

# Community of Practice: Chat and Text Best Practices

## PRESENTED BY:

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## Agenda

- High-acuity help-seekers
- Familiar (frequent) contacts
- Taking two chats simultaneously
- Supervision needs
- Breakout rooms
- Share out
- Wrap up/next steps

# High-Acuity Help-Seekers

- Provide specific guidance to counselors for different high-acuity situations (e.g., de-escalating panic attacks, working with teens and youth).
- Have guidelines for counselors on when they should reach out to supervisors for support.
- Promote wellness for the crisis counselors.



# Familiar (Frequent) Contacts



Evaluate help-seeker for safety at every contact.



If the help-seeker is safe/low risk (and it is not their first chat of the day), we inform them that we are not able to talk further today and politely end the contact.



Didi Hirsch has a committee that reviews familiar contacts and develops protocols for counselors to follow when interacting with these help-seekers.

- Protocols are individualized and based on the needs of each help-seeker.



## Taking Two Contacts Simultaneously

**The Unified Platform (UP) is set up to take as many as two chats at a time.**

- While taking a chat may be helpful for center needs, it can also have an impact on:
  - Individual crisis counselor well-being
  - The quality of the interaction

### **How to transition to taking two conversations:**

- New counselors should wait to take two interactions at a time.
  - First, they need to get used to a new modality and platform.
- After adequate time on the lines and training, a counselor can make the transition to taking two chats.
  - Can be determined by supervisor/program manager in conjunction with counselor.
  - Practice before taking two chats—starting a new conversation when finishing another one.
- Get counselors excited!
  - Many of our counselors are here to help people, and taking two chats is a way that they can have an even bigger impact.



## Taking Two Contacts Simultaneously

### Tips for taking two chats:

- Many counselors may be hesitant, so it's important to build their confidence.
- Counselors should not be expected to take two chats all the time.
- Counselors should stagger conversations.
  - Taking a second chat depends on the acuity of the help-seeker in the first chat.
  - Consider help-seeker response time.
  - Allow both conversations to end before picking up new ones.
    - This will allow for time for debriefs or self-care if necessary.
  - Pop out conversation windows in the UP.
  - Consider counselor well-being:
    - Taking two chats can be taxing. If a counselor is not feeling up to it one day, take that into consideration for the day.



# What Is Unique About Being a Chat/Text Supervisor?

## Ability to see multiple conversations in real time

- Pacing of conversations can make it easier to support more than one counselor at a time.
- Only possible to hear one conversation, but supervisors can read many.

## Emergency service interventions/mandated reports

- Possible to observe live conversation and call emergency services at the same time.
- Can be harder to get location and other important information for reporting.



# What Is Unique About Being a Chat/Text Supervisor?

## Fewer lines to actively monitor

At Didi Hirsch, our call team actively answers multiple lines, so there are several different protocols to be aware of.

Chat/text crisis conversations last longer.

- Could lead to increased burnout and screen fatigue.

Reliance on instant messaging with counselors for conversations, support, and connection development.

- While this also happens for calls, we've found that there are more digital, text-based debriefs with counselors and fewer video calls with counselors.



# Breakout Room—Action Plans and Group Discussion

## Room 1

**Centers providing 24/7 services and centers providing chat/text services (but not yet 24/7)**

Didi Hirsch (24/7), Alameda County (24/7), FSA Central Coast, StarVista, Felton Institute, Santa Clara County, Kings View

## Room 2

**Centers providing 24/7 services and those not yet providing chat/text services**

WellSpace (24/7), Kern County (24/7), Buckelew Programs, Optum, Contra Costa

# Share Out



## Wrap Up

Evaluation: What would you like to see for the next community of practice?

