



# Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Crisis Services

Public Availability and Disclosure of Mental Health Resources at HEIs

# The Trevor Project

**The Trevor Project** is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people. The Trevor Project offers a suite of 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention programs, including **TrevorLifeline**, **TrevorText**, and **TrevorChat** as well as the world's largest safe space social networking site for LGBTQ youth, **TrevorSpace**. Trevor also operates an education program with resources for youth-serving adults and organizations, an advocacy department fighting for pro-LGBTQ legislation and against anti-LGBTQ rhetoric/policy positions, and a research team to discover the most effective means to help young LGBTQ people in crisis and end suicide.

## Active Minds

**Active Minds** is the nation's leading nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults. Powered by a network on more than 800 high school and college campuses, in workplaces and communities, and through a vast public audience, Active Minds is creating communities of support and saving lives. Our signature programs include a robust college and high school chapter program, the nationally acclaimed Send Silence Packing® exhibit, our compelling Active Minds Speakers, and the newly launched Active Minds @Work initiative.

# Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) often take on a “home away from home” role for the students that attend them, and as such are integral to maintaining students’ mental health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death for those ages 18-24, the average age of college students. This public health crisis disproportionately impacts LGBTQ students, who are [more than four times as likely](#) to attempt suicide than their straight, cisgender peers.

Young adults may benefit from having access to peer support or crisis services. Whether those services are provided by the institution itself, local community services, or national resources like The Trevor Project, it is crucial that this information is accessible and easily obtained without excessive barriers, especially among underserved communities. To prioritize mental health and suicide prevention among students – both admitted and prospective – **one way to increase access to critical resources is for HEIs to prominently display contact information for crisis intervention services on their official, public-facing websites.** Displaying this contact information in a way that is visible not just to students, but also to their families and support networks, would help communicate that mental health is a top consideration for the HEI and enable students; and the people who support them to quickly identify avenues for help and support during times of crisis.

This report will examine the importance of accessible crisis services for students of HEIs, the risks of limiting accessibility, and the current level of accessible crisis services information on the official websites at HEIs across nine different states. These states make up over 1,800 institutions varying in size, geographic location, and student population.



# Methodology

In order to better understand how accessible information about crisis services resources currently is to college-aged students, The Trevor Project analyzed the accessibility of crisis services contact information on the official, public-facing websites of all HEIs from nine different states. States were selected to represent diverse geographic locations, population sizes, and demographics. Together, these nine states serve over 7.4 million students across 1,800 HEIs . The following states were examined:

Alaska  
Arizona  
California

Georgia  
Indiana  
North Carolina

Rhode Island  
Texas  
Wyoming

# Findings

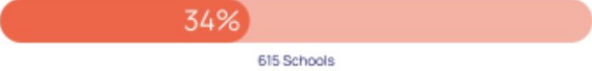
Total Number of Institutions Researched:



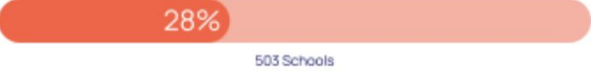
No crisis services information available:



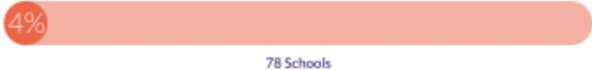
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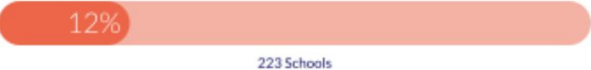
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline



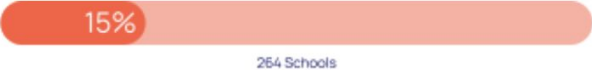
Gay and Lesbian National Hotline



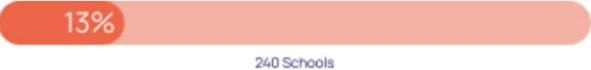
The Trevor Project's Crisis Services



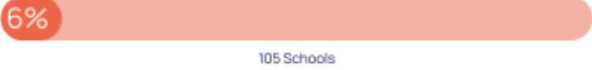
National Domestic Violence Hotline



Sexual Assault Hotline



SAMHSA Hotline



Military Helpline



# Discussion

Results of our findings indicate that 66% of the HEIs researched had no accessible<sup>1</sup> crisis services information available on their official website. Where crisis services information is publicly available, campus-specific services were most accessible, with 34% of institutions offering them. Despite its availability beyond geographic boundaries, only 27.7% of institutions publicized contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Publicly-available information regarding crisis services specifically for LGBTQ students is rare. The Trevor Project's services were highlighted by only 12.3% of the researched institutions. Information for accessing the Gay and Lesbian National hotline showed up on only 4.3% of all HEI websites researched.

It's important to note that even if HEIs did not make crisis services information available on their official website, many faculty, staff, and administrators are striving to publicize mental health resources in a range of formats. Some campuses are adding crisis services information to student ID cards, sharing information on social media, encouraging faculty members to include information on their syllabi, and tailoring resources to empower communities at higher risk to share these resources via word of mouth.

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**Our students have shared that they have access to crisis line information and resources because their professors and faculty have made it readily available in the classroom. We are actively working with our campus to make sure professors have access to this information to share via their course syllabi every semester.**

—(Student), Active Minds at Denison University, Granville, Ohio

## Looking Ahead

Addressing mental health and suicide is difficult and complex but every HEI can take small steps that will help save lives. Making crisis services information publicly available to everyone in the institution's community is a crucial step in supporting mental health and preventing suicide. To that end, The Trevor Project and Active Minds recommend that all HEIs prominently display the contact information for local and national crisis service and suicide prevention resources.

<sup>1</sup>Accessible - to be able to obtain without excessive barriers

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**I was able to access crisis line information/mental health resources during the pandemic by keeping up with social media posts from our Counseling and Psychological Services. They often post on platforms in response to recent events inside and outside the school; their commitment to doing so benefits students seeking help at any stage of their college career. It would be great to have more avenues that are more consistent and easily accessible for students to find resources!**

—Geela Margo Ramos, Active Minds at The University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL

In a recent study, 80 percent of LGBTQ young people said it is important that a crisis line include a focus on LGBTQ youth.<sup>2</sup> That’s why it is important for HEIs to include LGBTQ-specific mental health resources, such as The Trevor Project’s 24/7 crisis services via a phone lifeline, text, and chat, on their website as a means to support the unique needs of LGBTQ students. Additionally, Active Minds offers a guide to students and administrators working to add crisis services information to student ID cards ([activeminds.org/transform](https://activeminds.org/transform)).

While publicizing contact information for crisis services on their official websites is a good first step for HEIs to prioritize suicide prevention, it should certainly not end there. HEIs should implement comprehensive and LGBTQ-inclusive suicide prevention policies modeled after best practices to fit the institution. Institutions can act now by creating safe spaces and resources for communities at an increased risk for suicide and offering bystander intervention training to incoming students.

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**Our counseling center has discussed issues regarding LGBTQ students’ access to crisis information and mental health resources. With this, students have been able to share resources from the counseling center amongst themselves.**

—(Faculty), Gillette College, Gillette, WY

Finally, best practices dictate that all suicide prevention programs have an intervention policy that guides a school community on how to navigate mental health crises and suicide if and when they arise. A resource from Active Minds titled, “After a Campus Suicide: A Postvention Guide for Student-led Responses,” provides information to guide students through the difficult task of responding to a fellow student’s suicide and encourages students to identify campus, local, and national resources to support their mental health.

The Trevor Project and Active Minds are committed to continue advocating for and aiding in the development of comprehensive suicide prevention programs in higher education institutions across the country.

<sup>2</sup> [The Trevor Project, 2020 “National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2020”](#)