

below the surface campaign

STUDENT ANNOUNCEMENT SCRIPT

Around school soon, you'll be seeing a bunch of new posters. You'll probably first notice the top half of the posters, which say things like, "My Life is Full" and "I Have Friends." Then, on the bottom half, you'll see the messages get more complicated. These posters are meant to raise awareness of Colorado's Crisis Text Line, a confidential, totally free, 24/7 line staffed by master's-level professional counselors.

Though it's called a crisis line, the counselors are there to help with pretty much anything that might be bothering you: family problems; anxiety about tests or college; gender identity issues; feelings of depression; whatever. To start a text conversation, you just text the word "TALK" to 38255. Again, it's confidential, 24/7 and totally free.

Our school received these posters, and a bunch of mini cards that you'll see around, from NAMI-Colorado Springs, the local affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. We're one of nearly 20 local schools to adopt the Below the Surface campaign, which recently became a statewide initiative.

To find out more, check out the posters around school or visit the campaign website at need2text.com.

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LETTER TO PARENTS

Note: This is written as a letter “from” the school directly, as opposed to from NAMI-Colorado Springs. Feel free to amend it as desired and to put it on school/district letterhead, if you wish. If you would be more comfortable distributing a letter under the signature of NAMI executive director Lori Jarvis-Steinwert, and on NAMI letterhead, please let us know and we can provide one.

DATE

Dear District () parent or guardian:

Around the [name of school] campus, you and your child may notice brightly colored posters advertising “a personal, confidential crisis text line for teens.” Along with other Colorado Springs-area schools, [name of school] has agreed to adopt this mental health campaign from the Colorado Springs affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

The campaign publicizes the Crisis Text Line, a free, 24/7 counseling service run by the state of Colorado. By texting the word “TALK” to 38255 (or by calling 1-844- 493-8255), anyone can reach a professional counselor and share what is on their mind. Whether it is anxiety, unhappiness, stress, concern for a friend ... it is all OK to talk about. The service is completely free, and no insurance is required. You can learn more about the text line at coloradocrisiservices.org.

The professional counselors strive to keep conversations confidential. But parents and students should know that if a counselor believes a texter — or someone close to him or her — is in imminent danger, a Community Response Team (including First Responders) will be mobilized. Unless this situation is unfolding at school, it is unlikely that school personnel will be notified immediately. You would be more than welcome to notify us afterward, and to involve school personnel in a longer-term safety plan.

Having easy access to a professional counselor really helps some teens (and some adults, who are also welcome to use the line). That said, no one envisions the text line as a replacement for the support that students find in their families or school community. It is just another tool meant to help teens feel understood, connected and secure.

We also want to stress that the text line is truly for anyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, age or immigration status. Please feel free to find out more about this campaign at need2text.com. You can also learn about NAMI at namicoloradosprings.org, or by calling NAMI's office at 719-473- 8477. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,