



For Immediate Release

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ECONOMY, JOBLESSNESS CITED AS FACTORS IN 220% SURGE OF SUICIDE CALLS TO HOUSTON'S CRISIS HOTLINE THIS YEAR

Houston Job Hotline Provides Help, Hope

HOUSTON, TX (July 22, 2010) --- As the senate voted Tuesday on an extension of unemployment benefits, news reports profile anxious Americans who are worried about having no income and no place to turn. The effects of joblessness and economic pressures are evident on Houston's Crisis Hotline, where **there has been a 220% increase in suicide calls since this time last year.**

In 2010 1,446 suicide calls were received on Crisis Hotline from January through June as compared to 451 calls in 2009. Crisis Hotline counselors believe the economic downturn and high unemployment rate are factors contributing to the increase, noting that many callers express distress related to their financial situation and joblessness.

The **Houston Job Hotline** at **(713) 533-WORK (9675)**, which is also operated by Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc., was launched in November of 2009 to respond to needs generated by the economic crisis. Houston Job Hotline is free, confidential, anonymous and operates 24/7 to provide employment-related resources and referrals for qualifying, low-income Harris County residents. Dedicated, trained phone counselors provide qualifying callers with at least three employment resources based on their needs. Among the resources identified by phone counselors are job re-training programs, job fair information, resume help and other job-related support services. While officials point to success stories already generated by Houston Job Hotline, they believe a great many area residents do not know about the service.

Dr. Jonita Reynolds, CEO of the **Gulf Coast Community Services Association (GCCSA)** which funds the Houston Job Hotline, visited Crisis Intervention's offices recently for an update on the impact of the hotline, in light of the need as demonstrated by the increase in crisis calls from Houstonians who are desperate for help.

"Now, more than ever, a job hotline is a needed resource in our community, as evidenced by the dramatic increase in financial and employment-related calls to Houston's Crisis Hotline" said Dr. Reynolds. "Houston Job Hotline partners with more than 70 local agencies that provide unemployed, low-income Houstonians with a next step--- whether it's job re-training, resume help or other employment-related resources."

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Since its launch in November 2009 through June 2010, **Houston Job Hotline has received 2,309 calls** with the highest call volume in November 2009 at 706 calls and February 2010 at 627 calls. Fifty-two percent of callers were Hispanic, followed by 23 percent African-American and 14 percent Caucasian. Forty-five percent of callers were female and 42 percent were male.

While Houston Job Hotline serves a specific target income group, all callers have access and can receive help and resource referrals through Crisis Hotline, Spanish Hotline and TeenLine, which are all operated by Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc.

“We’ve seen such an increase in overall crisis calls this year to Crisis Hotline and many were related to financial and employment concerns--- so we know that Houston Job Hotline is a much needed resource in the community because it helps people access the programs and services they need to find work,” said **Shari Koziol**, executive director of Crisis Intervention of Houston.

Houston Job Hotline is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and administered by the Gulf Coast Community Services Association (GCCSA). To qualify for referrals through Houston Job Hotline, callers must be legal Harris County residents who meet the Federal Income Poverty Guidelines set by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs’ Community Services Block Grant.

About Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc.

Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc. operates Crisis Hotline (713-HOTLINE) as well as a Spanish hotline (713-4-AYUDA) and TeenLine (713-524-TEEN). These confidential, anonymous phone lines are staffed by trained counselors 24-hours a day, seven days a week to answer the call of Houstonians in crisis. In its 38-year history, Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc. has helped more than two million Houstonians by answering more than 80,000 crisis-related phone calls each year. Along with phone counseling, CIH services include on-site crisis response teams, suicide prevention and intervention education, links to community resources and referral agencies, and community education. With a mission of helping people in crisis, CIH’s goal is to remove all barriers to getting people in crisis the help they need, when they need it, regardless of their circumstances. Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc. is a United Way agency. To learn more, visit www.crisishotline.org.

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FACTS AND NUMBERS: SUMMARY

Total Number of **All Calls** to Crisis Hotline January-June, 2010: **33,404**

Total Number of **Suicide Calls** to Crisis Hotline January-June 2009: **451**

Total Number of **Suicide Calls** to Crisis Hotline January-June 2010: **1,446 (220% increase)**

Total Number of **Financial and Employment-Related Calls** to Crisis Hotline January-June, 2010: **1,714**