

October 31, 2013

The Honorable Amanda Fritz  
City Commissioner  
1221 SW Fourth Avenue, Suite 220  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Commissioner Fritz,

We are pleased to provide you with this report on the City of Portland's partnership to reduce suicide through its contract with Lines for Life.

Our crisis intervention specialists took 361 calls on the city-specific helpline, (503) 972-3456, plus an undetermined number of calls to the 1 800 SUCIDE line that was also publicized through outreach and city provided signage. Sourcing the calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) is challenging as they are mixed in with thousands of other calls we get for the NSPL.

Our experience with callers to the line shows that it made a significant difference in the choices that were made. We were able to talk some people off the bridge as well as facilitate warm transitions to the aid of emergency personnel. In June we were able to encourage a person who was sitting with their legs dangling over the railing to get back onto the bridge and accept assistance from the responders we had called to the scene.

The very nature of suicide prevention is an inexact science. We know one thing for sure: By taking the initiative and connecting Portlanders to our line, lives were saved.

Thank you for your leadership and compassion on this funding.

Sincerely,



Judy Cushing  
CEO

## Report on the activities of the Portland Suicide Lifeline

In the spring of 2012, then-Portland Mayor Sam Adams and Commissioner Amanda Fritz entered into talks with Lines for Life to create a city-specific phone line for people in mental health crisis. The line would be answered by Lines for Life personnel in a joint effort to save lives and reduce the demands made on Portland's first responders. The endeavor went into effect in October of 2012.

Lines for Life is a Portland-based nonprofit with 20 years of experience assisting people in crisis as well as at risk of suicide, de-escalate their emergencies with a safe outcome 98 percent of the time.

This report speaks to the information requested from the City as consideration for its investment during the past year.

Number of Calls - 361 exclusively to the (503) 972-3456 number. Calls to 800- SUICIDE from City signage: Undetermined because it's difficult to separate them from other callers in the general population dialing the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) number. Between October 1, 2012 and October 31, 2013 we received 14,674 calls on the NSPL.

Funds expended (October financials have not yet been prepared or expenses allocated, so these were estimated and included in these numbers based on the past 11 months worth of data.)

- Money spent on upgrades to system  
System improvement \$6,852  
Total Data/Telephone \$8,820
- Staff funded by grant  
3 Full Time Employee Masters level Crisis Intervention Specialists \$116,206
- Other operating expenses \$18,122 including rent, office supplies, postage, insurance, copying, etc.

Demographics and other information about callers:

1. Gender 49% male, 47% female, 4% unknown
2. Ages >55, 11%; 46-55, 20%; 36-45, 16%; 26-35, 14%; 19-25, 6%; 13-18, 5%; Unknown, 28%
3. Calling about Self: 65%, Other: 35% - We have definitely seen a trend of third parties calling the line seeking guidance or resources available to friends and loved ones who live in Portland. We have reports from these callers that they saw signage on the Vista Bridge as well as the Portland streetcars.
4. Substance abuse was mentioned in 32% of the calls – predominantly alcohol and prescription opioids
5. Reasons for calling (in order)
  - a. Mental Illness
  - b. Suicide

- c. Substance Abuse
  - d. Relationship issues
  - e. Physical illness
6. For the most part the calls were from Multnomah County, with some from Marion, Washington and Clark counties.

Here are some sample interactions from the line:

- A woman, who had gone to the bridge with the intention of jumping, called the posted number and spoke with a crisis intervention specialist who was able to work out a safety plan. During a follow up phone call she thanked Lines for Life for its assistance
- A 22 year old female called from the Vista Bridge, hysterical with her legs over the railing– crisis intervention specialist calmed her, got her to get back onto the bridge from the railing and then imitated a warm transition to cooperate with the first responders
- Many calls were received from persons concerned about well being of others. Including a 16 year old who was trying to keep her suicidal grandmother safe.
- A 34 year old male who was concerned about his cutting behaviors and wasn't sure he could stay safe for the night – he was close to Good Samaritan Hospital and was guided there for help by the crisis intervention specialist.

As this yearlong effort comes to a close, we have seen the effectiveness of the line firsthand. The cooperation between the City and Lines for Life has strengthened the safety net for Portland's most vulnerable citizens.

Lives have been saved.

It has been our pleasure to work closely with the City and Lines for Life envisions a long-lasting relationship with City Hall and the Portland Police Bureau.

Partnership with Lines for Life to reduce suicide (Presentation introduced by  
Commissioner Fritz)

FEB 12 2014

PLACED ON FILE

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**LaVonne Griffin-Valade**  
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Novick		
Hales		