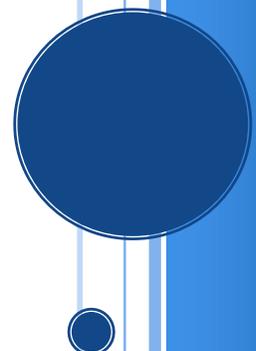




# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

FirstLink  
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Fargo, ND 58107

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## TABLE OF SERVICES

### **Information & Crisis Services**

#### **Telephone Services**

- Information & Referral
- Listening & Support
- Crisis Intervention
- Suicide Lifeline

#### **Crisis Contract Lines**

- North Dakota University System - Statewide
- Rape & Abuse Crisis Center
- Jamestown Salvation Army/South Central Homeless Coalition
- Military Service Center
- Region IV South – Both Adult & Children Mobile Crisis Teams
- Sexual Assault Resources and Advocacy (SARA) Helpline - NDSU
- Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)
- Southeast Human Service Center

#### **Suicide Services**

- Follow-Up Call Program
- Suicide Education Outreach Training
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- SafeTALK Training

#### **Community Information Services**

- Database Collection

#### **Emergency Services**

- Child Abduction Response Team (CART)
- Disaster Response and Volunteer Coordination

### **Education**

#### **Mental Health Trainings**

- Mental Health First Aid
- Youth Mental Health First Aid

#### **Community Education**

- Meet FirstLink
- Suicide Talk with FirstLink
- Community Resources
- Active Listening
- Noteworthy Customers
- Resilience & Self-Care

### **Community Outreach & Awareness**

#### **Public Relations & Marketing**

- Media Correspondence
- Agency Newsletter
- Social Media
- Advertising
- Speaking Engagements

**Development**

- Fundraising
- Grant Writing

**Giving Tree of Hope/Toys for Tots & Connection Fair**

**Administration**

**Finance**

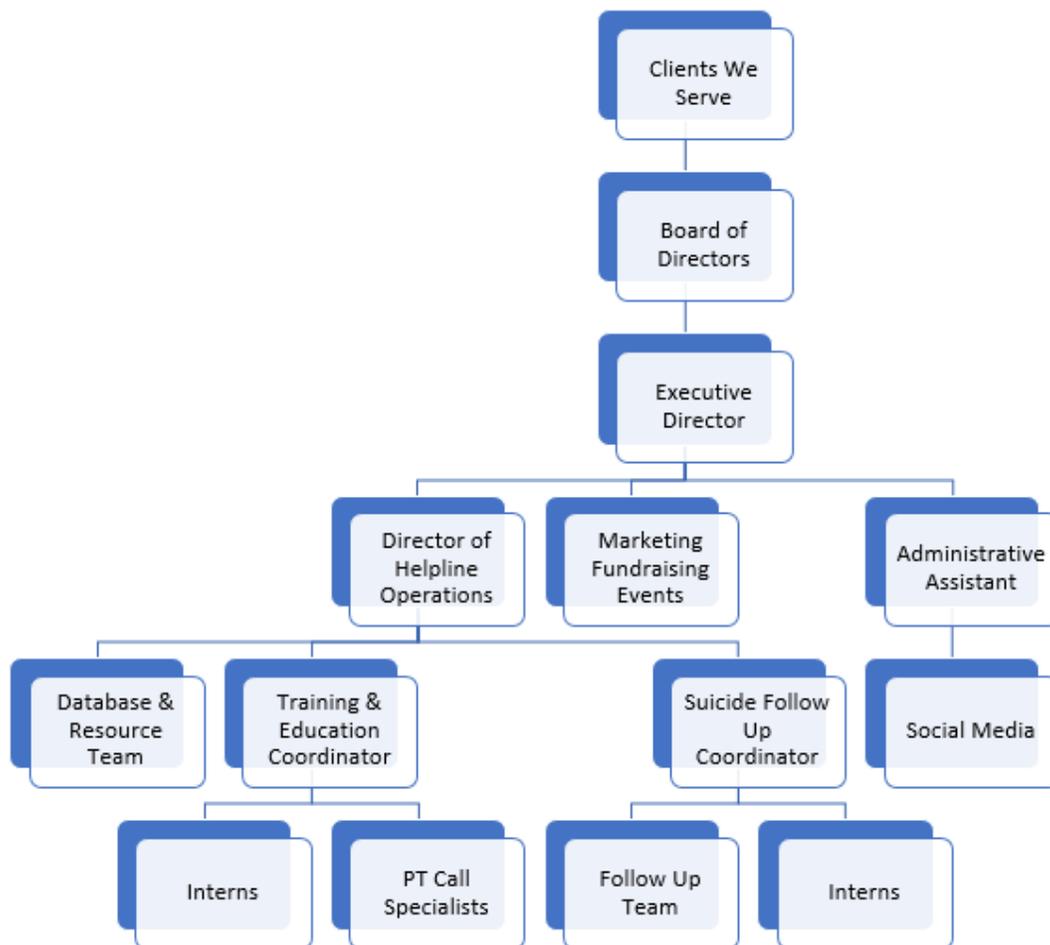
- Budget
- Audit
- Financial Reporting
- Accounting

**Human Resources**

- Benefits
- Staffing

**Technical Operations**

2017 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# FIRSTLINK'S MISSION, VISION, AND PURPOSE

Mission: To assist people in identifying, accessing, and making effective use of community and volunteer resources.

Vision: To be the first link in linking people and resources 24 hours a day.

Purpose:

- Provide appropriate Information and Referral of mainly Health and Human Service resources to callers and community members
- Provide 24 hour listening and support to callers
- Provide suicide prevention services including handling calls from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network at the local level
- Provide training in the areas of Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, and Workplace Wellness
- Provide after-hours services to other agencies by handling their calls when their offices are closed

FirstLink continues to be accredited by the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) since 1987 and by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) since 2009.

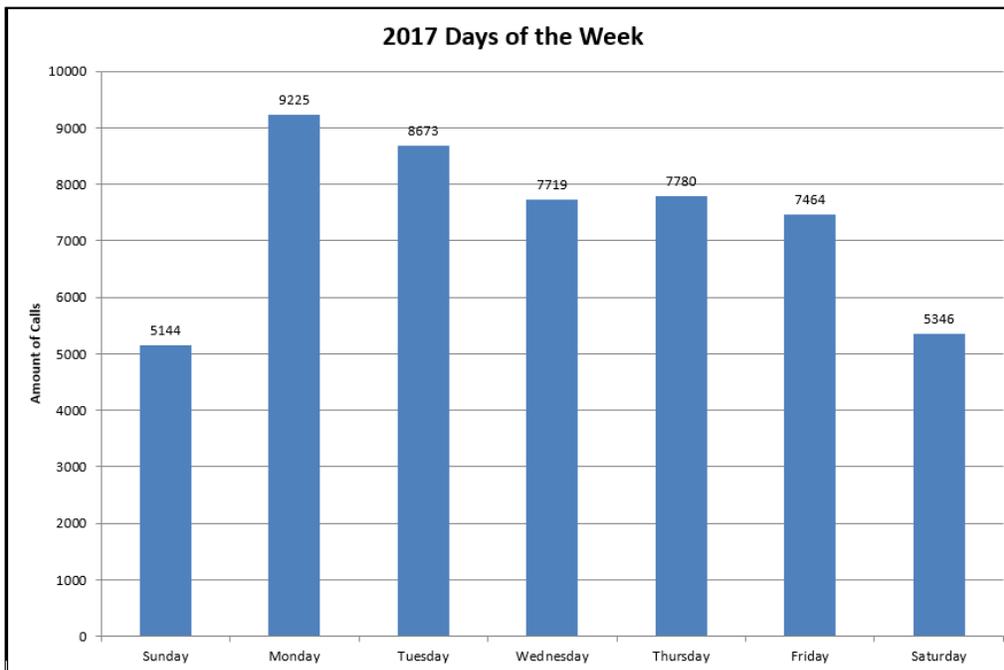
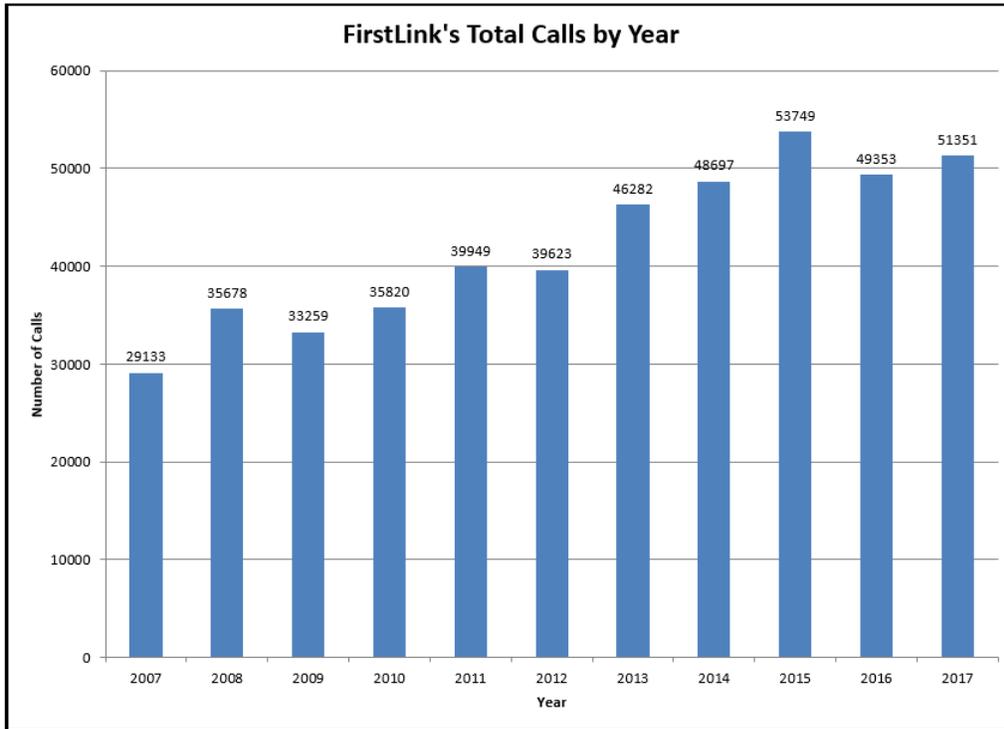
FirstLink is contracted to answer phones for 17 agencies to provide a variety of support services. FirstLink screens each call for crisis intervention needs, provides listening & support or information & referral according to individual contracts. FirstLink regularly attends community events in an effort to spread awareness about our organization. In 2017, we attended 24 different community events and reached approximately 1,598 individuals.

## 2017 STATISTICS – VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Volunteers help with a variety of tasks at FirstLink. Interns help by answering 211 and NSPL phone lines and go through the entire 75 hours of training to become a call specialist. Other volunteers help with fundraising, administrative tasks, operations, painting, putting together office equipment, photography and they help spread the word about our mission. FirstLink welcomed 7 interns from local universities that were trained as Call Specialists and provided resources, help and hope to FirstLink's contacts. Volunteers helped FirstLink paint our call center a cheerful color, provide photography at our events, and helped at our annual breakfast, Glitter Gala and Giving Tree of Hope/Toys for Tots event. FirstLink has a dedicated Board of Directors that volunteer hours of their personal time for meetings, trainings, and assist with special events. In 2017, FirstLink volunteers served 958.5 hours totaling a value of \$20,689.80 (excluding our Giving Tree of Hope event.) Amazing! Thank you!

# 2017 STATISTICS – PHONE CONNECTIONS

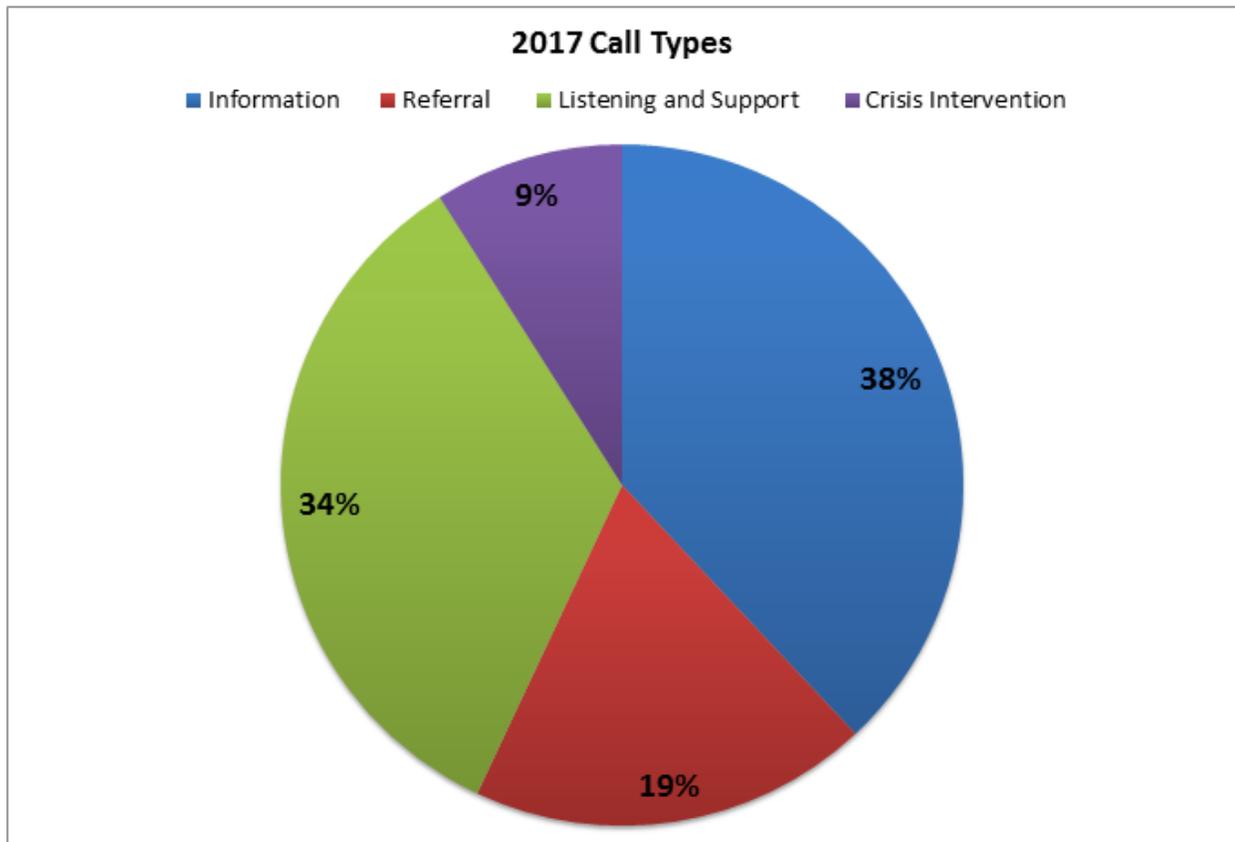
FirstLink's Call Specialists handled 51,351 calls in 2017. Call Specialists answer three main phone lines: The FirstLink 2-1-1 Helpline, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and After-Hours Answering Lines.



## 2017 STATISTICS – CALL TYPES

FirstLink categorizes each call with one of four call types: Information, Referral, Listening and Support, and Crisis Intervention.

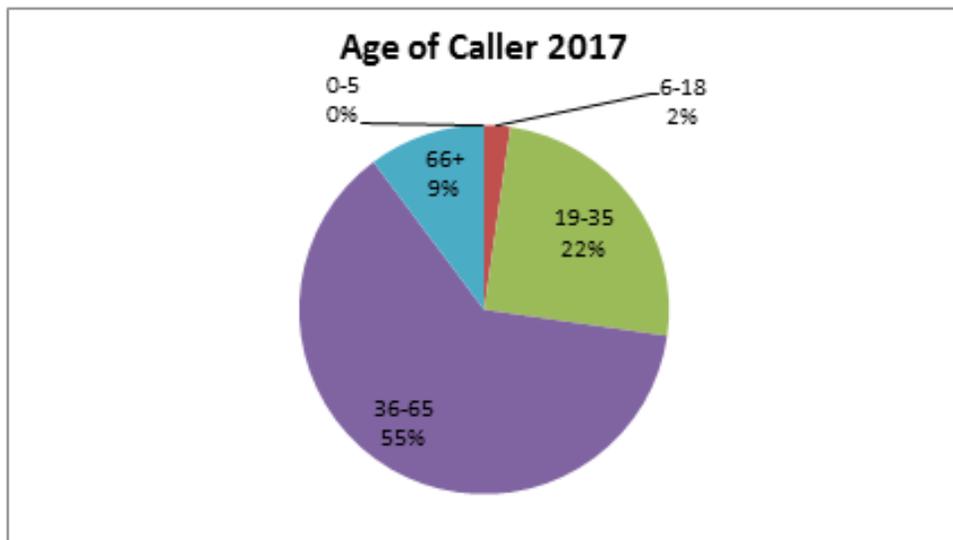
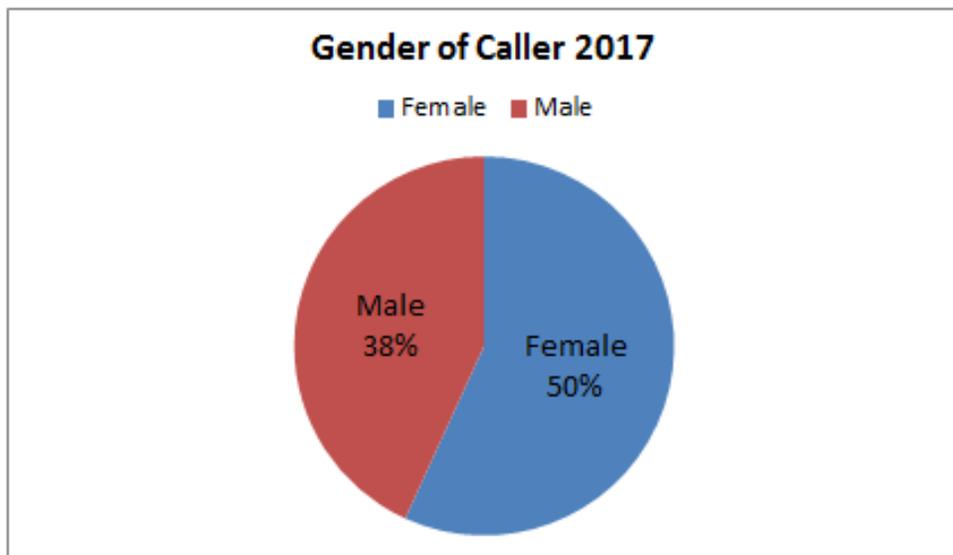
- Information calls include situations where the caller is requesting specific details about certain agencies in their community. Nonproductive calls such as hang ups are also classified as an information call type.
- Referral calls are when the caller informs the Call Specialist about a specific need and the Call Specialist assesses the situation and determines what resources are most appropriate.
- Listening and Support calls consist of Call Specialists using active listening to support the caller.
- Crisis Intervention calls include suicide related calls, calls when our Call Specialists initiated rescue, or calls through contract agencies' after-hour lines in which a Call Specialist had to connect a caller to the agencies' on-call staff.



Please Note: For our internal reporting purposes, all calls that come in are placed under one of the four following categories (information, referral, listening & support, or crisis intervention) but the reality is each call we receive is a crisis for the person on the other end of the phone. Imagine you are the mother who just fed your baby the last bottle of formula you have and you can't afford to buy more, this is a crisis to them, but a referral call to us. Or imagine you are newly widowed and it's the middle of the night and you can't sleep and just need to hear a voice on the other end of the phone, but don't know who to call, this is a crisis to them, but a listening & support call to us.

## 2017 STATISTICS – DEMOGRAPHICS

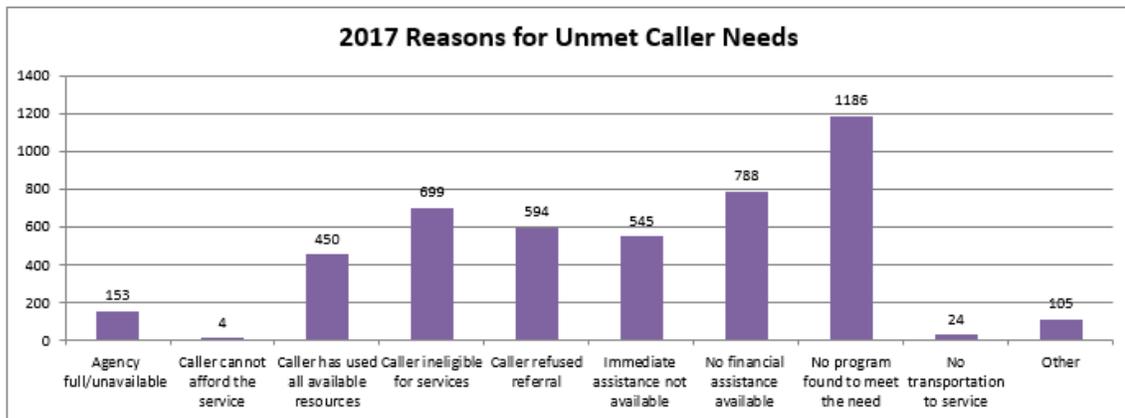
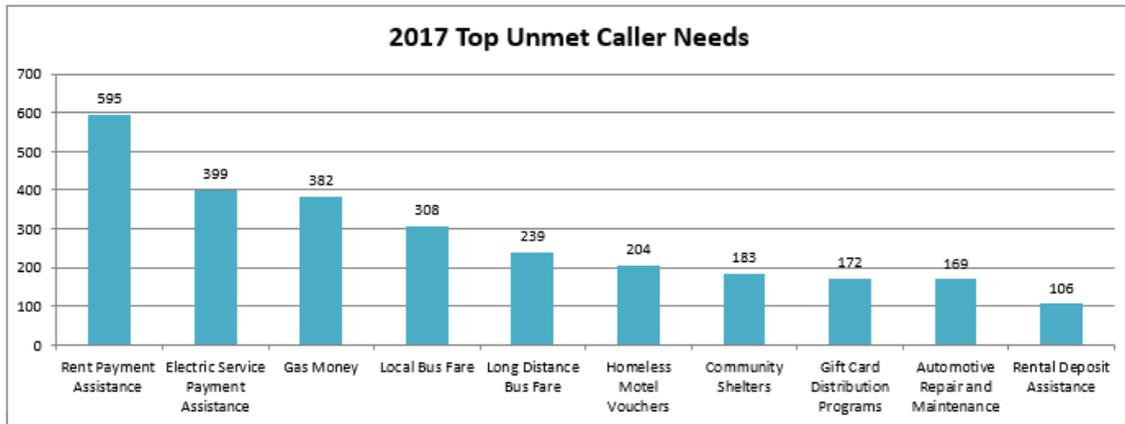
FirstLink identifies a caller's demographics once a conversation has been initiated through the incoming call. Of the callers we spoke with, 62% were female and 38% were male. Just over 1/2 of the callers were estimated to fall between the ages of 36 and 65.



# 2017 STATISTICS – RESOURCES

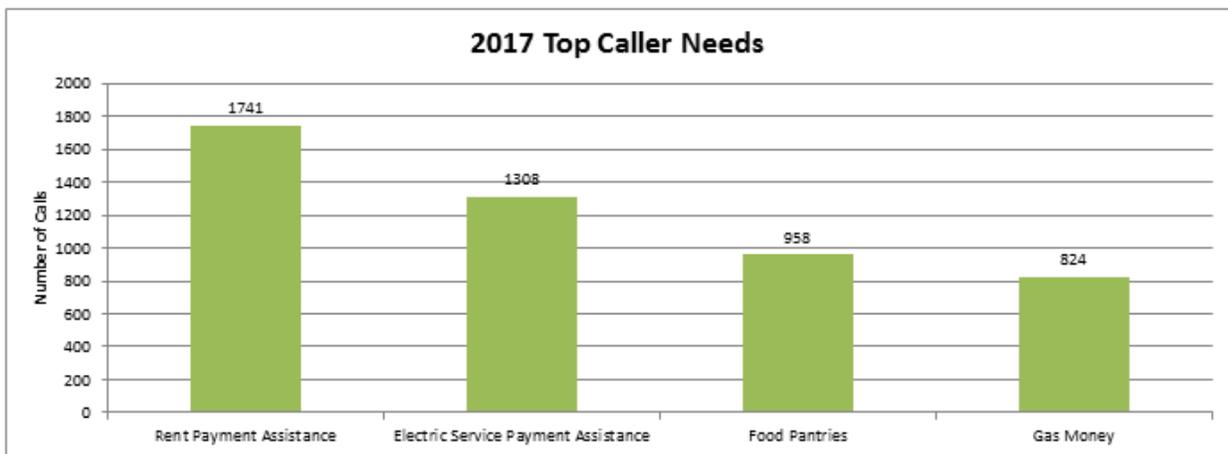
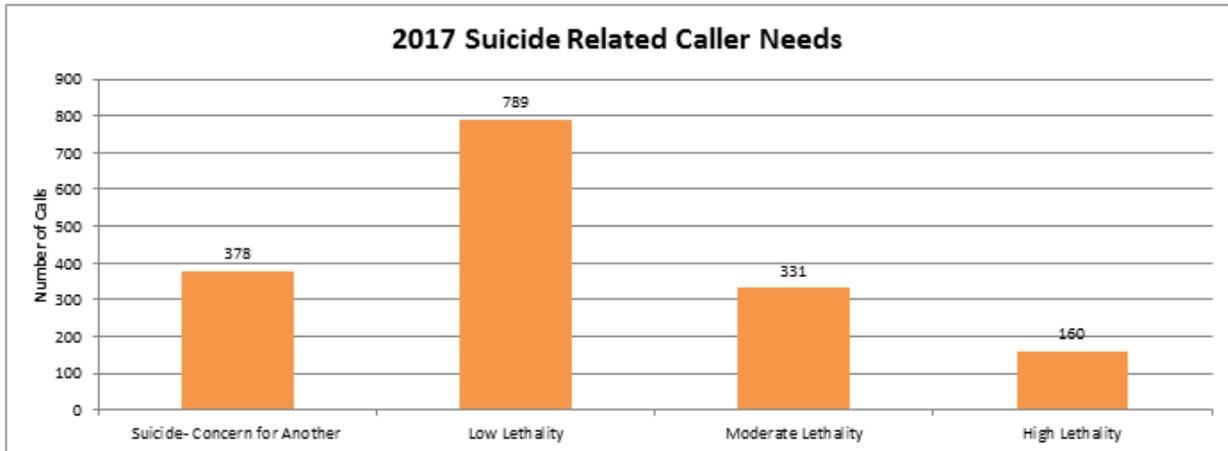
FirstLink offered 19,047 community resources in 2017. The following is a breakdown of information and referral needs that callers had this year:

- Arts Culture and Recreation - 136
- Clothing/Personal/Household Needs - 1298
- Disaster Services - 27
- Education - 92
- Employment - 124
- Food/Meals - 1222
- Health Care - 1154
- Housing - 3666
- Income Support/Assistance - 788
- Individual Family and Community Support - 1948
- Information Services - 820
- Legal Consumer and Public Safety Services - 876
- Mental Health/Addictions - 2147
- Other Government/Economic Services - 147
- Transportation - 1905
- Utility Assistance - 1573
- Volunteers/Donations – 135



# 2017 STATISTICS – SUICIDE RELATED CALLS

In 2017, FirstLink handled 6,533 calls related to suicide. Of those calls, FirstLink only had to initiate rescue 45 times. This shows what having nonjudgmental listening support can do to deescalate a situation.



## 2017 REPORT – GIVING TREE OF HOPE AND TOYS FOR TOTS

FirstLink hosted our 43<sup>rd</sup> Giving Tree of Hope event this December! It's amazing that for over 40 years, we have been providing gifts to those in Cass and Clay counties that are in need! We love Giving Tree of Hope here at FirstLink because we get to help our clients face to face!

This year we collected 11,480 gifts. On distribution day, we served 1,070 households, providing 4,061 gifts to them. The remaining gifts were distributed to 30 agencies in the Fargo Moorhead area to support their clients.

This program relies heavily on the community's support and would not be possible without our amazing volunteers. This year 399 volunteers dedicated 1,396.75 hours of their time to the Giving Tree of Hope event. Volunteers staffed our collection table at West Acres mall, helped organize and wrap gifts on collection day, and helped give out gifts on distribution day!

## 2017 REPORT - TRAINING & EDUCATION

In 2017, FirstLink provided 201 presentations on a variety of topics including mental health, suicide, community resources, disasters, volunteerism, and self-care. Through these presentations we reached 4,961 people. We were able to educate people in each region of North Dakota about the help and hope that is available through our 24-hour phone services.

In 2017, FirstLink staff provided education on suicide prevention to a number of county social service and county jail staff across ND. FirstLink also partnered with the EMS Association to provide Mental Health First Aid training to rural ambulance staff.

For nearly 20 years, FirstLink has provided Suicide Education Outreach to schools in Cass and Clay County. We provide students with information on myths and facts related to suicide, warning signs for suicide, and resources that are available to help. Through this program, we reached 2,670 students. During the presentation we give students a chance to write down questions they have about suicide and mental health. We also instruct them to write down their name if they would like to speak with a counselor. In 2017, we helped connect 73 students to their counselor for help.

FirstLink is always happy to present to different groups in the community to help them learn how they or their clients can use our database of resources to get connected to help and hope.

## 2017 REPORT – SUICIDE FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

FirstLink was excited to continue the work with the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) and the North Dakota Department of Health for the Suicide Prevention Lifeline Crisis Center Follow-Up Grant that was originally awarded in July of 2016. FirstLink is still partnered with Altru Health Systems in Grand Forks, ND to offer follow-up calls with any individual at imminent risk of suicide within 24-48 hours of receiving their referral. Although a year has gone by, the main goals and objectives of FirstLink's follow-up program remains the same. This program provides suicide support prevention services, by offering follow-up calls with participants after they have been seen at a clinic or discharged from a hospital or Emergency Department. The program is also offered to those individuals who have reached FirstLink through the 2-1-1 Helpline or National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) and stated they were having suicidal ideation. In 2017, FirstLink received 1,052 referrals to the program. 4,810 calls were made to participants, leading to 1,265 successful contacts. FirstLink also mailed 895 caring cards to program referrals.

Primary Goals:

- 1) Support physical and emotional safety of participants
- 2) Empower and motivate participants to use resources available to them in their own communities
- 3) Reduce service gaps by promoting continuity of care
- 4) Encourage resilience and the development of a safety plan

The follow-up team takes on many roles while in contact with a participant. The different responsibilities of each call specialist while talking to a follow-up participant are as follows:

- Assessing for risk
- Nonjudgmental listening and supportive contact
- Offer coping strategies and other informal resources
- Support and encourage self-help strategies
- Encourage appropriate resources & treatment promotion
- Develop a crisis management plan and/or safety plan
- Review crisis/safety plan
- De-escalating crisis (when appropriate)

Determine when the next follow-up call will occur (this is tailored to the unique and individual needs of each participant)

### Current Hospitals and Clinics that are Partnered with FirstLink:

- Altru Health Systems – Grand Forks
- Cavalier County Memorial – Langdon
- Central Valley Health – Jamestown
- CHI St. Alexius – Williston
- Community Action Partnership – Dickinson
- Elgin Community Clinic
- First District Health (9 Clinics)
- Glen Ullin Family Medical Center - Elgin, ND
- Jacobson Memorial Hospital and Care
- Jamestown Regional Medical Center (JRMC)
- ND State Hospital – Jamestown
- Northland Community Health (6 Clinics)
- Northwood Deaconess Health Center – Northwood
- Prairie St. Johns - Fargo
- Sakakawea Medical Center – Hazen
- Sanford – Fargo/Moorhead
- SW District Health – Dickinson
- Valley Community Health
- Wishek Community Hospital and Clinics

## 2017 REPORT – SUICIDE FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

### SUCCESS STORIES

Client was being discharged from the ER but knew he couldn't be safe. Told the follow-up program call specialist that he would attempt suicide when he got home, the emergency room was still going to discharge him, stating they did not have a bed for him. CS asked the follow-up participant if she could advocate for him and speak with the doctor in the ER. CS was able to speak with the doctor and was able to agree with the doctor on a safety plan and the correct services, ensuring the clients safety. This client re contacted us thanking us for advocating for him and getting him the services he needed. Client stated he feels we saved his life.