



Communicating about lack of services

People may experience a lack of access to services for a number of reasons, including physical location (especially in regional and remote communities), a lack of diversity and inclusion in services, a lack of available appointments at existing services, and financial factors.

When people experience a lack of services, they can be at heightened risk of mental health issues, increased alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and suicide.

Discussion around these issues is vital in increasing awareness of the problem and promoting change. However, it is important to recognise that there are risks in these discussions. Frequent, ongoing media coverage may cause feelings of hopelessness for those who are struggling with a lack of services and may stop people from attempting to access services, under the assumption that the services do not exist or do not have the capacity to support them.

With this in mind, there are some important things we can consider when communicating about a lack of services.



**Black Dog
Institute**



Mindframe

This resource has been developed by Everymind, under the Mindframe initiative, in partnership with Black Dog Institute and the National Suicide Prevention Trial Sites.



1. Balance acknowledgement of hardship with messages of hope

Balance an acknowledgement of the hardship that a lack of services causes with positive examples. This could include existing services that are succeeding or regions in which a lack of services have been addressed. For example:

'We would like to acknowledge that many members of our community are currently facing a lack of mental health services. We know that this can be stressful and would like to acknowledge this hardship. Although [e.g. many local psychologists are booked out], we'd like to point people towards a few alternative options available, including National Hotlines, online services and services in nearby towns/centres [give specific examples].'

2. Suggest preventative strategies and alternative options

Provide examples of preventative strategies, alternative care or temporary support options available to people. This might include information about self-care, national helplines such as Lifeline (13 11 14, 24/7) or creating a Suicide Safety Plan (Beyond Blue has a suicide safety plan app and website to guide you through this process). For example:

'We'd like to remind people that there are preventative strategies and techniques that can be implemented at any time, to help prevent mental ill-health or suicidal crisis. This might include creating a self-care plan or a suicide safety plan, which can be used to help you cope with times when you are low and/or experiencing suicidal thoughts. Beyond Blue has an app and website to guide you through the process of creating a suicide safety plan.'

3. Encourage members of the community to take an active role

Provide a call to action, which lets people in the community know how they can be involved in improving the situation. This may involve promoting suicide intervention programs or training that can help people recognise when someone is having thoughts of suicide, and respond to keep them safe (for example, R U OK? Day resources or LivingWorks' Start online training). For example:

'We'd like to remind the community that there are things you can do to improve this situation. This could include completing training, such as LivingWorks Start online training, which can help you recognise when someone is having thoughts of suicide and respond to keep them safe.'



4. Local supports and resources

When communicating about a lack of services, it may also be helpful to consider each of the following points that encourage people to think through the range of services available to them.

It may also be helpful to encourage community members to print the template (included at the end of this resource) based on these points so it can be filled out and used as a reference for relevant local services.

Local counsellor, psychologist, health provider or support services

Consider the services that are available in your community.

Counsellor, psychologist, health provider or support services in nearby city/town

If people are able to travel, consider the services that are available in nearby towns and cities.

Online/telephone counsellor, psychologist, health provider or support service

If community members have access to the internet or telephone, consider the services that are available via telephone, text message, online chat or video call.

Online/telephone crisis services

There are a number of online/telephone services available for crisis support. Add any others that may be useful for your community.

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14 or text 0477 13 11 14 (24/7)
- **Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467 (24/7)
- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 (24/7)
- **MensLine Australia:** 1300 78 99 78 (24/7)
- **Beyond Blue:** 1300 22 4636 (24/7)
- **QLife:** 1800 184 527
- **13YARN:** 13 92 76

Family members or friends to contact

Encourage people to create a list of family and/or friends that they can talk with.

Safe places you can go

Encourage community members to consider places they can easily get to, that are safe spaces for them to go. This might include a local Safe Haven, or a 24-hour fast food restaurant or gym.

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