

# Dutchess TEXTS

## *New service of Dutchess County HELPLINE to assist young people in crisis*

**Poughkeepsie, NY** ... The Dutchess County Department of Mental Hygiene has expanded its 24 hour HELPLINE service to include texting. **Dutchess TEXTS** is designed as an alternate way to access mental health assistance since many people, particularly young adults and teenagers, often prefer to text rather than talk on the phone. Young people can access support services by texting “**DMH**” to **741 741**. Experienced, trained mental health professionals are available 24/7 to help young people stay safe and healthy with effective, secure counseling and referrals.

Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro said, “Dutchess Texts makes our HELPLINE services more approachable and accessible to a wider range of people, particularly young people who may need to talk to someone but don’t feel comfortable talking on the phone. Dutchess Texts is an important tool in helping to connect with people in crisis and providing resources to help them through the crisis safely.”

**Dutchess TEXTS** is a free 24/7 service available to anyone experiencing a crisis and is part of the Dutchess County’s HELPLINE program. Although Dutchess County HELPLINE (485-9700 or TOLL-FREE: [877-485-9700](tel:877-485-9700)) handles more than 22,000 calls annually, texting has become a dominant method of communication, particularly for people under 25 years old. Dutchess TEXTS increases accessibility for young people to help ensure they can connect with supports to address mental health, relationship or substance abuse issues that they, or someone they know, might be experiencing. People utilizing Dutchess TEXTS will receive the same emotional support, information and problem solving help as those who call Dutchess County HELPLINE.

Over the past five years, Dutchess County has seen an increase in death by suicide for the first time in any previous year five period in the last 30 years. Dutchess County is also experiencing a public health crisis of prescription drug/opiate drug abuse, including heroin, with more overdose hospitalizations and deaths being reported than ever before. Dutchess County has the highest number of admissions of 18-34 year olds to certified rehabilitation programs in the Mid-Hudson region. Dutchess Texts is part of a broad-based, countywide prevention initiative aimed at those at risk for developing mental health and/or substance abuse disorders.

The prevention initiative is funded with \$350,000 from the New York State Office of Mental Health, secured by New York State Senator Greg Ball in 2013 as part of the 2013-14 State budget and was renewed in the 2014-15 State Budget.

"I was happy to work with County Executive Marc Molinaro to secure this funding for Dutchess County's mental health services. This new and innovative service offered by the Dutchess County Department of Mental Hygiene will help make sure these vital services are more accessible to our residents, especially our youth," said Senator Greg Ball.

Mental health experts recognize texting offers important privacy advantages and make it more likely people will utilize the service for help. Young people can text for support even if they are in public or with friends. Dr. Kenneth Glatt, Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, noted, "Dutchess TEXTS makes it easier for teenagers to reach out for help, perhaps in the middle of peer situation, and get the assistance and support they need."

Dutchess County Legislator Michael Kelsey, who serves as the Chair of the Family and Human Services Committee, said, "The new ways of connecting people with mental health resources that the Dutchess County Department of Mental Hygiene are implementing, including Dutchess Texts and the upcoming HELPLINE app for mobile phones, are beyond innovative. It shows an acute awareness into how teens and many adults choose to interface with others. I see real and actual benefit in meeting people in mental distress on their terms via text and mobile apps. I am pleased to share with my constituents these new methods for seeking out help at any hour of day, any day of the week."

Dr. Glatt added, "We know that reaching out for help can prevent a crisis and save lives. Dutchess County HELPLINE has been an invaluable resource for those who need help for many years. We are pleased to expand access to HELPLINE through Dutchess TEXTS to reach even more people, particularly young people in crisis, and have a positive impact."

Dutchess County HELPLINE is accredited by the American Association of Suicidality and is a member of LifeNet's National Suicide Prevention Hotline. Dutchess TEXTS is offered in partnership with the National Crisis Text Line (CTL). Partnering with CTL provides the benefit of a support structure in an established system, excellent training network and the ability to work with other call centers across the country that are committed to providing high quality crisis services with the goal of saving lives.

Dutchess County Legislator Sue Serino, who represents District 4 – Town of Hyde Park, shared, "My brother died by suicide. I've experienced the aftermath and the immense pain a family suffers when losing a loved one to suicide. That experience left me determined to help prevent other families from suffering like that and to offer help to people struggling with mental and emotional distress. I'm proud to see Dutchess County working to save lives."

For more information about the services offered through the Department of Mental Hygiene, including Dutchess TEXTS, visit [dutchessny.gov](http://dutchessny.gov). Dutchess County HELPLINE is available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, and can be reached at (877) 485-9700. To utilize Dutchess Texts, text "DMH" to 741 741.

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**NEED 2 TALK?**

**Dutchess TEXTS**

Life out of control?  
Friend needs help?  
Need someone to talk to?  
**TEXT "DMH" to 741 741**  
connect with  
**Dutchess County HELPLINE**

Experienced people who care and can help  
are available every day, 24/7

**Dutchess TEXTS** is a service of the  
Dutchess County Department of Mental Hygiene  
**Dutchess County HELPLINE 877.485.9700**  
[dutchessny.gov](http://dutchessny.gov)

The advertisement features a central smartphone displaying a text message conversation. The messages include: "DMH... I need help.", "What's happening... how can I help?", "My girlfriend just broke up with me", "I feel like cutting", "Bad fight with parents", "Friend is into drugs", and "I'm here to listen and help". Above the phone are two blue speech bubbles containing the words "Dutchess" and "TEXTS". At the bottom left is a QR code, and at the bottom right is the official seal of Dutchess County, New York.