



Crisis Center Needs Volunteers

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Cuts in the state's 2-1-1 program means the Arkansas Crisis Center will receive more calls than before -- and they need some help. Funding problems have forced the 2-1-1 hotlines to cut back on operating hours. The lines are now open from eight to five, Monday thru Friday only. All 2-1-1 calls are now answered at a statewide call center in Pine Bluff. Since the crisis center hotlines are open 24-hours a day, the center will now take calls from people unable to reach the 2-1-1 line after hours. Arkansas Crisis Center Executive Director Shelby Chandler says the center already takes 500 to 800 calls a month, and that number will only grow. "We're expecting our call volume to go up after hours because if people can't reach 2-1-1 they can still reach us so we'll need to ramp up and be ready," she says. Right now, she says there's only one person at any given time answering calls. "Everyday on the lines we have someone calling in tears saying I just need someone to listen to me, and that's what we do. We would hate for someone at that point in their lives, so overwhelmed, to call a hotline and receive a busy signal," Chandler says. Chandler would like to have two to three volunteers on a single shift answering phones. Volunteers can work from home. All they need is the internet. "Anyone that is retired, anyone that's disabled or doesn't have transportation but still wants to be involved in their community and help, it's a good way they could do that," Chandler says. Interested volunteers can contact the crisis center at 479-756-1995, or visit the website at nwacrisiscenter.org. The 24 hour crisis center hotline is 1-888-CRISIS2.
