

Text Line Protocols

I. Details

A. Number

B. Hours

1. 8am to 11pm Everyday

C. Coverage/Advocates

Monday	8am-3pm	Name	3pm-11pm	Name
Tuesday	8am-3pm	Name	3pm-11pm	Name
Wednesday	8am-3pm	Name	3pm-11pm	Name
Thursday	8am-3pm	Name	3pm-11pm	Name
Friday	8am-3pm	Name	3pm-11pm	Name
Saturday	8am-3pm	Name	3pm-11pm	Name
Sunday	8am-3pm	Name	3pm-11pm	Name

*red indicates advocates on shift at shelter

D. Coverage

1. If an advocate is sick or needs coverage for their scheduled Text Line shift, the person on at shelter will take over the phone.
2. If it is unable to be covered by the person on at the desk, the Direct Services Director will cover the Text Line. If the Direct Services Director cannot, the Executive Director will cover.
3. Please let the Direct Services Director know as soon as possible, or at least 2 hours before your scheduled shift.

II. Expectations of Advocates

- A. This cell phone cannot be shared or used by anyone outside of **PROGRAM** staff.
- B. The Text Line cell phone should **ONLY** be used to respond to crisis text messages received. It should not be used for any other purpose.
- C. Texts must be responded to within 15 minutes of being received. If there is a reason you cannot respond within this time frame, please communicate that to the texter.
- D. The advocate does not have to give out their name, only if they are comfortable are they permitted. An advocate should **NEVER** give out the name of another advocate.

III. Key Code

- A. Cell phone must be locked with a key code at all times.

IV. Location Services

- A. Cell phone must always have location services/access to location turned off.

- V. Calls on Textline Cell Phone
 - A. If a call comes in on the textline, do not answer the call.
 - B. Respond to the call with a text:
 - 1. Example: "I see that you just tried to call. This number is for text messages only. We would love to talk with you, if calling works better for you, please call **CRISIS LINE**, and an advocate is ready to chat. If you want to keep texting, I am here to keep texting."
- VI. Advocate Training
 - A. Text-based communication skills
 - B. [Technology safety planning](#)
- VII. Message storage
 - A. All messages will be deleted weekly on Fridays only by the Direct Services Director or her designee.
 - B. Pictures and videos should be deleted immediately, never kept.
- VIII. Continuity of care
 - A. If there is content in a text conversation with information that should be passed on to other staff, to help support the texter with a continuity of care, please make sure this information is put into the red book notes.
 - B. If you are managing the Text Line while you are not on at the shelter, please call the advocate on duty to transfer important notes.
 - 1. Do not email notes
 - C. If you are in the middle of a conversation with someone when the shift changes, inform the texter of this change, and let them know there will be a break in responses until you are able to successfully shift change.
 - 1. Example: "It has been nice to text with you, but I am just finishing up my shift, and someone else will be responding soon. There will be a little break in us texting back so that I can check in with the next advocate."
- IX. Client Files
 - A. A file should be made for every texter
 - B. If the texter never gives their name, please create an anonymous file, including their phone number on the white sheet.
 - C. If you are managing the Text Line and are not at shelter, please call the desk to have the advocate on duty assist you in updating files or creating new files.
- X. Gold Sheets
 - A. Every text conversation should be marked on gold sheets, in client files
 - B. If you are managing the Text Line and are not at shelter, please call the desk to have them mark files for you.
 - C. "18- Hotline/Crisis Line Counseling" : if texter is reaching out in crisis
 - D. "8- Individual Advocacy" : if not reaching out in crisis, just for support or for a question

E. Mark any others that apply as per regular practices.

XI. Communication of messaging limitations

A. Be clear about boundaries and expectations

1. Hours for texting ONLY 8am-11pm, if a texter texts after 11pm they will not be able to reach anyone on the text line until 8am.

B. Length of conversations

1. If text conversations lasts longer than an hour, it is okay to put up a boundary with the texter.
2. Example: "We have been texting for over an hour now, and I am going to have to go for right now. I am so glad you texted and we would love to hear from you again. You could call our office phone at 747-3370 or message this number again after a while. If you want to keep texting, I may just not be able to respond as quickly or often as I have been for the last hour."
3. This is not appropriate if the texter is in danger. These conversations must be permitted to last longer than an hour if necessary.

C. Multiple texters

1. If there are multiple texters reaching out at once, let them both know that you are responding to other people, and there may be a longer break between each text.
 - a) Example: "It is so nice to hear from you, I just want to let you know that there is another person texting right now, and I am fully present for both of you. It just may take me a little longer to respond to you. But I am here for you, and will respond as I can."
2. Alternatively, if you are in a text conversation, and get a new text request, you can let the second texter know that you will respond to them as soon as you can.
 - a) Example: "Thank you for your text, I am glad you have reached out. I am right in the middle of a conversation, but will be able to fully respond to your text in just a few minutes."

D. Multiple Advocates

1. Texters should be informed that there are several advocates who may respond to the messages. If they text back at a different time they may be texting with a different advocate.
2. Example: at the end of the conversation, "Just want to let you know that if you text back at another time, you may be reaching another advocate. We are all here for you and glad when you text."

E. Messages are not stored

1. Texters should be told that messages are deleted weekly on Fridays, so they are not surprised if a certain advocate doesn't know something they said over a week ago.

2. Example: “Just so you know, messages on this device are deleted weekly on Fridays, so if you text again another day, these messages may not be saved.”

XII. Texter Safety

- A. Texters should be reminded that texting can be unsafe
- B. If they are concerned about their partner finding their texts, remind them to delete our conversation regularly.
- C. Here is a great thorough resource for a survivor if they are concerned about cell phone safety in general. <https://www.techsafety.org/12tipscellphones>

XIII. Communication of confidentiality

- A. All of our confidentiality practices are still in place while responding on the text line. It is good to communicate this to the texter.
- B. Example: “I just want to let you know that this conversation is completely confidential, anything you say here will stay between us.”

XIV. Obligations and limitations to confidentiality

- A. Obligations and limitations to confidentiality should always be explained at the beginning of a texting conversation, and periodic reminders should also occur.
- B. There are only 4 reasons that confidentiality will be broken:
 1. If there is suspected child abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. (Advocates are mandatory reporters”
 - a) Mandatory Reporting Example: “Although this is a confidential conversation, I am a mandatory reporter. If you text anything about a child being hurt or in danger, I am going to have to make a report to OCS.”
 2. If there is suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult
 3. If there is suspected suicide
 4. If there is suspected harm to someone else or threat of homicide
- C. Example: “Although is conversation is private and confidential, there are four reasons I would have to break your confidentiality- if there is suspected harm of a child or a vulnerable adult, or if I am concerned that you are going to hurt yourself or someone else. But I will let you know if I have these concerns before I call others for help. Does that make sense?”

XV. Suicidal Texters

- A. If the texter indicates suicidal thoughts, you should follow the same protocol, as if it were a caller. Ask direct questions, and help safety plan if appropriate.
 1. Example: “The texts you are sending are seeming like you may be suicidal. Are you thinking of killing yourself? If you were going to kill yourself, do you have a plan for how you would do it?”
- B. If there seems to be an immediate risk of suicide or homicide, let them know you are concerned, and would like to call for help. Ask for their address.

1. Example: "I am feeling really worried about you and you being safe. I would like to call for some help to make sure you are safe. Could I have your address?"
- C. If the texter does not give you their address, call 911 anyway, and give 911 the texters phone number.

XVI. Disjointed Conversations

- A. If a survivor stops texting in the middle of the conversation, do not respond further
- B. If you are texting with someone who is indicating that they are in an unsafe situation, it is best practice to create a safety plan with them.
- C. Example: "It seems like you are in a pretty unsafe situation right now, I may become worried if you stop responding. If you stop responding, would you like me to call or wait for you to reach out again or something else?"
- D. Example: "I am hearing that you may be unsafe right now, and I am so glad you are texting. Could we come up with a safe word that you send if you want me to call the police for you?"

XVII. Potential Issues

A. Prank Callers

1. If you believe that someone is texting as a prank, it is okay to put up boundaries with them
 - a) Example: "The way you are texting, is seeming like you are not actually reaching out for support right now. This text line is specifically for people reaching out for support. I am going to stop responding now."
2. If someone is sending graphic texts or pictures, and they do not seem to be a survivor, it is okay to put up boundaries.
 - a) Example: "This is a text line for those needing support. The messages you are sending are inappropriate for this crisis text line. I am going to stop responding now."

B. Abusive Partner Impersonation

1. One concern when messaging with survivors is impersonation—someone else pretending to be the survivor. Someone other than the survivor could view or send messages either on the survivor's device or on another device connected to the survivor's account. This can be fairly easy to do, particularly if the survivor's phone doesn't have a passcode (or the abusive person knows the passcode)
 - a) Best practice:
 - (1) Establish a method to verify identity, which may include a previously agreed upon codeword or phrase.
 - (2) Check in regularly with the survivor to make sure messaging is still a safe method of communication.
 - (3) If either the advocate or survivor becomes uncomfortable with messaging, check in by other methods – over the phone or face-to-face.

C. If there is a prank texter or someone impersonating a survivor, and they do not respect the boundaries expressed. Their number should be blocked.

1. How to block:

- a) Go to “phone” icon.
- b) Click three dots on top right of the screen.
- c) Click “block numbers”.
- d) Click “add a number” and enter the number you wish to block.

XVIII. Other messaging tips

- A. Check in regularly to make sure that both survivor and advocate understand one another.
- B. Using slang or shortened words are ok, but advocates should take the lead from survivors. Avoid using emojis or vague phrases.
- C. Stop and clarify points or statements if there is any confusion.

Additional Resources:

[NNEDV Best Practice Principles](#)

[NNEDV Text Best Practices](#)