

Media release



New Kids Helpline data reveals spike in duty of care interventions

Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown**, has today announced that duty of care interventions to protect children and young people were **99%** higher nationally from 1 December 2020 – 31 May 2021 compared to the same period a year ago.

A duty of care intervention is an instance where Kids Helpline counsellors make contact with police, child safety or ambulance services because a child or young person is deemed to be at imminent risk.

The escalation over the past 6 months across Australia is largely related to suicide attempts (38%) and child abuse (35%).

Of note:

- **Victoria** has had an increase of 184% in duty of care interventions enacted by Kids Helpline on behalf of children and young people. 75% of emergency interventions were for young people aged 13-18. For those aged between 5-25, 44% of emergency interventions over the past 6 months in Victoria have been in response to an immediate intent to enact suicide, with child abuse accounting for 31%.
- **New South Wales** has had an increase of 40% in duty of care interventions enacted by Kids Helpline on behalf of children and young people. For those children and young people aged between 5-25, 44% of emergency interventions over the past 6 months in New South Wales have been in response to child abuse and 35% have been in response to an immediate intent to enact suicide.
- **Queensland** has had an increase of 46% in duty of care interventions enacted by Kids Helpline on behalf of children and young people. 120 contacts regarding a suicide attempt was made that required counsellors to engage an ambulance or medical intervention. For children and young people aged 5-25 in Queensland, 40% of emergency interventions have been in response to an immediate intent to enact suicide with child abuse accounting for 31% of duty of care interventions.

“We feared an increase in child vulnerability as a result of the pandemic and ensuing lockdowns, however the current spike in emergency interventions on behalf of children and young people across Australia is very disturbing.

“It is very clear that the pandemic is taking a toll on the lives of children and young people, however, thankfully by young people seeking help Kids Helpline has supported 862 suicide prevention interventions nationally in the past six months.

“Since the pandemic Kids Helpline has employed an additional 100 counsellors to assist us in dealing with the increased demand on Kids Helpline counselling service arising from COVID-19, through funding support from the Commonwealth, State Governments and Community,” said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams.

We know that prevention and early intervention can reduce the impact of mental health issues, so now more than ever we encourage children and young people who want to talk to someone about any issue of concern to them, to contact Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or use email or web counselling services. www.kidshelpline.com.au

Facebook: @kidshelpline, Insta @kidshelplineau, Twitter @KidsHelplineAU

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