

DHS news release

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DHS backed peer-driven mental health 'warm' line opens in Fossil

With a philosophy that “no one has to go through anything alone,” Morrow Wheeler Behavioral Health has begun Oregon’s first telephone “warm” line service for persons with mental health issues or questions.

The part-time, free warm line is a peer-to-peer telephone support service that operates from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays at 1-800-698-2392. The warm line is housed in an office in Fossil, but anyone in Oregon may use its services. It is funded by a one-year \$24,000 grant from the Oregon Department of Human Services Addictions and Mental Health Division.

“We’ve found that peer-to-peer mental health services such as the warm line are quite effective and that people who receive them are very positive about the experience,” said Bob Nikkel, DHS assistant director for addictions and mental health. “And with a 1-800 telephone number this warm line really is a statewide service.”

Warm line is not designed to supplant the crisis line, but offers a less formal environment to help a caller through a tough time or situation, said Kimberly Lindsay, director, Morrow Wheeler Behavioral Health, based in Heppner.

“This is for clients who would benefit from talking with someone who’s been through the same things they’re going through,” said Lindsay. “We have two employees, trained peer warm line associates, available to discuss problem issues, different coping techniques, new remedies or treatments – things that provide support to the caller.”

Here are some goals of the warm line:

- To fulfill an unmet need in the community by providing support to peers from people who have been through the system and can empathize with a caller’s situation;
- To provide help to a peer through a difficult time or situation or to share in a caller’s positive experiences;
- To listen and provide support when there may be no other source of support by helping a caller in getting through a day; to encourage a caller to find resolution to his or her own problem without infringing on the caller’s entitled right to make a decision; and

- To treat callers with respect and dignity, respecting the trust that someone places in a peer warm line associate when sharing the personal details of their lives.

“This program has a payback for the community,” said Lindsay. “It’s difficult to put a price on keeping someone out of the hospital, but the warm line may help keep someone functioning and in the community for just a few cents a day.”