IDAHO: Suicide prevention hotline to launch texting service

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The Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline is launching crisis text and online chat services. A focus will be on helping teenagers since the teen suicide rate is high in Idaho compared to most other states — and for teenagers, texting is “a channel of communication they’re using most,” said Lori Stewart, a member of south-central Idaho’s board for Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN) of Idaho. There are three to four staff on each shift and at least one will answer text and online chat messages. The hotline recently received a $300,000 donation that will be used to upgrade infrastructure, increase staffing, and pay the phone costs. The new offerings were scheduled to start on January 1, but the text number will not be advertised publicly right away. It will first be given out at a couple of high schools to get an idea of the need. Another program being implemented to help youth is Idaho Lives—a partnership between the Idaho Department of Education and SPAN Idaho designed to reach young people ages 10 to 24. School staff are trained on the basics of suicide prevention for youth and how to intervene, youth leaders learn how to recognize their sources of strength and help their peers, and then activities and programs are implemented.

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