25 Years Of Shifting Power Back

On February 21, 1996, the National Domestic Violence Hotline answered its very first call.

In the past 25 years, we have worked tirelessly to shift power back to those affected by relationship abuse. **We have answered more than 5.8 million calls, chats, and texts** from survivors and their loved ones, advocated for policy change, forged lasting and meaningful partnerships, and shifted our advocacy to best meet the evolving needs of survivors. Our services have expanded to include digital chat and text. In 2007, we launched our healthy relationship education and dating abuse prevention services through love is respect, the first national 24/7 service provider specifically for teens and young people.

The first step on the journey away from violence is towards hope. At The Hotline, we provide compassion. We provide connection to critical resources. We provide validation and a path to greater safety. **But first, we provide every person reaching out with hope.**

This significant milestone in our history is not a celebration. The need for our services continues to increase; in fact, our contact volume has increased by 43% in the last five years. Needing a national hotline to serve domestic violence survivors is a somber reminder of just how pervasive this issue is.

But the courage of survivors is something to celebrate. We are honored to bear witness to the strength and bravery of survivors every single day. Survivors speak up and reach out for support, regardless of barriers — like a global pandemic — and at the risk of not being believed by those they love.

Every story shared by a survivor is an act of courage. As more survivors speak out about their experiences, it is clear that domestic violence is not a private matter — it is a public health crisis. It’s more important than ever for survivors to know that they are not alone.

As we reflect on the last 18 months, we should feel proud of the extraordinary work of The Hotline through unprecedented challenges. Emboldened by our shared commitment to answer the call, The Hotline’s board and staff have done incredible things to respond to the increased risks facing survivors during COVID-19. Deploying our entire team to remote work; adapting our advocacy to support survivors through the difficulties of the pandemic; investing in the technology needed to put critical safety planning tools into the hands of survivors who may not feel safe enough to reach out directly; and partnering with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to use our data to inform their analysis of the impacts of shelter-in-place on survivors are just a few examples of what we’ve accomplished — together.

We could not do this work without our donors and partners who have been on this journey with us — **thank you for making 25 years of hope possible.**

Thanks to a partnership with Macy’s, survivors and their loved ones throughout the country can now reach a Hotline advocate by text.

On May 13, 2021, The Hotline launched text services through our toll-free phone number (1-800-799-SAFE). On June 14, 2021, the SMS short code (88788) for Hotline text services became active. Previously, text services were only available through our prevention program love is respect. The addition of text services for The Hotline is reflected on both thehotline.org and espanol.thehotline.org.

**As of August 31st, we have answered 12,569 text contacts on The Hotline’s toll-free number.** This greatly exceeded our expectations — we had projected for 4,000 Hotline text contacts per quarter. This response is even before launching paid advertisements. It confirms our belief that text could provide a safer, more reliable option for some survivors, particularly those without smartphones or a reliable internet connection.

We are profoundly grateful to Macy’s for their partnership in expanding access to our critical services!
The Impact of COVID on Survivors of Relationship Abuse

The COVID-19 pandemic brought change and tragedy to many of our lives. For survivors of domestic violence, it was a time of increased challenges and compromised safety.

In the media, some referred to domestic violence during COVID-19 as the shadow pandemic. Abuse is about power and control. When social distancing and quarantining were encouraged by the CDC (for good reason), our advocates knew that partners who choose to abuse would take advantage of an already stressful situation to gain even more control.

At the start of the pandemic, when survivors were forced to be in closer proximity to their partner who is abusive, we didn’t experience an increase in our contact volume - something that concerned us, but we also knew, from previous natural disasters, that survivors may not have the safety they needed to reach out for support.

Here is a snapshot of what survivors have shared with our advocates:

- July 25, 2020: A survivor contacted us after losing their job due to COVID-19. The survivor was disabled with no transportation and is financially dependent on their partner who is abusive. Their partner would take the survivor’s disability check, as well as their medication. The survivor was working with a local agency but those services had to close due to COVID-19.

- Aug. 19, 2020: A survivor was being monitored on all of their digital devices by their partner who was abusive. Due to COVID-19, libraries in the survivor’s area were closed, and the survivor didn’t have access to a safe computer. Their partner made it very difficult to focus on work by texting the survivor non-stop and calling repeatedly to check in over the course of the day. The survivor attempted to visit a friend once during COVID-19, and their partner who was abusive followed the survivor using the GPS app of the survivor’s phone.

- December 15, 2020: A survivor reached out because they had lost their job due to COVID-19. The survivor lived with their partner who chose to abuse and wanted to leave, but they were hesitant to go to a shelter due to fears of contracting COVID-19. After speaking for a bit, the survivor changed their mind. Unfortunately, all shelters in the area were closed down or at maximum capacity due to COVID-19.

Survivors are incredibly brave and resourceful. We find ourselves inspired by their strength and bravery every single day. And while we are thankful that many more people and companies who weren’t aware before are now familiar with the signs of domestic violence and how to help, the long-term effects on the health and safety of survivors must be a priority for us all.

A Legacy of Support for Survivors

The dedicated and generous support of Mr. John Herklotz and Mrs. Dale Herklotz has made a profound difference in the lives of survivors, and The Hotline is forever grateful for their longstanding commitment. Proud donors since The Hotline’s first year, Mr. Herklotz made a gift through his will to ensure their legacy of support would continue after their lifetimes.

Recalling his passion for our work, The Hotline’s CEO Katie Ray-Jones fondly remembers Mr. Herklotz sharing his powerful belief in The Hotline’s mission with guests at his birthday party. She says, “Among our earliest supporters, Mr. and Mrs. Herklotz saw tremendous growth in our organization and our services. Their impact will be felt far into the future through the countless survivors they have supported.”

If you would like information about including The Hotline in your estate plans, please contact Crystal Justice at cjustice@thehotline.org or 737-225-3191.
Our Partnership with The Allstate Foundation

Since 2005, The Allstate Foundation has long been committed to advancing avenues of support for survivors. The Allstate Foundation and The Hotline have partnered to ensure that those impacted by relationship abuse, especially financial abuse, have access to the information, resources, and services they need to pursue a safer, healthier, and more secure future.

We recognize the far-reaching impact of dating abuse in our communities, families, schools, and workplaces. This issue isn’t just impacting adults, it’s a crisis impacting our youth. One national survey of teenagers showed that almost 70% of teens aged 12-18 who had been in a dating relationship in the past year reported experiencing some type of abuse. In a recent survey conducted by Junior Achievement and The Allstate Foundation, nearly 1 in 3 U.S. teenagers aged 13-18 have experienced warning signs of financial abuse in a romantic relationship. The ideas and beliefs that enable abuse can be changed, and the earlier we intervene with education and support, the earlier we can prevent abuse.

This fall, with support from The Allstate Foundation, our youth prevention program love is respect created a parent’s discussion guide on youth healthy relationships. This guide provides information and resources for having meaningful conversations with the youth in your life and empowering them to have relationships that are healthy, respectful, and free from abuse.

Talking to teens and young adults about relationship abuse can be difficult. However, having the conversation is one of the best things you can do to create a safe space for the young people in your life to share their experiences and ask for support. Download the guide for free here (bit.ly/JA-Report) and start the conversation today!

The Allstate Foundation advances equity so that everyone can thrive. Since 2005, The Allstate Foundation has invested more than $85 million to end domestic violence thorough financial empowerment. The Foundation empowers victims with the tools to achieve financial independence and a life free from abuse and educates young people on the elements of healthy relationships to help stop abuse before it starts.

FVPSA Funding

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) supports life-saving services throughout the country through grants to states, tribal governments and territories, as well as to the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, FVPSA is the only federal funding source dedicated to providing support to domestic violence shelters and programs. FVPSA provides core funding to support more than 1,500 local public, private, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations and programs and over 240 Tribes and tribal organizations.

FVPSA has not been re-authorized since 2010. While protections continue and Congress makes funding decisions each year, re-authorization is an important time to make improvements to the bill.

The Policy team spends significant time working on re-authorization and sharing with Congress what we hear on the lines every day. Rep. McBath (D-GA), Rep. Young (R-AK), Rep. Moore (D-WI), and Rep. Katko (R-NY) have introduced the advocate-endorsed Family Violence Prevention and Services Re-Authorization Act of 2021 (H.R. 2119) in the House. Senator Casey (D-PA) and Senator Murkowski (R-AK) introduced the companion Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act of 2021 (S.1275) in the Senate. These bills increase the overall investment in services, expand culturally specific and underserved access, support LGBTQ+ survivors, increase Tribal investment, and will help better serve survivors. The bills are currently going through committees in both the House and the Senate.

You can support The Hotline in our advocacy to shift power back to survivors! By signing up for our action center at bit.ly/action_center you’ll be able to stay up-to-date with our latest opportunities for engagement.

Each voice can make a difference, and we appreciate your support!

If you or someone you know is affected by relationship abuse, 24/7 support is available.

Call: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Chat: thehotline.org
Text: “START” to 88788
Ways to Give

Your donation puts each and every survivor who reaches out to The Hotline on the path to safety.

Make a gift online at thehotline.org/2021Newsletter

Checks can be sent to:
National Domestic Violence Hotline
P.O. Box 90249, Austin, TX 78709.

Call to give at (737) 234-6464.

You can also make a gift by one of the following methods:
- Donor-Advised Funds
- Stock or Mutual Funds
- Mandatory IRA Distributions
- Estate or Planned Gift

Vehicle donations (car, truck, motorcycle, RV, or boat) are possible with CARS at bit.ly/TheHotline-CARS (link is case sensitive).

If you would like more information, please contact Donor Relations at development@thehotline.org

Thank you for your generosity!

Shop The Hotline’s New Online Store

You asked for it and now it’s here - The Hotline’s store! Show that you stand with survivors with custom-designed Hotline t-shirts, tumblers, notebooks, and more. A few items have also been created to honor our 25th Anniversary. The store is open October 5th - 20th. Our store is designed to open and close. We will always share when the store is live with items for purchase. Visit shop.thehotline.org today. All purchases benefit The Hotline.

Kendra Gives Back

Thanks to the Kendra Gives Back program, you can support The Hotline when you shop online at Kendra Scott. On Oct. 25th and 26th, 20% of your purchase will be donated to The Hotline when you use the code GIVEBACK-ASHHC at checkout. Visit kendrascott.com during the Kendra Gives Back event to find something special for yourself or get a jump on holiday shopping.

Special thanks to Kendra Scott for supporting The Hotline!

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