

**Online Emotional Support in the 21st. Century:
An Opportunity for Crisis Centers**

Jill Ordonez, LMSW

2-1-1 and Samaritans Director, programs of Family and Children's Service of the Capital Region
Albany, New York.

How will the crisis centers of the future adequately connect and serve young people? Online Emotional Support offers a tremendous opportunity and is an idea whose time has come. In this era where the majority of people under 30 have integrated e-communications into their daily lives while largely ignoring print and voice options, it is incumbent on the leadership of crisis call centers to consider planning that will engage and communicate with younger people and the next generations of even more technically astute potential clients.

This workshop will share a vision of the options and considerations on the use of technology and e-communications as an alternative to traditional voice communications for crisis centers in assisting people who are in need or at-risk . Participants will come away with a clear understanding of contextual information as well as the realities and potential of the practical execution of Online Emotional Support within the field as well a their respective organizations. In addition, they will learn of an ambitious 5 year plan that will test and integrate Online Emotional Support strategies within a professional research framework in partnership with CONTACT USA and LIFELINE International.

Participants will benefit from three results; they will be able to.... – 1. Assess their personal as well as their organizations attitudes and views towards Online Emotional Support, 2. Develop an outline for integrating elements of Online Emotional Support into their organizations, 3. Understand the rationale and opportunities for participation in the national research demonstration project.

The session will start with essential background information on why and how Online Emotional Support could be a useful tool. This will be followed by a thorough examination of the varying points of view of Online Emotional Support through the eyes of callers/clients, public and regulatory entities, service providers, and funders.

State of the art research focusing on the SAHAR program in Haifa, Israel will outline important key outcomes and findings that will provide valuable insight into the relative value and potential on the usage of an Online Emotional Support model. Summary information on research of online counseling will also be shared.

Online Emotional Support is a new concept that is largely untested and unknown to crisis centers. It offers significant upside potential in transforming service delivery and yet requires professional level research to consider and test its feasibility. There are numerous questions that the crisis center community must consider before accepting and integrating the model into their organizations.

An overview of the key considerations of Online Emotional Support will be outlined and presented with a critical and balanced perspective. The key issues of implementation will include an examination of the technology necessary, crisis centers core competencies inventory and organizational assessment tool, policy and procedure, legal implications and risk management, professional vs. volunteer staff models, training, quality assurance and supervision, confidentiality and disclosure factors, marketing and communications, partner and funder management.

Jill Ordonez will also be keynote speaker during the conferences Saturday morning breakfast and will be available to answers questions as well as offer consultation throughout the conference.