



May 9th, 2022

## Changes to LGBT YouthLine's HelpLine Phone Hours

In March 2021 – one year after the pandemic forced us to close our HelpLine's phone lines and shift our services to an entirely remote operation – we relaunched our phone lines. While we have remained open on chat and text during the pandemic, it has been wonderful connecting with youth again over the phone as another avenue of peer support to better meet the needs of 2SLGBTQ+ youth across Ontario. For more details about the steps we took to relaunch our phone lines, check out our [Phone Implementation Plan](#).

Reopening our phone lines remotely required us to rethink our previous protocols around supporting volunteers, as they now had to offer peer support in their own private spaces instead of a shared service room. In response, we developed a dedicated, skills-based phone training to strengthen key areas of concern identified by volunteers. Concerns ranged from noise and unpredictability in their personal environments, to dealing with unexpected crisis calls. The new training model consisted of two tiers. All volunteers undergo "Tier 1" training to be able to operate the chat and text services of our HelpLine. However, "Tier 2" is just for volunteers who are interested in taking phone calls. By the time we were ready to reopen our phone lines, we had 12 dedicated phone (Tier 2) volunteers fully trained.

Within a few months of relaunching our phone lines, we began noticing signs of difficulty and stress directly impacting phone volunteers as well as some capacity concerns. Some of these challenges included:

- Stress related to the overall higher intensity of calls vs chats and texts on our HelpLine, including harassment which accounted for 10% of calls compared to 2.5% of chats and texts that we receive.
- Reduced capacity on our phones. Balancing many competing priorities as a staff team we were struggling to run the number of Tier 2 training cohorts we needed to increase our phone volunteer numbers quickly enough to alleviate the burden on the small pool of phone volunteers. Ideally, we would have had 2-3 phone volunteers per shift to allow for scheduling flexibility, and we were averaging 1-2 per shift. While we continue to have strong coverage on chat and text, we began experiencing phone shift closures more frequently.

[www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca)  
[info@youthline.ca](mailto:info@youthline.ca)  
1-888-687-9688 / 416-962-2232

PO Box 73118, Wood Street PO  
Toronto ON M4Y 2W5  
Charity# 89756 4951 RR001



- Experiences of isolation and stress among our phone team, as their shifts were starting and ending at different times from our chat and text volunteers. As they were sometimes the only person on a dedicated phone shift, needing a day off could mean us having to close phones for the night.

Our priority is offering peer support to the youth who reach out to us. Given this, **we have decided to adjust our hours and schedule for our HelpLine’s phone lines.** We want to ensure the wellbeing of our phone volunteers as we continue to increase the number of HelpLine volunteers to meet the growing demand of our HelpLine services. This change will also allow us to offer a more reliable and consistent service to those youth who prefer phone calls over chat and text.

Since we reopened the phone lines, we have been offering our phone service at half capacity, Sunday to Friday from 6:00 – 9:00 PM EST, while chat and text have remained open from Sunday to Friday from 4:00 – 9:30 PM EST.

Beginning **May 16, 2022**, our phone lines will only be open on **Mondays and Tuesdays, but the hours will increase from 4:00 – 9:30 PM EST.**

Our new hours will be:

- **Phones:** Monday and Tuesday from 4:00 pm – 9:30 pm EST
- **Chat and Text:** Sunday to Friday from 4:00 pm – 9:30 pm EST

### **Benefits of this new schedule:**

- **Easier scalability.** From a scheduling perspective, it is much more challenging in our current model (phones open 6-9PM six days a week) to increase our hours incrementally. Full-shift days on phones means that we can add more shifts one day at a time, rather than having to build capacity to make the jump from half to full capacity at once.
- **Reduced isolation** between chat/text and phone volunteers by overlapping their shifts to increase volunteer relationship-building and peer support.
- **Continued phone service** while we build capacity internally, and adjust to the many changes and challenges the pandemic has brought to our frontline service organization at a pace that supports the wellbeing of our volunteers and staff.



[www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca)  
[info@youthline.ca](mailto:info@youthline.ca)  
1-888-687-9688 / 416-962-2232

PO Box 73118, Wood Street PO  
Toronto ON M4Y 2W5  
Charity# 89756 4951 RR001



If you are looking for support via phone, please give us a call during our new hours at **1-800-268-9688**.

You can also reach us by text at 647-694-4275, or by chat on our website:  
<https://www.youthline.ca/>

As a frontline service organization, we have consistently shown up for 2SLGBTQ+ youth across the province throughout the pandemic, and that includes our dedicated volunteers and staff. We hope this change will allow us to strike a balance between the needs of our volunteers and our service users. This change in hours will continue to be evaluated, and we will continue to train more phone volunteers to increase our pool. We will provide an update about the status of our phone hours by Fall 2022.

If you have any questions about these changes, please reach out to Minna Frederick, Peer Support Manager, at [MinnaF@youthline.ca](mailto:MinnaF@youthline.ca)

Sincerely,

Minna Frederick  
Manager, Peer Support

**About LGBT YouthLine:** LGBT YouthLine is a 2SLGBTQ+ youth-led organization that affirms and supports the experiences of youth (29 and under) across Ontario.

We do this by:

- Providing anonymous peer support through our HelpLine and referrals;
- Training youth to provide support to other youth; and
- Providing resources so youth can make informed decisions.

At YouthLine, all our volunteers are trained peer supporters ages 16-29 with a diversity of 2SLGBTQ+ identities and lived experiences. We serve all of Ontario. We are currently taking texts, chats, and email from 4pm-9:30pm EST every day except Saturday. We are taking phone calls only on Mondays and Tuesdays, from 4PM-9:30PM EST.



[www.youthline.ca](http://www.youthline.ca)  
[info@youthline.ca](mailto:info@youthline.ca)  
1-888-687-9688 / 416-962-2232

PO Box 73118, Wood Street PO  
Toronto ON M4Y 2W5  
Charity# 89756 4951 RR001