MONTH-TO-MONTH HOTLINE CALLS & TEXTS



We answered **19,921 calls & 23,442 texts** in 2022—the highest in our history yet.



**"I am so glad I have a support system who love and care for me so much they wouldn't let me give up. Without Teen Lifeline, I don't know if I'd be here."**  
— Dani, Peer Counselor

# LIFE SKILLS



**\$560,000+**  
value of peer services

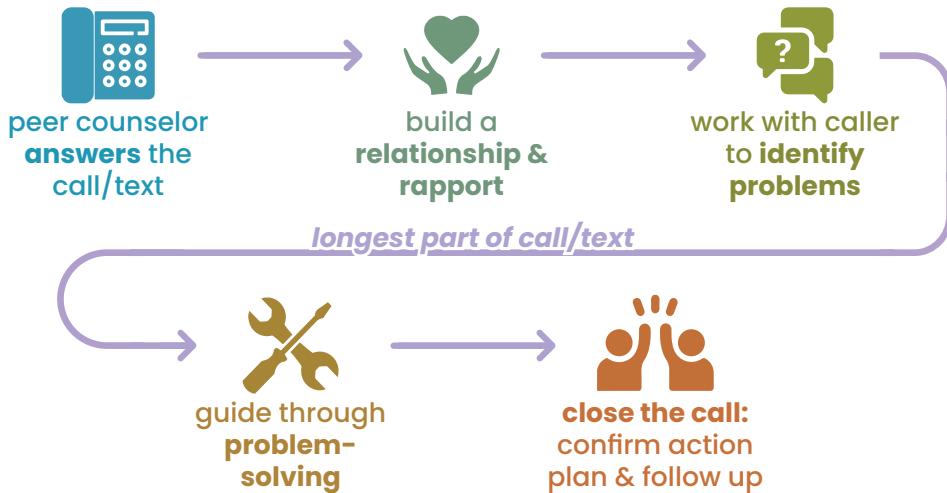


**20,000+ hours**  
volunteered by teens

Teens understand best what it's like to be a teen. 72+ hours of life skills training turns teen volunteers into peer counselors, able to **help themselves and others** through life's challenges. In addition to preparing them for the hotline, volunteers receive support from Teen Lifeline staff and peers, life skills education, and enhanced self-esteem—skills they use far beyond the hotline.

On average, a peer counselor volunteers for **three years, each helping 1,350+ teen callers/texters** on the hotline.

## THE FLOW OF A CALL



Learn more at [teenlifeline.org/lifeskills](http://teenlifeline.org/lifeskills)

"If I had not texted you tonight, I would have gone home & made a plan to end my life."  
— Hotline Texter

# HOTLINE

 43,363 calls/texts  
answered on the hotline

 76% increase  
in hotline contacts in 5 years

Our **24-hour free and confidential peer counseling crisis hotline/textline** is answered by trained teen volunteers 3 - 9 p.m. daily and is supervised by master's level clinicians. Calls are open 24/7 while texting is open 12 - 9 p.m. weekdays and 3 - 9 p.m. weekends. We partner with Solari for after-hours support.

Even three years after the pandemic started, hotline calls and texts continue to increase every year. This is good news—it means **teens are continuing to reach out for help** when they need it.

## WHAT CALLERS TALK ABOUT



suicide & depression



family issues



relationship problems



information & resources



school



anxiety



bullying



abuse



pregnancy & STIs



eating disorders



runaway & legal



sexuality & LGBTQ+



substance abuse

Learn more at [teenlifeline.org/hotline](http://teenlifeline.org/hotline)

"School needs to talk about mental health more. **This class reminded me that people care about me.**"  
— Student at a prevention workshop

# PREVENTION



 **530K+ school IDs**  
have our hotline info on it

 **436 schools**  
are part of the ID Initiative

Our clinician-led suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention education decreases risk, increases protective factors, and creates resiliency in Arizona's schools and communities. After a training, **both adults and teens feel more prepared to help** at-risk youth. Furthermore, students show willingness to tell an adult or call Teen Lifeline if they or someone they know needs help.

In continued collaboration with Grand Canyon State Gridiron Club, we made PSAs for **Teen Suicide Prevention Awareness Month**.

## PREVENTION PSA

Teen Lifeline produced a series of PSAs featuring high school football players and cheerleader spreading awareness of the hotline and **encouraging peers to reach out** for help when struggling.



 Students filmed **60 unique videos**

 **20 student-athletes** participated

 PSAs reached **10.3 million people**

Learn more at [teenlifeline.org/prevention](http://teenlifeline.org/prevention)



"The nation's **first-ever Caring Contacts program for teens** aligns with our commitment to provide prevention services to Arizona's most vulnerable."

— Mercy Care Arizona

## CARING CONTACTS

 **2 in 5 patients**  
are readmitted within 1 year

 most reattempts happen within  
**1 week of discharge**

Research shows that **teens recently discharged from inpatient psychiatric care are at a higher risk of suicide**. These teens need more support while transitioning back into their daily lives, especially during the first year after discharge.

In 2022, Mercy Care funded the development of Teen Lifeline's **Caring Contacts** to bridge that gap in support and **reduce future hospitalizations**. In 2023, Caring Contacts is now live, connecting high-risk teens with the hope they need to keep going.

### OUR SERVICES



### **CLIENT GAINS**



Learn more at [teenlifeline.org/caring](https://teenlifeline.org/caring)

**2022 GALA**

Honoree Mandy Purcell,  
Chair Lana Breen, and  
an all-star team create  
hope by raising over **half**  
**a million dollars** for teen  
suicide prevention.





**Connections of Hope 2022 raised enough to provide community education and support for half a year, enabling program growth & saving thousands of lives.**

**Social connectedness** is a basic human need, a protective factor against suicide, and the glue between every guest in the ballroom with us on Friday, October 7, 2022. From healthcare to socially-minded businesses, our community gathered to support teen suicide prevention and celebrate the charitable work of **Mandy Purcell**, beloved businesswoman and decade-long supporter of Teen Lifeline.

A true leader, Mandy brought in Event Chair **Lana Breen** and an all-star committee to make this year's gala the **highest-grossing gala** in our history, raising \$685,000 towards our life-saving work.

Special thank you to **our event advisors** for ringing in another successful gala: Alfredo J. Molina, Barbara & Hugh Lytle, Britt Sanchez, Irene Clary, Jeff Fields, and Mike Olsen.

Learn more at [teenlifeline.org/events](http://teenlifeline.org/events)

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Sissie Roberts Shank,  
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# FINANCES



"I've been touched by suicide in my own life and know that this organization is **making a real difference!**"  
— Teen Lifeline Donor

## WE RAISED

- **\$244,424** through **in-kind contributions**
- **\$664,069** through **special events**
- **\$348,164** through **all types of grants**
- **\$238,325** through **contributions\***

*\* Contributions include employee giving, service clubs, individuals, and other income.*

## WE INVESTED

- **\$495,010** in the peer counseling hotline and support to help teens through crisis
- **\$193,985** in life skills training to create peer support & resilient teens
- **\$532,012** in community education to train schools & families about suicide
- **\$195,405** in supporting services for effective, growing operations

**\$78,570**

**Net Income**

**\$2,577,338** Net Assets

Learn more at [teenlifeline.org/finances](http://teenlifeline.org/finances)



In 2022, the Teen Lifeline community raised **nearly \$1.5 million** for the programs and operations behind our suicide prevention work. From healthcare groups who sponsored entire suicide prevention projects to one-time donors who gave a special gift during the holiday season, **every single supporter had a role in saving thousands of teen lives** this year.

In recognition of their contributions, all donors who gave **\$1,000 or more** to Teen Lifeline in 2022 are named on the following pages. In addition, we would like to recognize all of the businesses and community members who donated in-kind services and items to support our mission.



Teen Lifeline is a **Qualifying Charitable Organization (QCO code 20695)**! Donations to us qualify you for a **dollar-for-dollar tax credit** up to \$800 (\$400 if single).

You can also donate through your workplace using our code: **United Way Charity of Choice Agency #707273**.

Get involved at [teenlifeline.org/give](https://teenlifeline.org/give)

### In Honor Of Donations

Barbara & Hugh  
Lytle  
Kristin & Bob  
Brown  
Charlotte  
Lawrence  
Julie Krause  
Brenda &  
Larry Beeer  
Nick Fenney

Ray Ng  
Susan Mathew  
Mandy Purcell  
Andrea & Scott  
Smiley  
Eide Baily's  
Phoenix  
Leadership  
Program

### In Memorium Donations

Ally Hill  
Anastasia  
Flanagan  
Anita Stack  
Ashley Post  
Austin Graf  
Brandon  
Campbell  
Brendan  
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Tadeusz  
Strenger  
Travis Perry  
Tristan Greer  
William  
Anekstein

## **\$99,999 - \$50,000**

Thunderbirds Charities

## **\$49,999 - \$25,000**

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona

Erik Olsson, Olsson Family Fund

David Walling

Jerry Moyes

Emma & Jeff Spight,  
MIND 24-7\*

Britt Sanchez & Lana Breen\*

David Allred\*

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Hugh & Barb Lytle  
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C.D Spangler Foundation

Moreno Family Foundation

## **\$24,999 - \$10,000**

Alfredo J. Molina, Black Starr  
& Frost\*

Mandy Purcell\*

Cynthia & Jeffrey Roths

Valley Toyota Dealers

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Creative Illustrations LLC

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Mary Gerdts

META

Judy & Frank Buonauro,  
Michael Buonauro  
Foundation

Phoenix Suns Charities

Rolling Plains

UMB Bank

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Meghan & Ben Vicchio\*

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JPMorgan Chase

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TEGNA Foundation

Wes Balmer

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Scott Knauer

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Marcos Lopez\*

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David Tinkelman  
Intel  
John Woudenberg  
Willmeng Construction  
Luxury Home Tour, Inc.  
Manish Gupta  
Matt White  
Univision Management Company  
Zeljko Minic

## **\$2,499 - \$1,000**

Marcia & Richard Zielinski  
Danny Engler Sr  
Marianne & Gregory Pond  
Pamela Fetzer  
Heidi & AJ Gates  
BDL World LLC  
Moriah Irving  
Russ Lyon Charitable Foundation  
Brian Olsen Addiction Treatment Fund  
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Patrick McGinley  
Alice & David Wells  
Jennifer & Daniel Biello  
Brandy Billeter  
Raquel Piekarski Fund  
Brooke & Dylan Figlo  
State of Arizona DCA Inmate Fundraiser - Phoenix 4000  
Steve Orsak

\*Includes In-Kind Support

Julie & Brett Ransom  
Pete Thompson  
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Susan & Ivan Mathew  
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Megan Mayhall  
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Cindi & Richard Schuster\*  
Rob Bass  
Arizona State Employee Charitable Campaign  
Jennifer Johnson, Phoenix RPGs  
Marlene & Lanny Lahr  
Laurie & Chris White  
Alisa & Paul Timm  
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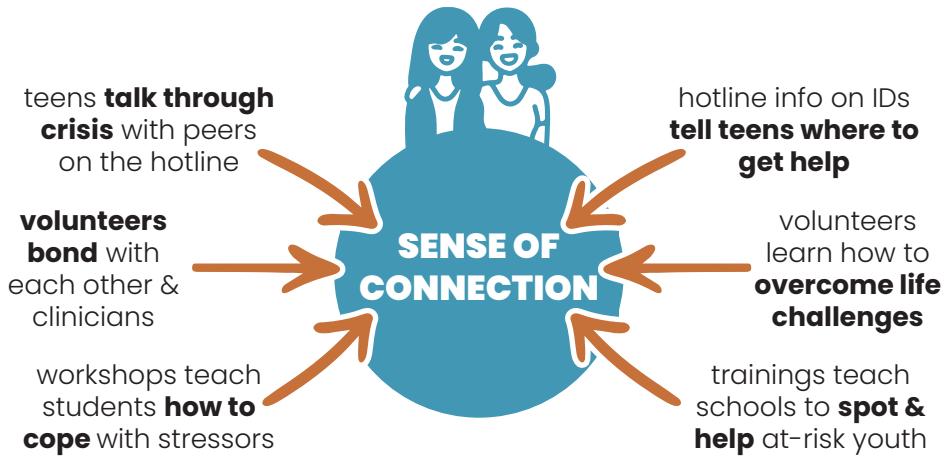
Roxanna & Bill Zurek  
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Monique Taillieu  
Patricia Chiodo  
Philip Weech  
Progressive Leasing  
Ryan Perez  
Stan Godbehere  
Troy Buchanan  
Community Bridges, Inc

Teen Lifeline is so grateful to the hundreds of individuals who contributed in 2022. Every effort has been made to ensure this listing is accurate. Our sincerest apologies for any inadvertent misspellings, omissions, or inaccuracies. Please contact Luis Barcelo, Development Specialist, at (602) 248-8337 or at [luis@teenlifeline.org](mailto:luis@teenlifeline.org) with any corrections.

**See the full list at [teenlifeline.org/donors](http://teenlifeline.org/donors)**

# THEORY OF CHANGE

Teen Lifeline continues to develop our Theory of Change to ensure our methodology is as **strategic, data-informed, and impactful** as possible. Here's how our Theory of Change and programs **create a sense of connection** for Arizona's youth:



## 17TH ANNUAL FIRETAG GOLF TOURNAMENT

- held on 11/11/22
- 112 golfers played
- \$98,000+ raised

On Veterans Day 2022, dozens of players gathered at the Firetag Tournament to support teen suicide prevention, including mental healthcare agency and champion sponsor **MIND 24-7**.

**Bad Birdie** launched a limited edition line of golf clothing (the Bad Birdie x Teen Lifeline collection), donating net profits to Teen Lifeline. They also gifted exclusive hats to all Firetag 2022 golfers.

Together, players raised nearly **\$100,000** for Teen Lifeline!





**WE PRIORITIZE TEENS'  
MENTAL HEALTH AND  
SUICIDE PREVENTION.**

*Donate to support Arizona's teens at*  
**[teenlifeline.org/give](http://teenlifeline.org/give)**

our site & socials





Teen Lifeline

# 2022 Program Results

**PEER COUNSELING HOTLINE** | Our **free and confidential call and text hotline** is the heart of why we exist. We are here to save lives, and when the phone rings we get the chance. It is answered 24/7 with Peer Counseling 3 to 9 p.m. and texting 12 to 9 p.m. weekdays/3 to 9 p.m. weekends. A Master's Level Clinician supervises the hotline at all times. However, Teen Lifeline isn't just about suicide. For teens having trouble in school, fighting with a significant other or family member, feeling depressed or who just need to talk, we are here. The biggest thing that separates Teen Lifeline from other crisis hotlines is the people who answer the phone. We understand that **when a teen wants to talk about their problems, they would prefer to turn to another teen**. That is what makes Teen Lifeline both unique and incredibly successful—teens helping teens.

## CALLER/TEXTER PROFILE

### AGE



### IDENTIFIED GENDER



### CALLED OR TEXTED?



→ 15% texts were during extended hours.

→ 93% feel better by the end of the call/text.

## HOTLINE TOPICS

30% suicide & depression

21% family issues

14% relationships

7% general

10% school

3% anxiety

3% bullying

3% abuse

2% STIs & pregnancy

2% eating disorders

2% runaway & legal

2% LGBTQ+ & sexuality

1% substance abuse

Call & Text Crisis Line:  
602-248-8336 (TEEN)

Call 24/7/365  
Text 12-9 p.m. M-F, 3-9 p.m. Sa/Su  
Peer Counseling 3-9 p.m. daily

Outside Maricopa, Call:  
1-800-248-8336 (TEEN)

## HOTLINE STATISTICS

- Answered 19,921 calls & 23,442 texts in 2022
- 155% increase in contacts & 964% increase in texts from '19

## ARIZONA STATISTICS

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for AZ youth
- In 2021, 44 AZ youth ages 10-19 died by suicide (1 child every 8 days). This is a 50% decrease from 2020.

## CALL/TEXT OUTCOMES

8% EXCELLENT

50% GOOD

28% AVERAGE

12% FAIR

2% POOR

problem is **resolved** with no further contact needed.

problem is **manageable** with no further contact needed.

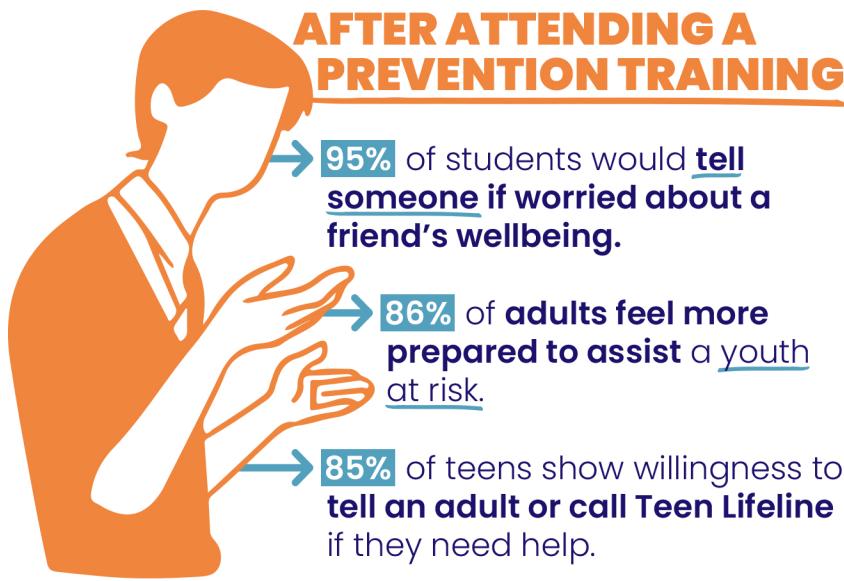
problem & options **explored**; further contact may be needed.

problem **explored but continues to have a negative impact** on the individual; further contact recommended.

problem **still a disruptive force** to individual; further contact needed to resolve problem.

# COMMUNITY & PEER TRAINING

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION & PREVENTION** | The goal of community education is to **provide awareness, education, prevention, and postvention services** within the community. Our presentations not only spread our name and hotline number, but also educate the community on important teen issues. This program involves diverse teaching methods that focus on increasing awareness and understanding of the problem behaviors, on acquiring or enhancing coping skills, and increasing help seeking behavior. Our prevention programs adhere to **best practice standards** in suicide prevention. Conducted primarily in schools, education is provided on an array of teen issues such as **teen suicide, depression, conflict resolution, grief and loss, stress and anxiety, and coping skills**. Information regarding this free service is mailed statewide to all mainstream and alternative middle and high schools twice a year. These presentations can be geared to both youth and adults.



**155,939 people reached** through Prevention Education and Outreach services.



Over **half a million students** in Arizona have Teen Lifeline's **hotline information on their ID.**

## COLLABORATIONS:

Solari (after-hours support)  
AZ Suicide Prevention Coalition  
Community coalitions & task forces  
Teen Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

**LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT** | The primary goal of the Life Skills Development program is to **empower Valley teens to take control of their own lives.** Through the program they learn skills that help them make healthy, productive decisions for use on and off the hotline. Through practical training measures, they learn the consequences of their actions and practice life-affirming decision making. These skills are **reinforced as they help their peers** with problems on the hotline.

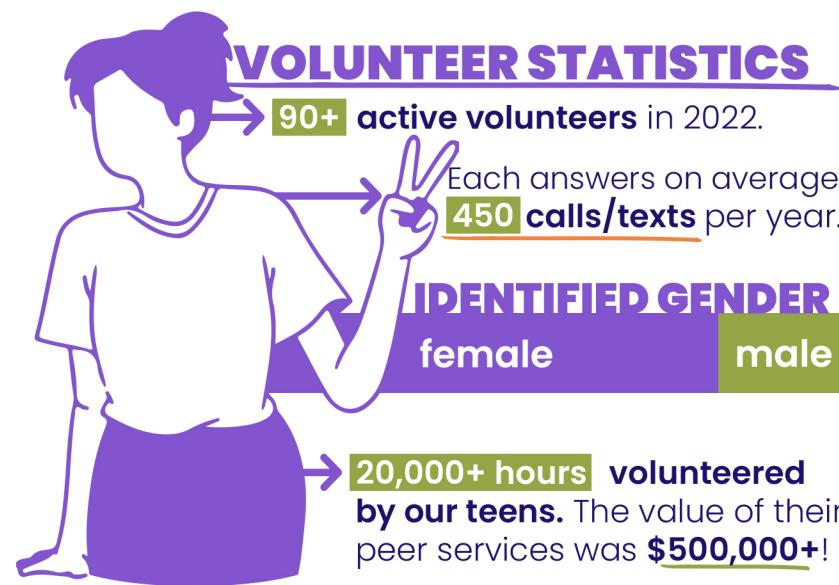
This training is conducted quarterly and provided at no cost. The training is **72 hours long** and covers listening & communication skills, self-esteem, the role of a helper and problem solving. It also includes relevant issues our youth often face.

### Accreditations:

- American Association of Suicidology
- International Council of Helplines

PO Box 10745  
Phoenix, AZ 85064  
info@teenlifeline.org

Business Phone:  
(602) 248-8337



### Volunteers learn:

- communication/listening
- identifying feelings
- problem-solving
- decision-making
- mobilizing resources
- protective/risk factors
- common youth issues
- identify, assess, and intervention of suicide
- being an effective helper



Teen Lifeline

## Our Mission

To prevent teen suicide in AZ through enhancing resiliency in youth and fostering supportive communities.

## Our Vision

We envision a world where all youth possess a sense of connectedness and hope for their future.

## Our Programs

For more than 30 years, Teen Lifeline has been on the front lines of suicide prevention. Teen Lifeline is best known for its telephone (and texting) crisis hotline. This program is effective because the teens who staff the hotline are well-trained and our prevention, intervention and postvention services that create the awareness necessary to help teens in crisis find our hotline services.

### THE HOTLINE

The hotline assists troubled youth throughout the state of Arizona and nationwide. The hotline is answered 24/7/365, with Peer Counseling and our text messaging service available from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. daily. The hotline is FREE and CONFIDENTIAL, and our trained Peer Counselors are supervised by a Master's level clinician at all times.

Calls to the Hotline have increased each year, with **one in every three** incoming calls from a teen who is "thinking about giving up." At Teen Lifeline, teens talk to someone their own age who understand what they are going through because they have gone through it too. **This is not an advice hotline.** Teen Lifeline is a place where teens help empower other teens to help themselves.

**"I don't know where I would be right now...You helped me so much. You saved my life."**  
-Tyler, Caller

Crisis calls are not the only calls received by the hotline. Many incoming calls are from young people asking for help with life issues from a non-judgemental, anonymous peer.

Teen Lifeline is a safe place for the volunteers as well as the callers, becoming a home away from home, with a full kitchen and lounge where volunteers can relax after a busy day.

### LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Through Teen Lifeline's proprietary training program, all Peer Counselors receive at least 72 hours of life skills training and are individually cleared to begin serving on the hotline. This training is conducted in 3 phases and covers a variety of topics. Training is both didactic and experiential to enhance learning and group cohesion. Since inception, Teen Lifeline has trained more than 1,500 teen Peer Counselors.

The **average length of volunteerism for Peer Counselors is three years** - well beyond the four month commitment requested. Most graduates of the Life Skills Development program report improved confidence in dealing with their own stressful situations in life, as well as being able to better identify warning signs and confidently reach out to their peers.

This training is simply more than preparation to become a Peer Counselor, it is a "life-changing" experience for many of our volunteers.

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE. ->

MAIN OFFICE / INFORMATION  
**602-248-8337**

[media@TeenLifeline.org](mailto:media@TeenLifeline.org)

[PO Box 10745, Phoenix, AZ, 85064](http://PO Box 10745, Phoenix, AZ, 85064)

[www.TeenLifeline.org](http://TeenLifeline.org)

Arizona's first and only peer-to-peer crisis hotline accredited by the  
**American Association of Suicidology**

No matter what, when you feel like giving up, DON'T. You are not alone. We are here to listen and help.

**602-248-8336 HOTLINE**



## PREVENTION SERVICES

Our workshops spread awareness of the hotline number, but also educate the community on important teen issues. These workshops adhere to best practice standards in suicide prevention and incorporate proven prevention strategies.

**School Staff Awareness and Prevention Training** - Suicide Prevention workshops train school staff who interact with teens how to lead real-life conversations with students that build resilience, strengthen relationships, and connect students with support. Specifically the workshops provide information on:

- recognizing and responding to suicide risk;
- how to access the next level of care;
- risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors for resilience;
- child development and how it relates to teen suicide;
- fostering a supportive community for students that encourages hope, connectedness and help seeking behavior.

Teen Lifeline is able to provide many of the trainings approved to meet the requirement of the Mitch Warnock Act including safeTALK, ASIST, Youth Mental Health First Aid & More than Sad.

**Parent Awareness and Prevention Training** - Parent focused workshops focus on identifying the difference between typical teen problems and those problems that suggest a teen is at risk for suicide or other destructive behaviors. Workshops provide tools for parents to :

- understand the difference between typical and troubled teens;
- how to build and enhance healthy coping strategies;
- enhance help seeking behaviors and when to seek additional help and support.

**Classroom Prevention Education** - Student-focused skill based education on suicide prevention, stress/coping, and grief/loss. These workshops teach teens how to recognize and respond to risk, how to increase healthy coping skills, and connections to adults.

**Arizona School ID Initiative** - Teen Lifeline works with School Districts statewide to foster a sense of connectedness and hope on school campuses. Monthly, we provide morning announcements to these schools to help further foster a supportive school community. Hundreds of thousands of students wear IDs with Teen Lifeline's positive message and access to help.

**eLearning for Schools** - This training coordinates with a school's crisis plan to help school staff and students promote a culture based on hope, help seeking behavior resilience and connectedness throughout a community.

- Postvention module (after a loss by suicide)
- Suicide Awareness, Prevention & Intervention modules

**Essential Implementation Guides for Schools** - Developing a series of webinars for schools statewide with strategies and examples of implementing suicide prevention, intervention and postvention activities on a school campus.

To see a video highlighting our life saving work, please visit:  
[teenlifeline.org/video2018](http://teenlifeline.org/video2018)

## TL on Social Media

### FACEBOOK:

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TEENLIFELINE

### INSTAGRAM:

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/TEEN\_LIFELINE

### TWITTER:

@602248TEEN & @800248TEEN

### YOUTUBE:

WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/TEENLIFELINEINC

### LINKEDIN:

WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/COMPANY/TEEN-LIFELINE

## THE MITCH WARNOCK ACT

Signed by Governor Ducey in 2019, this law requires that all schools (public & charter) statewide must provide training to school personnel who work with students grades 6th through 12th starting in school. The training must include:

- Suicide prevention,
- Intervention, and
- Referral training to be able to recognize and respond to suicide risk.

This Act did not include funding for schools or providers.

Teen Lifeline has been providing this type of education to school personnel since our inception in 1986. Over the past several years, the demand for this training to school personnel has increased significantly. Teen Lifeline does not charge a fee to provide these trainings.

## Caring Contacts

In 2022, with the support of Mercy Care we are piloting a new program, Caring Contacts. Teens that are discharge from in-patient facilities within Maricopa County will be connected to us where our teen peer counselors will reach out to make a connection. These contacts will happen monthly for a year to help provide needed support to teens upon release.



## Services

### Crisis Hotline

- Local Hotline: 602-248-TEEN (8336)
- 800 Hotline: 1-800-248-TEEN (8336)
- Texting service: 602-248-TEEN (8336)

### Life Skills Development

- 72 Hour initial teen Peer Counseling Training
- Ongoing Training for Peer Counselors
- Supervision of teen volunteers
- MSW/BSW Intern Training

### Caring Contacts

- Follow-up with teens 24-48 hours after hospital discharge
- Monthly check-ins for 12 months
- Care packages

### Prevention Education

- School ID Initiative
- School Information Booths
- Teen Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Activities
- Classroom Workshops
  - How to Utilize Teen Lifeline Services
  - Stress & Coping
  - Conflict Resolution/Problem Solving
  - Grief & Loss
  - Suicide Prevention
- Teacher Workshops
  - How to Utilize Teen Lifeline Services
  - Identifying Kids in Distress
  - Conflict Resolution
- eLearning
  - Postvention
  - Suicide Awareness
  - Suicide Prevention
  - Suicide Intervention
- Parents & General Population
  - How to Utilize Teen Lifeline Services
  - Identifying Kids in Distress
  - Conflict Resolution
  - Stress & Coping
  - Suicide Prevention

## Basha's Cole Martin joins Teen Lifeline in suicide prevention initiative

Zach Alvira, Tribune Sports Editor

Sep 21, 2021 Updated Sep 23, 2021



Basha junior Cole Martin is one of 15 Arizona high school football players involved in an initiative with Teen Lifeline creating public service announcements for teens struggling with their mental health. Pablo Robles/Tribune Staff

Basha junior defensive back Cole Martin is one of 15 Arizona high school football players who have taken the pledge to raise awareness for teen suicide in the state.

Martin, who is one of the top players in the country in the 2023 class, has already began starring in a series of videos aimed at providing messages of hope to teens struggling with depression, anxiety or thoughts of suicide. Often, these teens feel as if they are alone in their struggles and have nobody to talk to.

Martin and the 14 other players, in partnership with Teen Lifeline and the Grand Canyon State Gridiron Club, hope to show them that is not the case.

"They help teens that are in need with suicide support," Martin said. "It's a great thing that I'm excited to help with. It's something that, when they asked, I was more than willing to step up for. To be able to have my voice and have Basha High School be there to help support teens in need, it's something I was excited to be a part of."

The initiative began in September, which is recognized as Teen Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Martin joined Sandra Day O'Connor linebacker Brandon Craddock in a video posted earlier this month about teen suicide. Together, the two explained the benefits of Teen Lifeline and that there were people to talk to if they are struggling.

Along with Martin and Craddock, Desert Edge's Adryan Lara, Salpointe Catholic's Davian Miranda Carrasco and Treyson Bourguet, Central's Dominik Bagchi and Ironwood's Jayden Sullivan are part of the initiative.

Additionally, Lucas Rice and Spencer Hoos from Arcadia, Nick Martinez from St. Mary's, Taj Hughes from Brophy, Ironwood Ridge's Tyler Haynie and Zach Oakes and Pinnacle's Zach Wrenn are also involved.

More public service announcements similar to Martin's featuring those other players have run since then and will continue to through the end of September. They are primarily posted on social media, including Twitter and Instagram, where Teen Lifeline Clinical Director Nikki Kontz says they are the most effective.

"People have reached out on the hotline after seeing the videos on social media," Kontz said. "Sometimes all it takes is the right person at the right time to be listening to that video on Insta(gram)."

Kontz has been involved with Teen Lifeline for 27 years. She began volunteering with the group when she was 16 years old as a sophomore at Xavier Prep in Phoenix. She

became involved after she lost a close friend to suicide. She continued working with the group through college while she obtained her degree.

Since then, she has made a career out of helping teens.

“I immediately fell in love,” Kontz said. “As a teenager, it’s hard to know or feel like you’re making an impact and that your voice is also recognized as important. Teen Lifeline was that for me. I felt like with every phone call I could make a difference in someone’s life.”

Teen Lifeline provides an anonymous phone and text line for teens struggling with their mental health. Just in 2020 alone, the organizations received 23,341 calls and 11,497 text messages from teens struggling with mental health. Kontz said the pandemic, which forced teens to be isolated and take online classes, played a major role.

Of those calls, Teen Lifeline says 23 percent were from teens 13 years old or younger. Thirty-seven percent were from those ages 13-15, and 31 percent from teens ages 16-18. Just nine percent were 19 years old or older.

“I’ve known a couple of people, my friends, who have struggled,” Martin said. “It’s people that I’ve been close to, people I’ve known. It means more to me than just helping anybody else out. It’s a change I want to help start. I’m just happy to hopefully be able to help.”

Before the pandemic began in 2019, 38 teens children ages 8-17 died by suicide. According to Teen Lifeline, that equaled one child every 9.6 days.

Just in the last year, the Arizona high school athletics community has felt the unfortunate effects of mental health struggles from some athletes.

Last spring, Perry sophomore Zyon Anderson died by suicide. He had struggled with his mental health leading up to his death, and repeatedly received help from his mother, Nailah Hendrickson, who told the *Gilbert Sun News* it was a difficult process.

“This has been emotionally, financially, and mentally devastating,” Hendrickson said last April. “This caught us by surprise and it’s not something we had planned for.”

In August, the Desert Vista community was caught off-guard by a death that hit close to home for many.

A senior at the school, died by suicide on Aug. 31, according to records from the Maricopa County Coroner’s Office.

Kontz hopes with the help of football players like Martin, teens will realize they are not alone.

“Sometimes it’s that one kid who sees a player and thinks, ‘Wow, this kid who has no problems and is living the dream through high school and they’re sending me this message. Maybe I can do one more day,’” Kontz said. “I think that’s so empowering and so powerful. That’s why we started this partnership. These players realize they have a role. Wearing that uniform, people see them in that uniform and look at them differently.

“These players want to use that and make people realize they aren’t alone.”

Teens who are struggling are encouraged to contact Teen Lifeline (602) 248-TEEN (8336) or (800) 248-TEEN. They can also text with a teen peer counselor at (602) 248-8336 between noon and 9 p.m. on weekdays and 3 p.m. until 9 p.m. on weekends.

The Teen Lifeline hotline is staffed by teen peer counselors from 3 p.m. until 9 p.m. daily with trained, professional counselors available at all other times.

*Have an interesting story? Contact Zach Alvira at (480)898-5630 or [zalvira@timespublications.com](mailto:zalvira@timespublications.com). Follow him on Twitter @ZachAlvira.*