

Support Remains for Callers in Crisis with 2-1-1 Saskatchewan

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Christa Daku, Executive Director for Envision Counselling & Support says the new 2-1-1 Saskatchewan line launched this year should help fill the gap between the organization's discontinued 24-hour abuse / assault phone line and those unable to access email (photo by Jennifer LaCharite).

Envision Counselling & Support Centre recently published a calendar and Year In Review with a number of businesses and organizations, sharing their reflections on changes for the organization in 2018.

One of the main changes Envision made this year took place in June when they closed down their 24-hour Abuse and Sexual Assault Support phone line after 23 years.

Executive Director Christa Daku said the demand has shifted to electronic means, as callers simply prefer to use email.

“Over the years, as we’ve grown with technology, people have reached out through our website, so it’s moved more in-house. Our counselors are answering web submissions on a daily basis,” she explained.

She said it was for this reason they explored options around texting programs as an alternative to the phone line, as for some it’s easier to text and it’s easier to email. But Daku said the cost attached to that wasn’t sustainable.

At its peak, the line had up to 50 calls per month. By the time it closed, they were averaging far less.

“We were averaging, the last couple of years, about 60 a year, which, over the course of 365 days, 24 hours a day, is not many calls,” she said.

Daku said it was often a challenge to sustain volunteers.

“We always had great volunteers, but to give them a sense of making a difference, it’s very difficult when you have low numbers like that,” she noted.

Without a crisis line, however, web submissions would fall short of being able to assist in urgent situations requiring the old-fashioned method: a telephone call with trained counselors on the other end of the line.

While the abuse/assault line had initially been funded through the United Way, it seems only fitting that the answer to the would-be unmet demands for a phone number to call in times of crises would be a United Way-funded provincial initiative.

With 2-1-1 Saskatchewan having gone live in March of 2018, it couldn't have come at a better time for the province.

“It’s a very positive change for the province,” said Daku. “It just happens that it worked out the same time, it was completely unplanned.”

She said that over the years, as call numbers began to drop, they had been trying to come up with a plan for moving forward with the crisis line.

“So it was important for us to obviously have something for people to turn to, and it just so happened that United Way funded 2-1-1, so it was perfect as far as we were concerned,” she expressed.

The 2-1-1 line provides resources to help prevent challenging life situations from becoming crises. Its mission is ‘to strengthen communities by effectively connecting people with appropriate information and services.’ It has been

the designated telephone number for community information services across Canada since 2001.

Read more about the line closure [HERE](#).

Read more about 2-1-1 [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

2-1-1 Saskatchewan is a free, confidential, 24/7 service that connects individuals to human services in the province by telephone, text, or web chat, plus a searchable website with over 5,000 listings of social, community, non-clinical health, and government services across the province.

In addition to searching on the 211 Saskatchewan website, individuals can now call 2-1-1, text 2-1-1 or go online to chat with trained professionals to help find and navigate the services they need. This access to community, health and government services is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Over 100 languages, including 17 Indigenous languages, are available over the phone.