

What do young people in crisis need from their communities?

CRISIS TEXT LINE |

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Executive Summary

Depression and suicide among young people have increased significantly since 2010.

Over five million adolescents experienced depression in 2022, up from two million in 2010. More than 1,500 died by suicide in the same year, compared to less than 1,000 in 2010.

Many experts agree that there is a connection between these increases and the rise of new challenges facing youth, such as social media, mass shootings, and opioid use. Unfortunately, these challenges are unlikely to change in the near future. Communities need solutions to improve youth mental health in the midst of these new realities.

Adolescents say there are six resources communities can provide to help them cope with mental health crises.

Each year, counselors at Crisis Text Line work with hundreds of thousands of young people in need of mental health support. Our counselors help teens navigate through their immediate crisis and then make a plan to deal with similar crises in the future by identifying specific resources that help them cope with mental health distress.

We partnered with Common Good Labs to analyze the resources mentioned by young people in over 87,000 anonymized conversations. **This revealed six resources that youth in crisis say they need from their communities to help them cope:**

- **Opportunities for social connection**
- **Engagement in music, writing, visual, and performing arts**
- **Mental health services**
- **Exercise and sports programs**
- **Books and audiobooks**
- **Outdoor spaces and nature**

Reviews of medical studies also confirm that all six are associated with improved mental health.

Unfortunately, communities have been cutting programs that provide the resources youth in crisis need.

Local governments cut funding for parks by more than \$2.5 billion dollars from 2010 to 2021. Opportunities for social connection and playing sports also shrank considerably during this time — even though the youth population increased. The number of children participating in clubs fell by 1.8 million and the number playing high school sports dropped by 1.4 million. Data indicates the availability of arts education decreased as well.

This means many young people are not accessing the resources that can help them cope with crises. We can see this in a number of examples.

- Seven in ten children do not participate in clubs.
- Five in ten adolescents with depression do not receive treatment.
- Five in ten high schoolers do not play sports.
- Four in ten children do not live near a library.

The number of young people who lack access to resources for coping with crisis is often quite large. For instance, over 32 million children live in areas where there are not enough providers to address their mental health needs. Many of these resources are even more limited in rural counties and underserved ZIP codes within cities.

To learn more about Crisis Text Line and to support additional research efforts, go to crisistextline.org/waystogive.

If you need support, text **HOME** to **741741** to reach a live volunteer Crisis Counselor. Free, 24/7, and confidential.