



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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An Agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

SAMHSA

Statement

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PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has received numerous inquiries regarding our efforts to ensure individuals in suicidal crisis and their families have the instant support they need through access to a reliable hotline.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) serves as a central switchboard to immediately connect callers to over 120 certified crisis centers around the country – enabling individuals to receive counseling or emergency services, if needed, close to home. It receives and connects 9,000-10,000 callers per month to these local crisis centers. The “switchboard” which SAMHSA funds, is at arms length from the process of counseling or intervention. The only information SAMHSA receives is how many calls are referred to each of the crisis centers. SAMHSA does not solicit, collect, or maintain personally identifiable information about anyone who reaches out to the Lifeline. Confidentiality of personal information and of personal disclosures during calls to the Lifeline is a high priority for SAMHSA, for its grantee, and for the local crisis centers that respond to the calls.

The allegation that SAMHSA owes Kristin Brooks Hope Center (KBHC) \$266,000 is simply not true. SAMHSA has never directly funded KBHC; KBHC was a subcontractor to the first hotline grantee, the American Association of Suicidology (AAS). That means that SAMHSA has never had a direct financial relationship with KBHC as a funding organization, and, as a result, cannot “owe” KBHC funds for past work. The original grant to the AAS ended in 2004 at the close of its natural funding cycle.

The Kristin Brooks Hope Center had the opportunity to submit a proposal, as other organizations did, to compete for funding in 2005 to support the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The Center did not do so. After an open competition and a multi-level review conducted by experts in the field working outside of SAMHSA, a grant was awarded to the Mental Health Association of New York City in January 2005 to manage a toll-free (1-800-273-TALK) National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network.

SAMHSA has never sought to halt the work of the KBHC. When the data remind us daily of the numbers of individuals – both young and old – who are in crisis and contemplating suicide, we recognize that both public and private-sector resources need to work to help stem the devastation suicide leaves behind for families, friends, colleagues, and communities. We have made it publicly known that SAMHSA has been and is now willing to assume responsibility for maintaining 1-800-SUICIDE as a public service. SAMHSA is committed to ensuring that individuals in crisis have access to resources that may assist them and their families. We wish to encourage such services, not remove them.

To find a crisis center in your area, go online to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website, <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/join/membership.aspx>.

SAMHSA, a public health agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the lead federal agency for improving the quality and availability of substance abuse prevention, addiction treatment and mental health services in the United States.