Text- and chat-based hotlines: a novel approach to provide child maltreatment-related support

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Statement of purpose The purpose of this study is to describe how people seek child maltreatment-related support from a text- and chat-based crisis hotline. Ultimately, this study will provide the foundation for the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline practice model and training.

Methods/Approach We conducted a qualitative content analysis of 300 conversations from a text- and chat-hotline, selected through stratified random sampling. After the first round of coding was complete, we compared the characteristics of the initial sample to all conversations. Then, we purposefully sampled additional conversations from underrepresented groups, including perpetrators, young people, and maltreated children.

Results We identified six groups who seek support, as defined by their relationship to the maltreated child: family members, peers/friends, maltreated children (self), distressed children (self), other known adults, and persons unknown to the child. Many people used the hotline as a source of information for referral to CPS. Children often sought resources for coping with maltreatment or supporting a friend who was being maltreated. Overall, the conversations progressed through five stages: introduction/clarification of hotline role, exploring the issue, problem-solving, working towards a resolution, and conclusion. Across these stages, crisis counselors used empathy/active listening to build rapport.

Conclusions Text- and chat-based hotlines may be one way to reach young people and others who need child maltreatment-related support. In a recent survey of text- and chat-based users, 90% of chat-based and 50% of text-based hotline users reported that they would not call a phone hotline, suggesting that this service fills a critical gap in available services.

Child maltreatment

Understanding implementation of child death reviews in the United States

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Statement of purpose Child death review (CDR) teams provide insight into why child deaths occur by conducting systematic...