



State of New York
Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

ORIGINAL



Office of Mental Health
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, New York 12229
www.omh.ny.gov

August 12, 2011

Marlene H. Dortch
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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FCC Mail Room

RE: Notice of Ex Parte Communication
WC Docket No. 07-271

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I am writing this to support the permanent reassignment of the three suicide prevention hotline numbers (1-800-SUICIDE, 1-888-SUICIDE, and 1-877-SUICIDE) to the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Crisis hotlines are a critical public health safety net for the American public. We have concrete evidence of this in New York, for example related to the events of 9/11. We must have a reliable national crisis hotline system. Fragmentation, or a lack of reliability, jeopardize people in suicidal crisis. A permanent reassignment of the hotline numbers to SAMHSA by the FCC will save lives.

With SAMHSA managing all toll-free suicide prevention hotlines since 2007, people in emotional distress or imminent risk of suicide, and their loved ones, have access to a reliable and dependable national crisis hotline system 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Lifeline program provides a reliable safety net for America's most vulnerable citizens including people with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. Crisis centers are a core component of our nation's behavioral health system. They provide a safety net when other forms of care may not be available because of distance, scheduling, and other obstacles. Additionally, the Lifeline program provides continuity of care to high-risk callers and patients discharged from hospitals and emergency rooms by offering follow-up calls. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of this form of crisis support.

Since its launch in January 2005, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has routed over 129,000 calls from individuals in New York who are in emotional distress or suicidal crisis. Thanks to a partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, veterans in our state are able to seamlessly access care through the VA by dialing 1-800-273-TALK and pressing "1". Since the launch of this partnership in July 2007, over 20,000 veterans in our state have used this capacity to reach out for help. The Lifeline program also has an extensive backup system, which includes regional backup centers and a national backup center to ensure that all calls are answered, even if the crisis centers in our state are beyond capacity. The Lifeline also offers a service for Spanish speakers; since 2005 over 4,000 Spanish speakers in our state have accessed assistance through this option.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and provide input on this important decision.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Hogan, Ph.D.
Commissioner

cc: Bob Glover, NASMHPD
John Draper, NYCMHA

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