



Dear CSS Friends,

I hope this email finds you and your loved ones in good health. It's been a tumultuous few weeks and continues to be a challenging time for the agency and for the community as a whole.

I want to acknowledge our crisis line team and the speed with which they have adapted our services to be provided with a minimum number of people on site. Staff, interns, and volunteers alike, have demonstrated tremendous leadership and flexibility during this time and there has been no interruption in services for our callers/texters who rely on us.

One of our core values at Crisis Support Services of Alameda County is our commitment to growth, which is demonstrated through our ongoing reflection, seeking of feedback, and openness to learning, teaching, and growing together in service of our mission. We are grateful to our committed staff who live out these values and have designed a unique safety planning tool that they will be sharing with our colleagues nationwide later this year at the American Association of Suicidology conference.

Like many others who we connect with about our work, you might be wondering how you can be a meaningful part of suicide prevention in our community. I hope you consider volunteering with us, making a donation, bringing a suicide prevention training to your school or workplace. One opportunity for solidarity with us is for our 10th annual Healing Hearts 5K Walk/Run which had been scheduled for May 16th but will now be held as a "virtual run." (See the back page for more information.)

Or you can simply be open to talking about suicide prevention to those you care about. To learn more about ways you can support this important cause, visit us at: www.crisissupport.org.

In community,

Narges Zohoury Dillon, LMFT
Executive Director



Narges

If you would like to receive your next newsletter in a paper-free version, send a request to events@crisissupport.org

Grief Counseling

- # of adult clients served61
- # of sessions of individual grief sessions..199
- # of group sessions.....57
- # of supportive telephone calls485

Senior Counseling

- # of senior clients served.....139
- # of sessions1,857

School-Based Counseling

- # of individuals served.....139
- # of sessions3,822

Community Education: Teens for Life

- # of middle & high school students served13,037
- # of parents/school staff served.....714

Community Gatekeeping & Mental Health Consultations

- # of adults from the community trained...789
- # of primary care providers trained.....194
- # of Santa Rita Jail staff, deputies, technicians and mental health providers trained811
- # of adults and youth trained in Mental Health First Aid323
- # of community members reached through resource and health fairs.....1,362

The Crisis Line

- # of Crisis Line calls54,292
- # of medium/high risk calls.....1,003
- # of emergency dispatch rescues for clients w/ imminent risk for self-harm..... 150

Text Counseling

- # of text sessions.....1,115

Clinical Interns & Volunteers

- # of Clinical Interns.....19
- # of Licensed Supervisors.....15
- # of Crisis Line Volunteers.....195

**DURING THIS PAST YEAR
2018-2019**

School-Based Mental Health: Making The Difference In Oakland

The following is an excerpt from a conversation between Maryam Toloui, Director of Wellness Services at Oakland Unity Schools and Narges Zohoury Dillon, CSS Executive Director. The partnership between the two entities has been in place for over a decade and relies on mental health professionals in training (referred to here as interns) to deliver the services.

What does the partnership between CSS and your schools look like?

The CSS interns here mostly do individual therapy but have also run groups in the past such as social skills groups, grief groups, and mood groups. They are an integral part of the services we provide and we're very lucky that between CSS and a couple other relationships, we are able to serve every student who needs the service and that's pretty incredible. We would not be able to offer the level of support to our students without CSS.

What are some common categories of concern that come up for the students here?

We see a lot of depression and anxiety and a lot of suicidality and self-harm. We also see a lot of loss — our students have lost people close to them. And that's why CSS having a specialization in suicide and grief has been really helpful to us. Because unfortunately, that's much of what our students are experiencing. They are experiencing many family and life stressors, community and domestic violence, substance use, immigration and deportation issues, and housing instability. These experiences are for the most part, what we see.

As a whole, why do you think school-based mental health is a good model? I feel like it's the only model. And that's because it's so hard for our families to access services that aren't on our campus. Even when students have insurance and can technically access services, that doesn't mean that it's possible logistically. A lot of our families work 2-3 jobs to make ends meet, so getting to a clinic before they close at 5 pm is just not possible. Also transportation is expensive and it's not always safe. Those are some concerns that I have seen our families have. And because school-aged kids spend most of their waking hours at school, they already have a sense of community and trust if we are doing our job right. We can really leverage that in a way to connect them to the services that they need because they already feel comfortable here. It's not a foreign experience.

There's a stigma reduction piece to seeing a counselor at school. So that's another barrier that's addressed. Yes, because we have had such a long standing relationship with CSS and other mental health organizations, we have been able to reduce any stigma on campus. People are just used to seeing counselors around. About half of our students receive some sort of support on a yearly basis, though not all through CSS.

Have you noticed a rise in utilization of services or the need on your campus? Yes. Each year we serve more students than the previous year. That might be that the need is increasing, but I wonder if it's also recognizing that services are available and that they have a good reputation. Things that maybe go unnoticed before, now come our way.

What about suicide prevention in general, how do you think schools and agencies can partner? I think the more information we have the better. It's really great that the CSS counselors here also answer the (Crisis) Hotline, because when they are doing safety planning, or risk assessments with students, they can also talk about the hotline as a resource they know a lot about. I have had counselors call with students to make it less scary and to see what it's like. The resources that are out there to prevent suicide are more accessible because our counselors can talk about them in a real way. Whereas stigma around getting support has gone down, I think suicidality still carries a lot of stigma and a lot of misunderstanding especially among parents. Having more people on campus who can talk to parents about what to do if their kid is making suicidal comments is really important.



Maryam

A Year of Transitions and Deepening Commitments!

This past year, Crisis Support Services of Alameda County has a new Executive Director, **Narges Zohoury Dillon**, who took over the role from much-beloved, long-time ED, **Nancy Salamy**.

Last Spring, our **HEALING HEARTS 5K WALK/RUN FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION** brought our community together. Due to the pandemic, our 10th annual event will be a virtual run. Participants will run their own 5K course (3.1 miles), while maintaining social distancing.

Visit www.tinyurl.com/healingheart5K

This winter CSS held its first-ever fundraising art show, **ART FOR LIFE** featuring local artists and friends of the agency.



In the fall, we were right on course for our first annual miniature golf tournament, **FAIRWAY TO WELLNESS**, in Castro Valley.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION reached over 13,000 children and youth.

The **MUSIC VIBES** fundraiser brought gospel music together with mental health.



ZINO Mediterranean-inspired restaurant in Berkeley donated \$1 for every "Flor de Vida" cocktail sold.





FROM CONES TO CONNECTIONS

By Lorrie Goldin, LCSW

“Crisis Support Services changed my life.”

We’re used to hearing this from callers, whether on the brink of suicide; devastated by loss; living with persistent mental illness; or desperately lonely with no one else to talk to. I am not a caller, but CSS changed my life, too.

In 1978, after moving to Berkeley from the East Coast with a newly minted B.A. in English and landing a job scooping ice cream, I saw a notice asking for volunteers at the local suicide prevention hotline. It had never occurred to me to do anything like this, but since I had plenty of time on my hands, I decided to check it out.

The agency was in a hard-to-find church basement. But I found it, and was accepted.

I loved it immediately. Nothing had ever felt as meaningful as connecting with another person on the end of the line, of mattering. I was humbled by the fortitude of people struggling with unbelievably difficult problems. I learned the profound power of listening, of presence, acceptance, and compassion. I learned how to persuade a person who had swallowed pills to accept help so they could live instead of die. I learned how to help someone draw upon their inner and outer resources to get through a crisis. I learned how to set boundaries, and to break down barriers of mistrust and hopelessness.

Scooping ice cream was tasty and fun, but I had found a different line of work, as well as my professional birthplace: My volunteer experience led me to be-

come a licensed clinical social worker.

Although I’ve worked in private practice and other agencies, I’ve always stayed connected to CSS — as a volunteer, on staff, and, for the past 25+ years, as a supervisor and consultant. The dedication and hard work of hundreds of volunteers and staff members have constantly inspired and invigorated me over the decades.



Lorrie

A lot has changed from those days in the basement. CSS answers tens of thousands more calls from an increasingly diverse population struggling with ever more complex problems. CSS’s programs have expanded to include Grief Counseling, including specialized groups for those bereaved by suicide or homicide; In-Home Senior Counseling Services; school-based counseling; Teens for Life, which offers education about suicide prevention to public middle and high schools throughout Alameda County; community education; a text line; follow-up services for those discharged from the hospital after a suicide attempt; and an extensive Nightwatch program offering after-hours crisis intervention and support throughout California. Robust volunteer and intern training programs support all of these efforts (as does the generous financial help from our community of donors!)

One thing has never changed throughout the years: The profound sense of person-to-person connection, of making a difference through the simple act of being there. I’ve experienced this even since I walked down those basement steps for my first shift. It’s the heart and soul of CSS, changing lives for the better.

THINGS YOU CAN DO:



Contact us about becoming a phone or text volunteer



Come to our community events
www.crisissupport.org gets you started!



Make a tax-deductible donation today

Help Will Soon Be Only Three Digits Away

In late 2019, the Federal Communications Commission proposed 988 as a three digit number to be used nationwide for suicide prevention and mental health hotline access. This shift, which is awaiting legislative approval, is estimated to be nearly two years away from implementation and is a major step toward stigma reduction. The anticipated result is an increase in access to vital services crisis centers provide to their communities through assessment, safety planning, and referrals to appropriate resources.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline also known as "The Lifeline," currently responds to approximately 2.5 million calls per year through a network of over 170 accredited local crisis lines (including ours) and anticipates that the shift to a 3 digit number would double the call volume to 5 million calls in its first year, and to over 12 million by the fifth year.

The prospect of such an enormous increase in the reach of crisis hotlines is one that is both exciting and worrying for those of us familiar with the already stretched systems in place within our centers and within our communities. Over the last few years, our center has experienced an increase in calls from those calling The Lifeline and has also experienced an increase in the intensity of calls, which translate to more individuals who are in need of more in-depth crisis intervention.

We look forward to continuing to be part of a system that values local response and plan to be vocal advocates for additional resources that would enable our center to continue to respond to the increased need for suicide prevention and crisis intervention.



24-
HOUR
CRISIS
LINE

(800)

309-

2131

GROUPS OFFERED BY CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

Survivor of Suicide Attempt Support Group provides support for individuals over 18 years who have made a suicide attempt. This group offers adults a safe, confidential supportive environment to explore strengths and coping skills and receive support.

Grief Support Group is for people over 18 years old. There are few events in life that are as painful as the death of your spouse, life partner or other loved one. You may wonder whether you can survive this overwhelming loss. Join others as we share this difficult time.

Women's Support Group for Women 55 and Over
Life transitions often produce anxiety as well as a sense of loss and grief. The transition from middle adulthood to senior status can be a difficult period. How do we reinvent ourselves as mature women with much to offer?

Men's Support Group is for men 55 and over. Navigating changing life stages can be a tricky process: Changing

roles, expectations, health problems and financial stresses may make our elder years harder than we expected. In this group, men share their stories and talk about how they make it through, what holds them together in the midst of difficult life passages and learn from one another in the process.

Loss Due to Suicide Group is designed to aid those who have lost a loved one to suicide. The pain and grief associated with the death of a loved one is often magnified during the holiday season because it is a time that family and friends gather in celebration. A death has forever changed the meaning of the holiday season.

Homicide Survivors provides support, coping strategies and a safe outlet for those who have lost a loved one to homicide. Death by homicide is especially difficult for survivors who are often re-traumatized by the criminal justice system and by feeling stuck in the experience of helplessness, despair and rage.

If interested in or more of these groups, please call our Counseling Program at 1-800-260-0094

Follow-Up Calls Fill a Vital Need

By Binh Au, Crisis Line Program Director

“I was referred to you guys by a friend. She advised me to call and it helped. It really helped. I appreciate you, I really do.”

“The call back from the counselor was really helpful. She was really nice and I felt better after talking with her. I didn’t have any more suicidal feelings.”

These are just two examples of the many expressions of gratitude we have received during a follow-up call. In a different follow-up call, the person reported to the counselor that in their first crisis line call, they were on the way to the Golden Gate Bridge. They did not tell the counselor at the time of the call but the connection was so helpful they chose to live through the day. Stigma and shame about living with suicidal experiences is real. Crisis line counselors don’t judge. When you call the crisis lines, we want you to be yourself. Be authentic and open because that is how crisis line counselors will respond to you. Many crisis line counselors have lived experience of being in crisis, and have lived through suicidal experiences.

Follow-up calls are opportunities for counselors to reconnect with people in crisis after their initial call to provide ongoing support, additional suicide assessment and intervention and additional safety planning and connection to resources. The service is not therapy and is not a substitute for professional psychiatric help. Rather, through one or more conversations, the follow-up counselor collaborates on a plan to keep people in crisis safe through the crisis period and explores ways the person can be connected to a support system.

It takes a tremendous amount of courage to reach out in a time of crisis. We honor people by reaching back to offer continued support. We provide follow-up calls for people experiencing active and difficult

to manage suicidal thoughts and feelings, as well as people who were recently released from the hospital after a mental health crisis.

In December 2019, a study published in JAMA, (*The Journal of the American Medical Association*) showed that suicide deaths were nearly 57 times higher with patients who were in a hospital or emergency room after deliberate self-harm — with or without suicidal ideation and 31.4 times higher for patients who

were in the hospital reporting they had suicidal ideation but no self harm. We hear stories on the crisis lines and in the community of people leaving the hospital after a crisis without many options or referrals. The crisis line program is here to fill that gap, to connect with people and be a partner on the journey to recovery.



Binh

Follow-up calls have a positive impact for counselors as well. Historically, after a crisis line call, the counselor may never know what happens with someone they had a meaningful connection with. Not knowing can leave the counselor with some anxiety and worry for the person in crisis. The follow-up calls are an opportunity to build connections between the program and the person who was in crisis. People also have an opportunity to provide gratitude for the counselor. This is an example of CSS values in action.

In 2019, the crisis line program dedicated funding and crisis line supervisors to provide follow-up services and we tripled our ability to connect with people at the highest risk for dying by suicide.

If you or a loved one was recently released from any hospital in Alameda County and would like ongoing support, please reach out to Kenneth, our hospital follow-up supervisor, at 510-420-3288.

Reference: <https://talk.crisisnow.com/new-study-shows-increased-risk-of-suicide-after-emergency-department-visits/>

Crisis Support Services of Alameda County (CSS) was founded in 1966 on the humanistic idea that skilled intervention by non-professionals can help people in emotional crisis

Many thanks to our recent donors! We would like to recognize our recent donors who gave gifts between 12/01/2018 and 2/13/20. Our apologies if we missed you. Please let us know so we can list you on our website's donor acknowledgment page: rgelber@crisissupport.org

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A VIRTUAL 5K EVENT

Between May 9th
and May 16th, 2020

10th
ANNUAL

Visit [www.tinyurl.com/
healinghearts5K](http://www.tinyurl.com/healinghearts5K)



HEALING HEARTS

#healinghearts5K

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Visit www.tinyurl.com/healinghearts5K to register