



FSSA News Release

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Be Well Crisis Helpline answers the call for Hoosiers in need

Crisis counselors have helped more than 6,000 Hoosiers experiencing emotional distress from COVID-19

INDIANAPOLIS – The Be Well Crisis Helpline recently passed an important milestone as it enters its sixth month of operation. The free service was [launched in July](#) to support the mental health needs of Hoosiers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service has answered more than 6,000 calls for help as it continues to provide 24/7 access to experienced and compassionate counselors, specially trained to help with the personal challenges that have come along with this pandemic.

“While we recognize that each of these calls is a cry for help from a Hoosier experiencing feelings of distress and anxiety, likely aggravated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also comforted to know that, through the Be Well Crisis Helpline, they are connecting with someone who can listen, assess their needs, and help,” said Jennifer Sullivan, M.D., M.P.H., secretary of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration.

To date the Be Well Crisis Helpline has answered 6,049 calls, with an average talk time of 18 minutes and 10 seconds, but with an average wait time of only 16 seconds. To reach a counselor, anyone in Indiana can simply call 2-1-1, enter their ZIP code, and follow the prompts to reach the Be Well Crisis Helpline.

According to data collected by the counselors, 46% of the callers have a pre-existing trauma or substance use or mental health problem. Following their conversations, the counselors referred 29% percent of the callers to mental health treatment, 24% for additional community-based resources such as food, clothing, housing or utility assistance, and another 16% for additional crisis counseling. In just over 1% of the cases, following telephone counseling, Be Well Crisis Helpline counselors have determined the situation is critical and have called 9-1-1 to get the callers the immediate help they need.

“This data tells us that the Be Well Crisis Helpline is playing a critical role in the health care continuum for Hoosiers who feel like they are in distress as a result of this pandemic,” said Jay Chaudhary, director of FSSA’s Division of Mental Health and Addiction. “Hundreds of our fellow Hoosiers have begun to receive treatment for the mental health issues they face, and likely faced prior to COVID-19. We strongly encourage anyone who feels like they could use the help to call us at 2-1-1.”

The top distress reactions counselors are encountering on the calls include isolation or withdrawal (34%), issues with sleep (34%), anxiety or fearfulness (32%), and difficulty concentrating (27%).

“We are also getting referrals from first responders who know they can rely on the Be Well Crisis Helpline as a new resource in their toolkit to deal with persons under mental stress,” added Chaudhary. “This helpline has come at the right time for Hoosiers who are under real mental distress and need someplace to turn for help.”

The Be Well Crisis Helpline is funded by a [Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program](#) grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. More information on the Be Well Crisis Helpline can be found at www.BeWellIndiana.org. Indiana 211 is a free service that connects Hoosiers with assistance and answers from thousands of statewide health and human service resources — quickly, easily and confidentially. Indiana 211 [became part of FSSA earlier this year](#).

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News Media Contact

Jim Gavin
317-234-0197
Jim.Gavin@fssa.IN.gov