



BOYS TOWN
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FULL REPORT:
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NATIONAL STUDY: Thoughts of Suicide, Anxiety and Depression Jump 12 Percent among Teens

Suicide ideation is now the most commonly reported problem to Boys Town National Hotline; Teens Struggle to Connect Problems to Specific External Factors

Father Boes: "Whether you have questions, need support, or simply need to speak to someone who truly cares, Boys Town is here - and you are not alone."

OMAHA, NE – Teens across the country are reporting an alarming uptick in thoughts of suicide, depression and anxiety, according to new national report released today by Boys Town.

The new report, which documents calls, texts, chats, or emails from teens to Boys Town's National Help Hotline between 2012 and 2016, found a 12 percent jump in reports of teenage mental anguish. Thoughts of suicide continue to be the most commonly reported problem among teens, increasing eight percent to nearly 3,500 reports this past year. At the same time, reports of problems with external relationships, including boy and girlfriends, parents and friends, dropped significantly.

The report comes as Boys Town celebrates its Centennial Anniversary.

Given the finding, Boys Town recommends the following tips for parents and families:

- **Look for the signs.** Changes in your child's behavior, mood, or overall desire to do things – as well as physical changes like headaches or problems eating and sleeping – could be indications of mental angst.
- **Let your kids know it's okay to feel upset.** Help them identify their feelings, and let them know that life will go on and that they can learn to study, laugh, and have fun again.
- **Help identify people they can talk to in their immediate environment.** Family, teachers, coaches and friends are natural grief counselors, and kids might not realize they have help available right in front of them.
- **Designate more family time together.** Organize family outings and least two sit-down meals per week – without the distraction of electronic devices. Building and nurturing personal relationships – eye to eye – helps young people express themselves and know that they can talk to you.

"Now more than ever, young people have more methods of connecting and communicating," said **Father Steven E. Boes, Executive Director of Boys Town**. "What is most important, however, is that they know they can use these outlets seek help when they need it. Whether you have questions, need support, or simply need to speak to someone who truly cares, Boys Town is here - and you are not alone."

KEY FINDINGS

- Over the past five years, suicide ideation, depression and anxiety have all increased, with an overall growth of 12 percent.
- The number of a teen contacts reporting thoughts of suicide – the number one most common problem – increased eight percent, from 3,215 in 2012 to 3,465 in 2016.
- Anxiety represented the greatest increase in overall reports – up nearly 500 to 2,577; Problems with boyfriends and girlfriends dropped the greatest amount, down 2,018 reports or 58 percent.
- Females consistently contacted the Hotline more than males for each form of contact since 2012 – with an average of approximately 79 percent of contacts made by females versus 21 percent made by males in 2016.
- A new Hotline Texting Service started in 2014 has been widely used, with 4,454 young people texting issues to the Hotline in 2016 alone.

“With technology increasingly connecting our society, young people are internalizing the causes of their anguish more and more,” said **Dr. Dan Daly, Boys Town Child Psychologist**. “The Boys Town Hotline aims not only to offer care and support, but to help teens better identify the causes of their angst through professionals who truly care. We are proud to have been offering help to and reaching young people across the country for nearly thirty years.”

The full report, entitled “A Five-Year Look at the Boys Town National Hotline,” can be view at <http://www.boystown.org/news/news-media/Documents/BTNH-5-yr-Report-2017.pdf> .

THE NATIONAL HOTLINE AND METHODOLOGY

The Boys Town National Hotline first launched on October 22, 1989, as an extension of the organization’s mission to help troubled children, young adults and parents. The Hotline was created as a way to provide Boys Town’s care and expertise to those who need it in locations without a physical Boys Town site, expanding our footprint and reaching as many children around the country as possible. By the end of 1989, the Hotline was already processing approximately 200 calls per day. In 1991, Hotline Counselors received their one millionth call.

Upon each receipt of contact, the Crisis Counselor codes the contact by method of communication (email, chat, text or call) and the main presenting problem. The topic of suicide takes precedent over any underlying issues a person may be having, such as a relationship break-up or loss of a job. As a result, a Hotline contact is coded under the suicide category when the primary focus is related to suicidal thoughts or behaviors, and the resulting need for safety planning.

ABOUT BOYS TOWN

For 100 years, Boys Town has been a beacon of hope for America’s children and families through its life-changing youth care and health care programs. In 2015, almost 500,000 children and families across the United States were impacted by Boys Town programs. This includes those who received services from Boys Town’s residential programs as well as those served by the many varied programs that comprise the Boys Town Integrated Continuum of Child and Family Services, including In-Home Family Services, health care services provided by Boys Town National Research Hospital and the Boys Town National Hotline. You can find more information about Boys Town online at www.Boystown.org.

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