



Crisis Workers shouldn't work alone

Clients and their communities deserve better

When are frontline Crisis Workers at Regina Mobile Crisis Services working alone?

- Since the spring of 2013, there has been only one Crisis Worker scheduled to work the weekday shift, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., leaving only one Crisis Worker available for a 7.5 hour period.

Is it true that Mobile Crisis doesn't get many calls during the day?

- No. In 2014-15, 33% of the total number of calls recorded at Regina Mobile Crisis were between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.¹ This percentage is consistent with the past several years.
- Crises happen at all hours of the day. No one can predict when a crisis will happen, but the agency can prepare for a crisis by ensuring that it's adequately staffed, with at least two Crisis Workers scheduled at all times.

Isn't Mobile Crisis largely a referral-based agency during the day?

- No. Crisis workers engage in crisis counselling on a regular basis, including weekdays.
- Regina Mobile Crisis Services is the only agency that is responsible for the Problem Gambling Helpline, the Farm Stress Line, and the Crisis/Suicide Line – and people call these lines at all hours of the day.
- In addition to these lines, Regina Mobile Crisis also answers the office Intake Line, Child Abuse Line, Social Services Line, Mental Health Clinic, Regina Police Services Line, and the Regina Police Service radio, as well as assisting walk-in clients.

How busy are Crisis Workers at Regina Mobile Crisis Services?

- In 2014-15, Regina Crisis Workers responded to 23,286 calls – an 11% increase over 2013/14 and a 22% increase over 2012/13.²
- In 2014-15, Regina Crisis Workers spent on average 25.8 minutes per call. Time spent on contacts varies from five minutes to more than 10 hours.³

How does working alone affect people in crisis?

- When a Crisis Worker is working alone, and on the phone with a client, or attending a call out of the office, a live answering service takes messages. This is unacceptable. When someone is experiencing a crisis, they need immediate crisis intervention from a trained professional. Leaving a message doesn't keep someone safe, or address their urgent, possibly life-threatening situation.
- Crisis Workers are responsible for responding to multiple lines. When working alone, calls are sometimes dropped, leaving clients in crises with no one at Mobile Services to respond to them. If someone is contemplating suicide, or trying to flee from a domestic violence incident, they will have to wait, or try to find help elsewhere.
- A Crisis Worker working alone could be out on a call for several hours. This results in a delay in services.

How does working alone affect Crisis Workers?

- Crisis Workers are faced with an ethical dilemma when working alone. They know that someone in crisis is calling on another line, but they can't answer, because they're assisting another client in need.
- Crisis Workers want to be able to meet all of their clients' needs – and need adequate staffing in order to do so.
- Knowing that they are not equipped to respond immediately to all of the agency's clients calling for help takes its toll on workers' mental health.
- Working alone is also a safety issue: clients have walked into the Regina Mobile Crisis office and jeopardized the safety of a lone Crisis Worker.

Do Crisis Workers always go out on calls in teams of two?

- No, not always. Due to a recent cut to weekend and statutory holiday coverage, three Crisis Workers – down from four – are scheduled, so if there are two calls at the same time, one Crisis Worker has to go out on a call on their own.
- Crisis Workers have also gone out alone on calls while working alone during weekdays.

How does going out on calls alone affect Crisis Workers and their clients?

- Frontline Crisis Workers deal with high risk situations and need to have backup staff. When working in teams of two, they are able to assist one another in dangerous situations, and are better equipped to protect people who are vulnerable.
- During a day shift, while working alone, a Crisis Worker had to assist police with an “out of control” 17-year-old who was being kicked out of her mother’s house. The worker transported the teenager to a high school.
- While working alone, during a day shift, a Crisis Worker transported a woman to a medical appointment, at the request of the Crisis Response Team from the Mental Health Clinic.
- While working alone, a Crisis Worker attended a completed suicide to provide support to the family. This worker was on this call for three hours.
- Crisis workers have – by themselves – provided transportation to women fleeing domestic violence, located patients who needed to return to the hospital for medical treatment, assisted the fire department, and assisted the City of Regina by supporting tenants who were affected by condemned housing.

How can you expect management to address this issue when the board chair says the agency has a \$50,000 deficit?

- This is a staff scheduling issue, not a resource issue.
- The schedule can be changed without the agency experiencing any financial impact. The Crisis Worker that works from 4:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. Monday to Friday can be scheduled to come in earlier that day. And the Crisis Worker that works from 2:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. on weekends and statutory holidays can also be scheduled to come in earlier.
- If Mobile Crisis Services is running a deficit, management is responsible for the agency’s recent spending decisions, which include hiring an expensive lawyer to represent the agency at the bargaining table, and choosing to pay for an Assistant Executive Director position for which the agency did not receive funding – at the expense of having more Crisis Workers scheduled.

Sources

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- ¹ *Mobile Crisis Services Inc. 41st Annual General Meeting Statistical Report 2014-15, p.1*
http://www.mobilecrisis.ca/assets/documents/MCS_AGM_2015.pdf
- ² *Mobile Crisis Services Inc. Annual General Meeting Statistical Reports: 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15.*
- ³ *Mobile Crisis Services Inc. 41st Annual General Meeting Statistical Report 2014-15, p.10*
http://www.mobilecrisis.ca/assets/documents/MCS_AGM_2015.pdf