

# Kids Help Line

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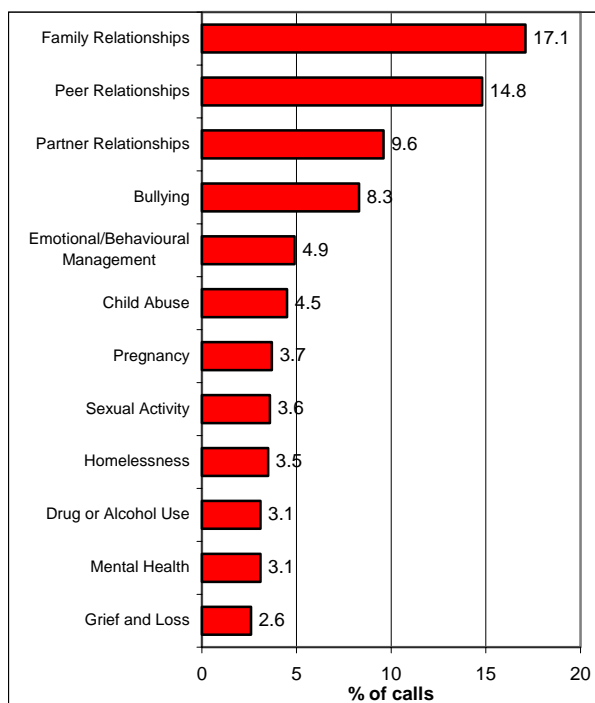


Kids Help Line (KHL) is Australia's only free, national telephone counselling service for children and young people aged 5 to 18. The service began in Queensland in March 1991 and progressively expanded into the other states and territories, becoming a national service with the launch in New South Wales in May 1993. The service is available 24 hours a day from anywhere in Australia.

## Callers

An average of 20,000 children and young people call Kids Help Line each week – with 50% successfully connecting to a counsellor. Females make almost three-quarters of calls and 54% of callers are younger than 15. All calls are treated with respect.

The table below shows the 12 main reasons (of a possible 36) children & young people call the service.



(See also Infosheet 2: 2003 Statistical Summary)

Callers have direct access to counsellors and can choose to speak to a male or female counsellor. They are able to call back and speak to the same counsellor as they work through their issues. Over 60% of callers say they have used the service before.

The service is busiest between 3pm and 9pm weekdays and during weekends and school holidays. At these busy times callers may have to wait for some time in a queue before getting through to a counsellor.

The length of calls varies from only a few minutes for enquiries and questions, to an hour or longer for serious issues such as self-harm and mental health. The average length of call across all problem types in 2003 was 18 minutes. Feedback is encouraged from callers.

Confidentiality is an important consideration for young people. Counsellors explain confidentiality and duty of care when appropriate. Many callers choose to withhold their name and location, particularly when talking about sensitive issues.

## Referrals

Counsellors use a computerised referral database. The database contains details on approximately 7,000 agencies around Australia which provide various services to children and young people. It allows callers to be referred to services in their own locality, where appropriate, either by providing contact information or via a direct, three-way phone link. Eleven percent of callers are referred to other agencies, the majority for child protection, legal assistance, emergency accommodation and drug and alcohol counselling. The database is constantly being reviewed and updated, both through client feedback and by regular interagency contact.

## Counsellors

Kids Help Line is staffed by over 100 paid, professionally trained and supervised counsellors who work out of the contact centre in Brisbane. All counsellors undergo Kids Help Line's five day Skills Based Training Course. Probationary counsellors must complete 250 paid hours on the phone plus further training.

All KHL counsellors are supervised regularly and submit their practice to routine monitoring and continuous review. A two tier system of supervision ensures that counsellors are provided direct supervision and debriefing while on shift, plus at least one hour per month working on professional development with a personal supervisor. (See also KHL Information sheets 3 & 4).

## Counselling

Kids Help Line promotes a non-judgmental, confidential service where no problem is too small, too embarrassing or too "out of bounds" to talk about. The principle values underpinning counselling at KHL are empowerment and child centred practice.

Empowerment involves assisting each caller to clarify their concerns, formulate options, develop strategies for positive change and to identify and understand the consequences of particular courses of action. Callers are encouraged to believe in themselves and to recognise their personal strengths. Respect is accorded to each caller's individuality, feelings and the right to make personal decisions. At the same time productive relationships with parents, teachers, peers and other important people are encouraged.

Child centred practice commits counsellors to viewing the young person's situation from the young person's point of view, examining the consequences of professional practice on children and young people and making explicit the ideological and ethical base on which decisions are based. It demands that the interests and welfare of the child be paramount, allowing them to challenge adult's interpretations of the child's experience and interests, and to express their own perceptions and beliefs.

## Research & Information Services

Non-identifying information is logged after each call into a comprehensive, computerised caller database. Calls are classified into 11 problem categories which are further broken down into 36 sub-categories. A maximum of 31 fields of information may be filled in for each call. The length of the call (in minutes), outcome of call and the type and severity of problem is the minimum amount of information gathered for every call. Where possible and appropriate, counsellors also collect information such as the caller's age, gender, ethnicity etc. Fifteen percent of callers reveal their location, allowing analysis of data by postcode and region.

This data provides a unique window into the issues and concerns of young Australians and forms the basis of KHL's research agenda and advocacy platform. It also provides valuable information for policy development at a number of levels within the government and non-government sectors. It is used to highlight possible gaps in service delivery, to assist in the planning and targeting of scarce resources and to support funding or grant applications for service development. This information is available on request for a fee.

Kids Help Line produces a newsletter three times a year which is sent to 22,000 agencies, schools, media and other key stakeholders. A list of other Kids Help Line publications is found on the website.

## Kids Help Online -Email & Web Counselling

Children and young people are also able to seek help via the internet by contacting a counsellor in real time. Web counselling is similar to a chat room except that the interaction is solely between the young person and the counsellor. Kids can also email counsellors for help. The website also contains free educational and information resources for all ages. During 2003, Kids Help Line counsellors responded to 13,462 online counselling requests. (See also Infosheet 27: Online Counselling)

The web address is: [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

## Mission Statement

Kids Help Line exists to assist people to develop strategies and skills which enable them to more effectively manage their own lives.

An integral part of achieving this mission is the provision of free, accessible national services which are founded on the principles of empowerment.

## Goals

- To maintain free, confidential counselling services for all 5 to 18 year olds in Australia which meets the highest standards of professional practice and management.
- To collect, analyse and disseminate non-identifying information which contributes to research and reflects the issues and problems of Kids Help Line's clients.
- To advocate on behalf of Kids Help Line clients where their interests are ignored, minimised or unrepresented.
- To assist young people to have a direct voice on those policies or issues that affect them.
- To utilise existing technological and professional expertise in developing services to other groups in the community.

## Other Services

### Peer Skills

This program was developed in response to requests from schools for students to do work experience at KHL and the number of calls from kids concerned about their friends. This program is run as a 2-day workshop and aims to enable young people to further develop skills that promote personal competence in assisting friends in need, and coping with and responding to everyday issues.

By the end of 2003, 716 trained facilitators had delivered over 770 workshops to over 11,000 young people in all parts of Australia.

The web address is: [www.peerskills.com.au](http://www.peerskills.com.au)

### Parentline

In 1995, after receiving 15,000 calls from parents across a 2 year period, Kids Help Line recognised the need for a service for parents based on similar principles as Kids Help Line. Parentline is a Queensland-only service responding to 250 calls per week, and is fully funded by the Queensland Department of Families. The service operates between 8am and 10pm every day of the year.

The web address is: [www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au)

## Funding and Support

Kids Help Line and Peer Skills are primarily funded from the revenue-raising activities of BoysTown through its Lottery. BoysTown and Kids Help Line are initiatives of the De La Salle Brothers in Australasia. Kids Help Online is also supported by its Corporate Sponsor, Optus. Additional funds are derived through donations, fundraising activities, trusts and various state and federal government funded projects.

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A series of information sheets provides both general and specific information on problem types, counsellor selection and training and other issues raised by clients. Specific queries can also be processed on request.

The following **INFOSHEETS** are available on request:-

### Info Sheet No

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| 4  | Training & Supervision    | 19 | Eating Behaviours                           |
| 5  | Family Relationships      | 20 | Sexual Orientation                          |
| 6  | Peer Relationships        | 21 | Loneliness                                  |
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| 8  | Child Abuse               | 23 | Callers from Indigenous Backgrounds         |
| 10 | Domestic Violence         | 24 | Callers of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds |
| 11 | Suicide                   | 25 | Study Issues                                |
| 12 | Leaving Home/Homelessness | 26 | Callers from Rural and Remote Australia     |
| 13 | Drug & Alcohol Use        | 27 | Online Counselling                          |
| 14 | Developmental Issues      |    |   |
| 15 | Sex & Intimacy            |    |   |
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[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

24 hour telephone counselling line: 1800 55 1800

Optus is Kids Help Line's major sponsor and has been helping kids connect since 1999.