6 Million and Counting

On December 30, 2021, a little over 25 years after the first call rang into the National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline), digital advocate Dana answered our 6 millionth contact. The chatter identified as a woman from Ohio who was experiencing a complex abusive situation. Reflecting on this milestone, Dana said,

“It's amazing that we have been able to support that many people, and at the same time, it's sad that so many people have been affected by domestic violence.”

Donors like you make this milestone possible — you have enabled millions of people to receive the support and resources they need to pursue a safer future.

The number of people reaching out to The Hotline for support grows each year, and the time it takes to answer one million contacts continues to get shorter as demand for our services increases. While it took nearly seven and a half years to answer our first million contacts, it took just over two and a half years to answer the latest. It is troubling how quickly we reached this milestone and how many people continue to experience domestic violence. Our monthly incoming contact volume (calls, chats, and texts) for the past six months is up significantly — anywhere from 6%-33% — compared to 2020/2021. This is the most sustained increase we’ve experienced since the pandemic. This February we experienced the highest monthly contact volume in our 25-year history. We knew that once life returned to any kind of normalcy, there would be more survivors needing support who hadn’t felt safe to reach out during the height of the pandemic.

The Hotline continually adapts to best support survivors’ changing needs and put resources into the hands of those who need them. We began as a phone hotline, expanded in 2013 to include online chat, and in 2021, we added text messaging capabilities on The Hotline’s toll-free number (previously only available through our prevention platform, love is respect). These service channels allow survivors to reach out in the way that is best and safest for them. Even with these options, some survivors may still not feel safe reaching out for support from a live advocate, so we recently published our entire provider database of 5,000+ local providers and resources on thehotline.org. This allows survivors and helpers to easily find local resources and support in their communities without having to connect to an advocate. Since this tool launched in July 2021, it has been used more than 38,000 times.

For 25 years, we have kept our lines open 24/7 for anyone who needs us. Every day we are inspired by the incredible strength of survivors. Reaching out for support is brave, and we are honored to empower our contacts with hope that a safer future is possible. Dana says she aims to leave her contacts with the message: “There is always support available. You are not alone in this. You do have options. You can survive this, and you are worth it.”

As long as there is a need for our work, our lines will be open for the next million and beyond. Thank you for making this important work possible.
A Note from Our Board Chair

I am proud to introduce myself as the new Chair of the National Domestic Violence Hotline’s Board of Directors. I serve in this role not only as an organizational leader, but also as a survivor who turned past violence into present victory. I am dedicated to helping others who have experienced relationship abuse pursue the safety and healthy relationships they deserve.

Undoubtedly, we have all — at one time or another in life — heard of The Hotline, which provides 24/7 critical assistance to those in crisis and for some, life-threatening situations. Its value is immeasurable, and it has proven itself as a saving grace for those seeking support, guidance, and resources that will help them navigate a pathway to a safer future.

It is entirely understandable that people in abusive relationships are often disinclined to share their experiences or survivor stories and prefer to remain anonymous. Thankfully, there are others who do — and their voices, testimonials, and advocacy on behalf of the silent are what helps us all sharpen our awareness, refine our perspectives, and change the narrative.

It is an honor to lead, along with my Board colleagues and our amazing staff, this organization and make such an incredible difference for millions of people. We also honor you and your investment in our mission. We could not support and shift power back to those affected by relationship abuse without your generosity.

Thank you for the hope you provide. It makes a transformative difference — one call, chat, and text at a time.

With gratitude,
Tommi A. Vincent

Meet Our love is respect Youth Council

Preventing abuse is central to The Hotline’s vision of a world where all relationships are positive, healthy, and free from violence. In 2007, we launched our love is respect platform to engage, educate, and empower young people to prevent and end abusive relationships in their communities. One in three teens in the United States (U.S.) will experience relationship abuse before they become adults, so this work is critical.

Our Youth Council (YC), comprised of 18 individuals across the U.S. aged 13-26, helps shape our resources and services. YC members review and inform social media and website content, assist with planning local awareness activities, co-facilitate trainings, webinars, and information sessions. They also help create our annual Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM) campaign.

In October 2021, some of our YC members had the opportunity to participate in a White House Listening Session hosted by the Gender Policy Council. The session focused on how online abuse and harassment impact young people. The discussion and recommendations from the session will assist the Biden administration in launching a task force for online harassment, including the creation of improved policies to support those in the LGBTQ+ community and marginalized populations.

Our YC members are all passionate about healthy relationship education and abuse prevention. Here’s what some of them had to say about why they became involved:

- “When I first saw the call for volunteers to sit on this council, I was intrigued by the opportunity to join a nationwide initiative and learn from people who were from different geographical backgrounds, but also those with different lived experiences. I love being able to contribute ideas and perspective from my own life that help continue the positive work love is respect is doing and help marginalized folks feel safe.” – Megan

- “Dating violence prevention is a lifelong passion project for me after experiencing it firsthand in high school. Love is respect has become a channel for me and like-minded young champions to empower our peers to take charge of their health, bodies, and relationships. The council has given me the connections, resources, and the confidence to speak up on important issues that young people face!” – Sophie

- “I had been following love is respect for some time before I joined the Youth Council. I had been in an abusive relationship and after it ended, I googled answers to why things happened in my relationship and how to prevent those things from happening again. Educating people about healthy relationships is something that I am really passionate about. I want to help others realize that healthy relationships are the norm. Abusive relationships should not have to be tolerated, and everyone deserves to be in a relationship where they feel safe, heard, and respected.” – Lily

“The Hotline Met Us Where We Were”

The Hotline supports anyone affected by relationship abuse, including family and friends of survivors, sometimes called “helpers.” Alex* referred her parents to The Hotline one night when their loved one was in crisis at the hands of her partner. It was after 8:00 p.m., and their family felt like they were out of options. She remembers, “My mom sat at the kitchen table and cried as she spoke to the advocate, knowing that she wasn’t alone, and had someone to listen and explain the nuances of intimate partner violence. I remember my mom telling me how nice the woman on the other end of the line was. My family and I were at very different places of understanding when it came to domestic violence, but The Hotline was able to meet us where we were.”

That conversation helped Alex’s family understand how to best support their loved one through her situation. Alex notes, “We want to help, but understanding how we can be most helpful is sometimes not as intuitive. It was a conversation between myself and my loved one that changed everything. When she and I were alone and it was safe for us to talk, I told her that I saw what had been happening and that it wasn’t okay. From that moment forward, I have seen her find the courage to advocate for herself as best she can.”

![Photo of the page where Alex wrote The Hotline’s number down for her mother to call.](image)

Alex wants other helpers to know that being there for someone experiencing abuse can be a long and difficult journey. “This is going to take time,” she says. “Keep showing up, but take care of yourself too — it’s the only way you can continue to help. Give yourself and the survivor grace and remember that it is not your journey. Rather, you are walking alongside someone else on theirs, and you are doing more to help than you realize.”

Alex hopes that all survivors can find freedom, agency, love, and know their self-worth. She encourages anyone impacted by abuse to reach out to The Hotline, “You don’t have to know what questions to ask or what to say. Just call. They will help.”

*Name changed to protect contact identity.

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**Policy Update**

The Hotline’s Policy team spends a significant amount of time sharing with lawmakers what we hear on the lines and advocating for policies, legislation, and funding that best support survivors’ evolving needs. Two key pieces of legislation that impact survivors are the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

On October 26, 2021, the House of Representatives passed the advocate-endorsed FVPSA Re-Authorization Act of 2021 (H.R. 2119). You can read more by visiting bit.ly/FVPSA-2021. While the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) passed the companion bill by a voice vote, at the time of this article, we still await full Senate passage. These bills increase funding for the overall investment in services, expand culturally specific and underserved access, support LGBTQ+ survivors, increase Tribal investment, and will help better serve survivors. We are optimistic that a bipartisan bill can pass both chambers in the coming months.

In March of this year, the House and Senate passed the Fiscal Year 2022 spending package which allocates $15.5 million for The Hotline (including direct support for the StrongHearts Native Helpline) and $200 million for FVPSA. The bill includes increases for a variety of important domestic violence programs along with the reauthorization of the bipartisan VAWA, which includes important enhancements and modernizes the three-decades-old law. Visit bit.ly/VAWA-22 to learn more about this legislation.

The Hotline thanks House and Senate Leadership, the Appropriations committee, and Appropriations staff for their commitment to survivors and bi-partisan agreement on this essential funding to ensure critical support, resources, and services to those impacted by domestic violence. While we celebrate these advances, we know even more robust funding and resources are needed.

You can support The Hotline in our advocacy to shift power back to survivors by signing up on our action center at bit.ly/action_center to stay up-to-date with our latest opportunities for engagement.

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

Your donation puts every survivor who reaches out to The Hotline on a path toward a safer future.

Make your gift online at thehotline.org/2022-SpringNewsletter or by scanning this QR code.

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

Call to give at (737) 234-6464

There can be advantages to donating through:
- Donor-Advised Funds
- Stock or Mutual Funds
- Mandatory IRA Distributions
- Estate or Planned Gifts

Vehicle donations (car, truck, motorcycle, RV, or boat) are possible through 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!

Beneficiary Designations Are a Simple and Flexible Way to Leave a Legacy

Many financial accounts allow you to name a non-profit organization as a beneficiary following your passing. This can be done through a form available online or from the plan administrator. It is simple to update if your circumstances change.

Designating The Hotline as a beneficiary can be one way to leave a legacy of support for survivors.

Assets to consider:
- Retirement Accounts
- Donor-Advised Funds
- Bank and Investment Accounts
- Life Insurance Policies

To learn more, contact development@thehotline.org.

This is not intended as legal or tax guidance. Please seek professional advice regarding your personal situation.

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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

National Domestic Violence Hotline
P.O. Box 90249 | Austin, TX 78709