Plain Language Statement

Measuring Crisis Support Service Outcomes: A Two-Stage Delphi Study

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in this study. This document explains what the study is about and what participation would involve. Please read this information carefully before you decide whether to take part.

What is this study about?

Emotional and crisis support helplines (referred to as crisis support services in this study) offer immediate and anonymous support to anyone in distress or struggling to cope. Despite growing demand for these services, we know little about their effectiveness. To address this gap, the University of Canberra has teamed up with Lifeline Australia to develop better ways to measure user outcomes (the things people gain from using crisis support services).

This Delphi study will allow us to identify (1) what outcomes should be measured, and (2) how these outcomes should be measured, based on consensus from three expert panels comprised of people with lived experience, crisis supporters, and researchers from around the world.

What is a Delphi study?

Delphi is an established method for reaching agreement among experts. It is based on the idea of the ‘wisdom of crowds’: that group opinion is better than individual opinion. The Delphi method avoids social pressure by ensuring individual responses remain anonymous. It also allows each expert to respond at their own pace.

Key steps in a Delphi study

1. A panel(s) of experts is recruited
2. Experts complete an initial survey
3. Experts receive anonymous feedback that shows how their responses align with the rest of the group
4. Experts consider the feedback and potentially revise their responses
5. Consensus decisions are made based on the results (e.g., to include or reject an item)

Who can participate in this study?

1. People with lived experience of using crisis support services, including via phone, text, online chat or email (e.g., Samaritans, Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM), Shout (24/7 text service), Papyrus)
2. People who are currently working or volunteering as a crisis supporter or listening volunteer with a crisis support service
3. Researchers with experience evaluating crisis support services anywhere in the world

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete 4 online surveys. Starting in October 2022, you will be asked to complete one survey per month. This will involve rating outcomes and items relevant to assessing crisis support services as not important, less important, important, very important, or essential. You may also provide comments and suggest additional items. Each survey will take around 15 to 30 minutes to complete. You will have 2 weeks to complete each survey.

What are the possible benefits?

The main benefit of this study will be the resulting set of items deemed by our experts to be most important for measuring the effectiveness of crisis support services. This measurement tool will be available to helplines and researchers around the world to support more consistent and improved service evaluation. This will enable a better understanding of the benefits of crisis support services. It may also enable comparisons across different services and delivery modes (e.g., phone, text, online chat). Ultimately, this may inform improved and tailored crisis support service delivery and lead to better outcomes for help-seekers.

Participating in a Delphi study is a collaborative experience. You will have the opportunity to share your unique perspective and provide recommendations that may inform global best practice in crisis support services. You will also be able to review feedback from other experts and consider how (and why) their opinions may differ from your own. As such, we hope that participating in this Delphi study will be a shared learning experience that strengthens ties between service providers, help-seekers, and researchers across the globe.

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What are the possible risks?

The survey includes items that refer to risk of suicide, self-harm, and psychological distress. It is possible that you will experience some discomfort or distress when responding to these items. We believe that this risk is small, but if you become distressed while completing the survey, you can stop participating at any time.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is completely voluntary. If you start a survey, you can stop at any time. If you wish to withdraw between surveys, please email Dr Kelly Mazzer. After you withdraw, we will not collect further information from you. Please note completed surveys cannot be withdrawn as they do not include any identifying information.

Will I hear about the results of this study?

All participants will receive summary feedback about this project. Project updates will also be made available on the Lifeline Australia website: https://www.lifeline.org.au/about/our-research/building-a-lifeline-for-the-future-expectations-innovations-outcomes/

What will happen to information about me?

Only the study researchers will have access to the individual information you provide. Your name and contact details will be kept separately from the information that you provide for the study. You will not be identified in any publication. The information collected will be stored securely on a password protected computer throughout the project and then stored at the University of Canberra for the required five-year period after which it will be destroyed according to university protocols.

Who is funding this study?

The study is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council in Australia.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information, please contact Dr Kelly Mazzer.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

Queries or concerns regarding the research can be directed to the researchers. The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Canberra. If you have any queries or concerns about

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the conduct of this study that you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, you should contact Ms Maryanne Simpson via phone +61 2 6206 3916 or email humanethicscommittee@canberra.edu.au. If you would like some further guidance please refer to the Participants’ Guide located at Microsoft Word - Agreeing to participate in research_final (canberra.edu.au)

How do I register to participate in this study?

If you are interested in participating in this research, please follow the link or scan the QR code below https://bit.ly/3bRySlZ

Alternatively, please email Kelly.Mazzer@canberra.edu.au. Please provide the following information in your response:

**Lived Experience Panel:**
Name:
Email:
Country:
Do you have lived experience of using crisis support services, including Samaritans services?:
Are you a member of a reference/advisory group? Which group/s?:

**Listening Volunteer Panel:**
Name:
Email:
Country:
Which emotional or crisis support helpline (and branch) do you currently work/volunteer for?
What is your role (e.g., Listening Volunteer, Supervisor, Crisis Supporter etc)?

**Researcher Panel:**
Name:
Email:
Country:
Relevant areas of expertise: