Evaluating a Web-Based Crisis Hotline for Sexual Assault Victims: Reducing Barriers, Increasing Help-Seeking, and Improving the Help-Seeking Experience

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Introduction

Studies suggest that approximately 20% of female college students experience a sexual assault while in college (Fedina et al., 2018; Krebs et al., 2007; Muehlenhard et al., 2017). Students with marginalized identities, such as those who are black, gay or bisexual, transgender or gender non-binary, have a disability, or have several intersecting marginalized identities, experience higher rates of sexual violence than their peers (Coulter et al., 2017; Coulter & Rankin, 2020; Findley et al., 2016; Ford & Soto-Marquez, 2016; Scherer et al., 2016). Sexual assault has been linked to a number of adverse outcomes, including mental and physical health consequences, as well as negative educational outcomes like lower GPA and increased risk of dropping out (Banyard et al., 2020; Campbell et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2014; Mengo & Black, 2016; Wasco & Campbell, 2002). Despite the existence of victim advocacy services (e.g., counseling, advocacy, investigatory), only 15-25% of college victims of forcible rape and 7-13% of victims of rape while incapacitated seek help from one or more of these services (Cantor et al., 2015; Krebs et al., 2007). Reporting to law enforcement is similarly infrequent, with only 0-12.9% of college victims reporting their experience to the criminal justice system (Sabina & Ho, 2014). Finding ways to decrease barriers to help-seeking, increase the utilization of crime victim services, and improve the quality and efficiency of the help-seeking experience are driving the emergence of new, technology-based services for crime victims, including text or web-based crisis hotlines. However, there is little research available to guide the development and implementation of these web-based crisis hotlines for campus sexual assault survivors or to assess the effectiveness of this mode of service delivery for college survivors.

Background and Review of the Literature

Sexual Assault Victim Advocacy Services

Victim advocacy services emerged as a way to provide empathic and nonjudgmental support for crime victims, whether or not they report their experiences to law enforcement (Martin, 2005). To accomplish these service goals, victim advocacy service providers adopt a client-centered approach in which victims control the direction of the conversation (Grossman et al., 2019) and utilize trauma-specific care guided by the principles of safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). Sexual assault service providers utilize specific skills such as active listening, normalizing and validating survivors' experiences, educating about sexual assault, and assessing safety (Macy et al., 2009; Munro-Kramer et al., 2017; Wasco et al., 2004). For example, service providers reduce isolation by providing a safe environment to discuss help-seeking, reporting, and whether and how to share with family and friends (Decker & Naugle, 2009; Macy et al., 2009). The victim's physical and emotional safety is paramount, and providers regularly assess and address safety needs (Decker & Naugle, 2009; Macy et al., 2009). Sexual assault services also seek to restore control and agency to victims, increasing self-efficacy and confidence (Decker & Naugle, 2009; Macy et al., 2009; Munro-Kramer et al., 2017).

Early crisis intervention techniques, in particular, may serve a crucial role in setting a victim on a path toward healing, as supportive experiences during sexual assault disclosures positively influences victim's longer term mental health outcomes (Bonnan-White et al., 2018; Dworkin & Schumacher, 2018; Kennedy & Prock, 2018). Furthermore, victim advocacy positively influences criminal justice related outcomes for victims. Engagement with a victim advocate has been shown to be associated with higher rates of police taking reports, less negative treatment by law enforcement, and less emotional distress for victims participating in criminal justice processes (Campbell, 2006).

Help-Seeking Theory

Drawing on health care utilization theories, Logan and colleagues (2004; 2005) proposed a four-factor framework for understanding victim help-seeking that focuses on impediments to service use, including an individual's assessment of the *availability*, *affordability*, *accessibility*, and *acceptability* of services. This framework shifts attention away from thinking about help-seeking as solely an individual decision (e.g., "Do I want help?") and toward understanding help-seeking decisions as being an interplay between the individual *and* the qualities of the available services (e.g., "Are the available services something that I want?"). Others have similarly made a call to attend more closely to how organizational and institutional factors, like the types of services offered, may shape victim help-seeking, service utilization, and reporting (Moylan & Javorka, 2018; Sabina & Ho, 2014). Web-based crisis hotlines may increase help-seeking and reporting by making additional opportunities for accessing services more readily available to survivors.

Research on Sexual Assault Hotlines

For decades, 24-hour telephone crisis hotlines have provided immediate support, information, and referrals to sexual assault victims. Telephone crisis hotlines often serve as a soft entry point into further advocacy services (Macy et al., 2010). Hotlines may appeal to those desiring anonymity and those who find it difficult to physically access in-person services (Young et al., 2018). Evaluation research on sexual assault telephone and text-based hotlines has found that the skills used by hotline responders include providing information, conveying empathy, advocating for the victim, and providing referrals, including to law enforcement (Colvin et al., 2017; Wasco et al., 2004; Young et al., 2018). However, there is limited research that identifies

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the extent to which these skills are present in sexual assault advocacy, especially web-based hotlines, and whether these skills bring about intended outcomes (Moylan et al., 2021).

Evaluation Research on Text and Web-Based Crisis Hotlines

Text or web-based crisis hotlines are an emerging approach to delivering support and advocacy services to sexual assault victims, though they have not been widely researched even across hotline subtypes (e.g., suicide, substance abuse). Some studies suggest that text or web-based hotlines show promise for addressing issues like suicidal ideation (Barak, 2007; Hoffberg, et al., 2020), youth crisis (Mathieu et al., 2020), and veteran's concerns (Predmore et al., 2017). A meta-analysis of 64 studies about internet therapeutic services more generally found no differences in the effectiveness of face-to-face services and internet mediated services, suggesting that the provision of support and therapy can be effectively done over the internet (Barak et al., 2008). Of the limited research on web-based crisis hotlines, much of it is exploratory and not rigorously designed, underscoring the need for rigorous evaluation research to expand the amount and quality of evidence (Brody et al., 2020; Dowling & Rickwood, 2013; Hoffberg et al., 2020).

Currently, hotline evaluation methods fall into a few broad categories: 1) provider-completed call logs which include an overview of call or text length, topics discussed, and involvement of others (e.g., supervisors) (Colvin et al., 2017; Finn et al., 2011; Finn & Hughes, 2008; Moylan et al., 2021; Young et al., 2018); 2) review of call recordings (e.g., audio recordings or transcripts) or silent monitoring protocol (Grossman et al., 2019; Mishara et al., 2007; Mokkenstorm et al., 2017); and 3) post-call satisfaction surveys that primarily assess overall satisfaction and willingness to recommend the service to others (Finn et al., 2011; Finn & Hughes, 2008; Wasco et al., 2004).

An evaluation of RAINN's online crisis line, initiated in 2006, used *call logs* to find that the service was used primarily by victims (86% of chatters) and less often by those in a victim's support network (about 10%) (Finn et al., 2011; Finn & Hughes, 2008). Chats were mostly related to past incidents, with only 14.4% relating to recent experiences of sexual assault (Finn & Hughes, 2008). The average length of chats on RAINN's online hotline was 54 minutes (range: 0-270 minutes) (Finn et al., 2011). The most common services provided on the hotline mirrored those provided by telephone hotlines including providing empathy, problem solving, general information, and referrals. Most of the literature related to call recordings and *silent monitoring* focuses on mental health, particularly suicide, and measures short-term outcomes such as satisfaction, helping behaviors, and overall empathy (Mishara et al., 2007; Mokkenstorm et al., 2017). Grossman et al. (2019) developed a Client-Centered Hotline Assessment Tool to code client-centeredness of calls to a domestic violence hotline. The tool was co-created by researchers and advocates to assess the stages of crisis intervention on recorded calls to the hotline for evaluation and training of advocates but has not been widely adopted. Text and web-based crisis hotlines inherently have the built-in potential for transcripts that could be a useful resource for the evaluation of web-based sexual assault hotlines that has yet to be explored in the literature. The evaluation of RAINN's online hotline also used *client satisfaction* data and found that, overall, 72% of clients were highly satisfied with the experience, with 85% of clients rating the service as easy to use and 74.4% saying they would recommend the service to others (Finn & Hughes, 2008). Clients also said they were highly satisfied with the volunteer advocate (70%) and intended to use the referrals they were provided (65%) (Finn & Hughes, 2008). Approximately one in five chatters were not satisfied, often citing negative perceptions of the volunteers' skills and abilities as the reason for their dissatisfaction, highlighting the need for

fidelity monitoring (Finn & Hughes, 2008). However, there was only a 23-30% response rate, which limits generalizability and suggests that we need a better understanding of how to best capture satisfaction and outcome data (Finn et al., 2011; Finn & Hughes, 2008).

While this body of research is suggestive of the benefits of web-based crisis hotlines as an emerging approach to supporting sexual assault victims, much of the research is dated and was not designed to assess whether the web-based crisis hotline is an *effective* way to deliver support services to victims. Current review articles of crisis hotline services also indicate important opportunities for future research including: 1) building an evidence-base for training providers (Mathieu et al., 2020); 2) gaining a better understanding of the demographics of crisis hotline users, particularly regarding outcomes (Mazzer et al., 2020); and 3) a lack of rigor in evaluation designs (Brody et al., 2020; Mathieu et al., 2020).

About this Project

Phased Evaluation: Building Rigorous Evidence for Text & Web-Based Crisis Hotlines

In 2018, we were awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Justice (2018-ZD-CX-003) to conduct the first stage of a phased evaluation of Crisis Chat, a web-based crisis hotline for sexual assault survivors[1] at Michigan State University. The **overarching research questions** driving our phased evaluation were: 1) Does a text or web-based crisis hotline increase victim reporting, help-seeking, and use of services, particularly among traditionally underserved populations, on a college campus? 2) Does a text or web-based crisis hotline decrease barriers to help-seeking and criminal justice system engagement among sexual assault victims on a college campus? And 3) Does a text or web-based crisis hotline improve the help-seeking experience for sexual assault victims on a college campus?

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[1] The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' will be used interchangeably to convey both the criminal nature of these assaults, and the strength required to survive such violence.

As Crisis Chat was a relatively new program when our evaluation grant began in January 2019, we focused on formative evaluation activities that strengthened and prepared the program for further rigorous evaluation (See Figure 1 for an outline of the full Phased Evaluation Strategy). The goals of the formative evaluation were to 1) describe in-depth the Crisis Chat program and explore its potential to increase access to services, decrease barriers to help-seeking, and improve the help-seeking experience; 2) strengthen the Crisis Chat program infrastructure in order to facilitate further rigorous evaluation of Crisis Chat, including creating a logic model and developing measurement tools; and 3) conduct a pilot test to assess the feasibility of using the developed measures to evaluate Crisis Chat as a means of increasing victim-reporting and help-seeking, decreasing barriers to help-seeking, and improving the help-seeking experience. Using a Utilization-Focused Evaluation approach (Patton, 2012), we engaged team members from the Michigan State University Center for Survivors (CFS) in designing and implementing a phased evaluation that is both methodologically rigorous and aligned with CFS goals. In this report, we present a summary of the activities we undertook in this formative evaluation, the first phase of a rigorous phased evaluation plan intended to produce evidence with the potential to help strengthen and improve the victim services field. When relevant, we do describe data sources, methods of data collection, and results of data analysis, however this was not a hypothesis-testing research project. The purpose of analytic activities in this project was to strengthen the potential of future evaluation research to answer compelling questions about the efficacy of chat hotlines.

Figure 1. Web-based Crisis Hotline Phased Evaluation Strategy

PHASE I: FORMATIVE EVALUATION (Current Project)

Completed objectives:
- Identified and strengthened program components.
- Created a logic model.
- Established data use and transfer agreements.
- Developed and piloted evaluation tools.

What we learned:
- Crisis Chat was inconsistently implemented due to lack of guidance on chat-based skills.
- Low response rate to post-chat survey & overly broad questions limit ability to assess outcomes.
- Lack of research/technical guidance hampers design/implementation of high-quality services.

PHASE II: PROCESS EVALUATION (Proposal Under Review)

Proposed objectives:
- To conduct a process evaluation of Crisis Chat and assess implementation fidelity.
- The Fidelity Rating Tool will be used to develop an algorithm for machine learning to inform future fidelity assessment.

What we anticipate learning:
- Identifying and promoting best practices in digital crisis intervention.
- Whether the algorithm is capable of assessing fidelity and will allow us to scale-up to larger data sets for future replication.

PHASE III: OUTCOME EVALUATION (Proposal Under Review)

Proposed objectives:
- To conduct an outcome evaluation of Crisis Chat compared to the telephone hotline.
- To compare strategies for gathering outcome data from users of Crisis Chat.
- To produce a toolkit to assist other programs interested in establishing web-based hotlines.

What we anticipate learning:
- Comparing satisfaction and outcomes between Crisis Chat and the telephone hotline.
- Best strategy for enhancing response rate.
- Consolidating best practices and evaluation techniques for future replication and scale-up.

PHASE IV: REPLICATION (Future Direction)

Future objectives:
- To conduct a long-term outcome evaluation.
- Implement a machine learning algorithm for fidelity assessment.
- Using our toolkit, identify additional sites for replication and evaluation to build a stronger evidence base.

What we could learn:
- Whether our model can be replicated with similar outcomes.
- Whether our model can be replicated with similar fidelity adherence.
- Does a machine learning algorithm accurately assess fidelity at multiple sites?

About Michigan State University's Center for Survivors & Crisis Chat

The setting for this evaluation, Michigan State University, is a large, public university with approximately 50,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The CFS is well-supported within the university and is funded through a combination of university funding and state Victim of Crime Act funds. Founded in 1980, MSU's CFS provides free and confidential individual and group therapy to student survivors of sexual violence. CFS also provides personal, academic, institutional, and criminal justice advocacy services to student and non-student (i.e., faculty, staff, or community member) survivors of sexual assault, as well as healthcare and forensic medical exams as part of a new Sexual Assault Healthcare Program. CFS recruits and trains volunteers multiple times per year and has about 100 active volunteers. These volunteers, who we will continue to describe as hotline responders, currently staff a 24-hour telephone crisis line, 24-hour Medical Advocacy for forensic medical exams, and web-based crisis hotline via the Crisis Chat program. Michigan State University CFS serves over 800 survivors per year. Given student preference for texting and other web-based methods of communication, CFS launched a web-based crisis hotline in summer 2018.

Project Activities and What We Learned

Goal 1: Describing the Program and Identifying Barriers and Facilitators

The first goal of this formative evaluation was for the research team to develop an in-depth understanding of the program and to help the program formalize some of their procedures. This was essential for planning of further evaluation activities, as the details about how the program works and what the program is trying to accomplish shape what can and should be evaluated. As a new program, it was also important to examine whether processes that were developed before the program launched had shifted to accommodate emerging needs that may

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not have been anticipated. Our intent, then, was to document the current state of the program, and identify ways the program could be strengthened to support further evaluation.

What We Did

To increase understanding of the focal program, members of the research team reviewed agency documents, interviewed staff and hotline responders, and attended about half of the organization's volunteer training and an additional continuing education training session focused specifically on Crisis Chat. CFS staff provided the research team with access to their training materials and program policy documentation for review. These materials were used as general background information to help the researchers get more acquainted with the program. The other two more formal data collection activities, interviews and observations, were opportunities for the research team to gather more details about the program's operation and the barriers and facilitators to both a smooth implementation of the program and further evaluation.

The 30-hour volunteer training is typically held over a series of weekend sessions. The PI attended sessions on campus sexual assault, neurobiology of trauma, understanding rape culture, supportive communication skills, safety planning, suicidality, and setting boundaries, as well as sessions that covered the details of how to operate Crisis Chat and the "nuts and bolts" of volunteering (i.e., paperwork and procedures). Members of the research team also attended a subsequent continuing education session for hotline responders that was focused specifically on Crisis Chat, during which hotline responders shared their observations, questions, and tips for answering the web-based hotline. At all training sessions, program staff introduced the research team and provided an opportunity for the team to describe the research project and explain why they were present, including that the team would be observing for research purposes, that the goal was to understand the training and not to observe the individual hotline responders

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themselves. The research team then sat quietly and observed the sessions without participating. The research team took detailed observation field notes using a simple two column format. The first column included space to detail the content of the training session (objective observations). The second column provided space for the team to note responses to what was observed (subjective responses). The field note template also included metadata about the session being observed (date, time, title) and space to describe the setting. Field notes were typically handwritten to reduce the distraction that typing on a computer might cause and were later typed for easier use in analysis.

The research team conducted interviews with staff and hotline responders who had the most experience with answering Crisis Chat. Recruitment began with the volunteer supervisor sending out invitations to the listserv of active volunteers. At that time, there were approximately 50 active volunteers at CFS, though not all volunteers participated in Crisis Chat. The volunteer supervisor also reviewed records of volunteer hours to identify which volunteers had worked the highest number of shifts answering Crisis Chat and personally reached out to those hotline responders regarding their willingness to be interviewed for this study. Additionally, the research team contacted the four CFS staff members who had developed and implemented Crisis Chat and invited them for interviews. Ultimately, interviews were conducted with five hotline responders and four staff who had the most experience with Crisis Chat (total n = 9). Interviews took place at either the office of the PI or CFS. The interviews began with participants consenting to be interviewed and having the interviews recorded. The Stakeholder Interview Guide (Appendix A) included questions regarding the participant's views and experiences about three main topics: 1) the participant's experiences with the focal program, 2) the benefits and challenges of Crisis Chat and digital hotlines more broadly and 3) how Crisis Chat operates. Participant interviews

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were transcribed and uploaded to Dedoose software (Version 8.317) for analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). Initial codes were developed based on the interview guide and project goals, and then excerpts within each code were reviewed to identify themes in an iterative process.

What We Learned

In these interviews, as well as at continuing education training on Crisis Chat, staff and hotline responders described the benefits and challenges of providing crisis intervention on the web-based hotline (also see Moylan, et al., 2021). For example, interviewees described chat as having increased privacy and accessibility for survivors, allowing survivors more control over how they present themselves. Hotline responders described how the chat medium gave them the ability to respond quickly while maintaining privacy and allowed them more time to be thoughtful about their responses. However, they also noted that the freedom to take time to respond had the effect of increasing the pressure they felt to say the right thing. Hotline responders also identified that the pacing of the chat was sometimes a challenge, either because of long pauses in which they didn't know how the chatter was responding, or because chatters sent multiple messages before the responder had time to compose a response. The interviewees also described strategies they developed to address these challenges, such as deliberate use of informal language to emulate speech patterns, clarifying meaning, and checking in during long pauses.

Drawing on the observation of training sessions and the interviews with staff and hotline responders, we prepared a detailed program description that details how Crisis Chat operates and its guiding principles (see Appendix B). This program description includes details about program operations, including technology platforms used and program procedures for turning the system

on and off, and transferring between shifts. It also includes a more in-depth description of the program's philosophy and approach to providing crisis intervention via a web-based hotline for sexual assault survivors. For example, the training sessions detailed the purpose of crisis intervention, and taught core skills of relational empathy and supportive communication, and how to apply these skills to counter victim-blame, help process emotions, and connect survivors to longer-term support services. In this program description, we also included some initial thoughts on the program's suitability for further evaluation, consistent with the goals of a formative evaluation. We noted that future evaluation would likely be supported by staff who demonstrated curiosity and commitment to learning from evaluation opportunities. The program had some existing data collection strategies that could be leveraged in future evaluation. However, we also noted a need for further refinement of existing data collection strategies to improve the quality and scope of data collected, and the lack of an overall evaluation strategy to provide guidance on what else should be measured.

This stage of the project was critical in identifying the necessary activities to further strengthen the program for analysis. For example, it became clear that we needed a logic model to provide guidance for future evaluation and to help us identify what we should be measuring. We were able to identify existing data sources that could be strengthened, such as the routine call logs that hotline responders completed, as well as opportunities to utilize other data sources such as the chat transcripts. The perspectives shared by hotline responders and volunteer training helped us identify specific program components and skills that should be reflected in the logic model and measured in evaluation efforts.

Goal 2: Strengthening the Program to Support Rigorous Evaluation

The second goal of the formative evaluation was to engage in activities to help strengthen the program for further phases of evaluation. In this section of the project, we worked with program staff to develop a logic model to guide future evaluation, examined existing data collection tools, and developed or revised data collection tools to support further evaluation. In each of these activities, we drew heavily on the program description and information gathered in the first part of the project.

Logic Model

To enhance the potential for further rigorous evaluation, consistent with a phased evaluation plan, we identified a need for Crisis Chat to develop a logic model. As Crisis Chat did not have an existing logic model, we developed a process to engage program staff in the creation of one. First, we will describe the process that we used to develop the logic model. Then we will share the final logic model and provide some context for understanding how it will be used to guide further evaluation efforts.

Logic Model Creation Process. To create the logic model, the research team and program staff met together. In attendance were five members of the research team (including two students) and six program staff most closely involved with Crisis Chat's development and operation. The PI first explained the typical function and format of a logic model, with a focus on how logic models are important for shaping evaluation activities. After this brief introduction, the PI posed a series of questions to the group allowing time for discussion of each question before progressing to the next. Responses were captured on a large dry-erase board, and when needed the PI or other members of the research team asked follow-up questions to further clarify or probe for elaboration.
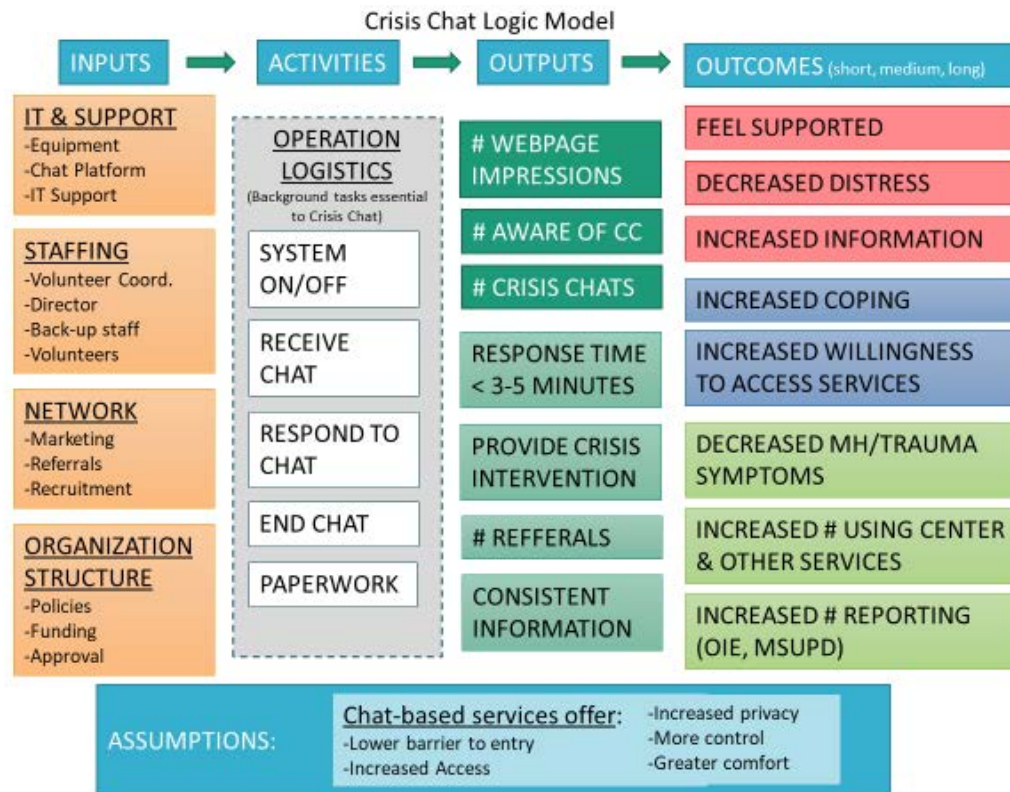
We began by exploring the question/prompt "Why did you start Crisis Chat?" and a follow up prompt of "What are the benefits of Crisis Chat?" to illuminate the intended outcomes of the chat service. The second brainstorming prompt was the question "What needs to be in place in order for Crisis Chat to work?" We used this question to brainstorm the inputs necessary for Crisis Chat's success. The final brainstorming prompt was structured in a different format. We asked attendees to create dyads. Each dyad was asked to brainstorm the activities that are part of Crisis Chat from either the perspective of a chatter/survivor or from the perspective of program staff. Dyads were given post-it notes and asked to write each activity on a post-it and arrange them as needed. This activity helped to illuminate the processes and activities that are part of Crisis Chat's operation, and that are necessary for the realization of the intended benefits of the program.

After the meeting, the PI used the information shared to create a draft of the logic model. This required an initial attempt to organize the information, starting with the three primary prompts aligning with the inputs, processes, and outcomes categories typically included in logic models. The PI reviewed additional program documents, interview transcripts, and field notes the research team took when attending and observing training sessions as described earlier. These materials were used to deepen understanding of the logic driving the program. The PI used these additional data sources to identify any missing information, check for consistency between how hotline responders are trained and how program staff described the service, and identify any conflicting information.

The Logic Model. After carefully reviewing the notes from the logic model meeting and other resources, the PI created a draft logic model. The draft logic model was then circulated to the research team and program staff for further refinement. After several rounds of revisions, a

final logic model was prepared. The final logic model includes a simplified one-page overview (see Figure 2) of the logic model that is easy to read and display without relying on tiny print, along with more detailed descriptions of each category on subsequent pages (see Appendix C).

Figure 2. Crisis Chat Logic Model

Inputs captured key resources that must be in place to support the operation of Crisis Chat, including having sufficient information technology equipment and support, well-trained hotline responders and staff, partnerships with a rich network of community partners, and support from the sponsoring organization (the university). The activities column captured essential tasks to the operation of Crisis Chat that typically take place in the background, but without which the program would not be successful. This includes things like proper operation of the technology, hotline responders receiving and responding to incoming chats, and the

completion of paperwork that documents chat interactions. Outputs include core skills that are essential to crisis intervention and hotline advocacy, as well as other measurable facets of the program's operation, such as community awareness of Crisis Chat, the number of chats received, whether chats are answered in a timely fashion, and the number and type of referrals that are given to chatters. Outcomes were organized into short, medium, and long-term outcomes. Short term outcomes include chatters feeling supported, experiencing decreased distress, and accessing more information. Medium term outcomes for chatters include increased coping skills and increased willingness to access services for on-going support. Expected long-term outcomes include decreased mental health and trauma symptoms, increased use of CFS and other services, and increased reporting.

The logic model meeting and other project activities also surfaced what we labeled program assumptions, or hypotheses about why chat-based services might appeal to users and the reasons why survivors might use the services. For example, chat services may offer increased privacy, enabling survivors to reach out even if a roommate is nearby or the survivor is in a crowded location like a classroom or dining hall. Ultimately, we decided that these assumptions are important when considering the ability of Crisis Chat to produce the intended outcomes to the extent that they tell us something about the reasons why a survivor might use Crisis Chat. If the assumptions are misguided, survivors might not access Crisis Chat even if all other inputs and activities are in place and functioning well. We therefore included them on the logic model. However, because these are assumptions and may not include all the reasons that survivors might access Crisis Chat, we also concluded that even if all these assumptions are false, survivors still might contact Crisis Chat for other reasons. In other words, these assumptions did not need to be true for Crisis Chat to have the intended outcomes. After some discussion we decided that they

did not fit cleanly in any of the other sections of the logic model (inputs, activities, outputs, or outcomes), so we included them as a separate category.

The final logic model is designed to be a tool to guide further evaluation activities, and therefore was an integral part of this formative evaluation. In later sections we will describe how the logic model served as a touchstone as we continued with our evaluation and planned for future evaluations.

Learning from Existing Data: Advocacy Reports

As part of the formative evaluation, we examined existing data sources to identify how data sources could be used in further stages of evaluation, and to identify ways to strengthen the data being collected. A primary source of existing data was what the program refers to as Advocacy Reports (ARs). After every telephone hotline call and Crisis Chat, the hotline responder completes a brief data collection form with information on the date, time, and length of the interaction, demographics of the caller/chatter, and information about the content of the interaction. The form was designed primarily to capture information that the program was required to report to funders, but also served as a mechanism for the supervisor of the hotline programs to monitor the operation of both hotline programs. To explore what the ARs could tell us about Crisis Chat, we collected all the forms from both the chat and telephone hotline for the duration of the project and entered them into a database for analysis. We conducted descriptive analysis (e.g., the number of calls and chats) and some comparative analysis (e.g., comparing the length of chats and calls)[2]. Based on this analysis, discussion with program staff, and the logic model, we identified ways that the AR could be used in further phases of evaluation and revised the form. We then collected another six months of data using the new form and conducted

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[2] In this report we are using data collected throughout the project, but for a review of the data from the first year of program operation, see Moylan, et al, 2021.

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similar descriptive and comparative analyses. Every month, program staff de-identified all ARs, removing names and other details about the hotline responder or caller/chatter. Forms were then transferred to the research team via a secure shared drive. The research team entered the data from the form into a database.

Measures. The original AR (Appendix A) was used from (October 2018-July 2020) and included the date, time, and length of the interaction, whether the caller/chatter was a survivor or someone else, and the type of violence/victimization (e.g., sexual assault as an adult). Demographic information was only recorded if the caller/chatter shared information, but could include age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, student status, and whether the caller/chatter was deaf/hard of hearing, homeless, LGBTQ, Veteran, had a disability, had limited English proficiency or was an immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker. Forms also included an indication of whether the interaction included: referral to victim service programs, referral to other kinds of services, and safety planning. In addition to this, the form also included a section identifying any technical problems (e.g., disconnected call/chat), and an open-ended prompt for additional comments.

Beginning in August 2020, a revised version of the Advocacy Report (R-AR) was used (see Appendix A). It contained most of the same information as the original AR, with some additions and changes. The R-AR included additional open-ended comment fields for the hotline responder to record the chatter/caller's initial reason for contacting the hotline, details about safety planning, and to enable explanation of other answers. The form had more specific options regarding student status, adding sub-categories like undergraduate, graduate, and/or international student, as well as more specific non-student categories like faculty/staff or community member. The R-AR also included a section on topics discussed, with six common topics listed and space

for additional topics to be listed, specific options for referrals shared, the ability to indicate if hotline responder resources were used (e.g., resource binder, handouts), whether the hotline responder had difficulty finding a referral resource, a more comprehensive list of technical problem options, and whether the hotline responder consulted with staff back-up and if so for what reasons. The final additions to the R-AR included two questions designed to gather additional information about the hotline responder perspectives of the process and outcome of the chat/call. The first question asked the hotline responder to indicate how helpful they think the interaction was for the chatter/caller on a five-point scale ranging from least (1) to most (5) helpful. The second question asked the hotline responder to indicate how they felt during/after the call/chat on a five-point scale ranging from completely unprepared (1) to completely prepared (5). Both questions were accompanied by a prompt for a brief explanation.

When preparing the dataset for analysis, we removed three cases that had missing information about whether the interaction occurred over chat or the telephone hotline. Some variables were also removed from the dataset because they were either used inconsistently or were not relevant to our analyses. When possible, we combined similar versions of variables from the original and revised AR so that we could have a single variable that applied to all cases. For example, the R-AR had more detailed options for the identity of the caller/chatter, such as whether the service user was staff in a residence hall. While useful information for the program, these more specific categories were infrequent and thus for our purposes it made sense to collapse categories to enable a single variable that applied to all cases regardless of which version of the AR was in use.

Analysis. We used SPSS (Version 27.0) to conduct descriptive analyses about Crisis Chat, such as the number of chats, demographics of chatters, and topics discussed. We also

conducted some comparisons between chats and calls, using t-tests or their non-parametric

equivalent (e.g., Mann-Whitney U test). Due to the exploratory nature of this formative

evaluation and features of the dataset (including changes to the data collection form made mid-

way through the project), we used listwise deletion to remove cases with missing data from

analyses.

Results. During the data collection period (October 2018- January 2021), there were a

total of 522 chats and 544 calls[3]. Crisis Chat is only available during the hours of 10am to 10pm,

so all 522 chats occurred during those hours. During the same hours, there were 312 telephone

hotline calls, with the additional 232 calls occurring between the hours of 10pm and 10am when

Crisis Chat was unavailable. Most chats and hotline calls were short. The median length of

telephone calls was 10 minutes, and the median length of chats was 15 minutes. When

comparing the distribution of chats and hotline call lengths, chats were significantly longer than

telephone calls (Mann-Whitney U= 171931.5, $p<.001$). There were technology difficulties in a

small portion of chats (6.3%) and hotline calls (8.3%), including service disconnections,

technology malfunctions, or poor cell/Wi-Fi service.

Figure 3 illustrates the number of calls and chats in each month of data collection. From

this figure we can see seasonal variations in the frequency of hotline usage, with fairly

predictable fall surges in use, coinciding with the "red zone" of higher risk for experiencing

sexual assault (Cranney, 2015), and smaller spikes in March and April which coincides with

spring break and increased stress with upcoming finals. The figure also illustrates that while

Crisis Chat usage lagged in the initial months of the program (Fall 2018), it quickly became used

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[3] Crisis Chat operations were suspended from mid- December 2018 to mid-January 2019 to coincide with the university's winter break so there were no chats during that period due to the service being unavailable. Due to a clerical error, we are missing AR data from hotline calls that occurred in November 2019.

as often as the telephone hotline, with some monthly variation in which service was used most

often. As our data collection period included the emergence of COVID-19, we also looked at the

number of chats in a similar time period before COVID-19 and during COVID-19. In Michigan,

COVID-19 emerged in early March 2020, with the university abruptly announcing a shift to

online classes on March 11, 2020. We therefore used March 2020 until the end of our data

collection period, January 2021, as our during-COVID-19 time period. We utilized a similar

time period of March 2019 to January 2020 for the comparison pre-COVID-19 time period. In

the pre-COVID-19 period there were 228 chats and 188 telephone hotline calls. In the during-

COVID-19 period there were 198 chats and 217 calls. This represents a slight increase in the

number of calls and decrease in the number of chats (with a nearly identical overall number of

contacts).

Figure 3. Number of Chats and Calls by Month

Note: Crisis Chat was closed from mid-December 2018 to early-January 2019. Due to a clerical error, we are missing hotline data from November 2019.

CFS has a policy of not collecting demographic information that isn't naturally shared by a caller or chatter to enhance privacy and remain client centered. Therefore, demographic information from callers and chatters is limited (See Table 1). Over two thirds of chatters were survivors, with the remaining chatters identifying themselves as family or friends (8.0%), or as others, such as faculty or staff (21.0%). Most chatters identified themselves as having experienced sexual assault as an adult (55%), though some chatters identified past child sexual abuse (6.3%) or intimate partner violence (4.8%) as their reason for calling. Other demographics, like age and race, were often indicated as not reported. For example, in 80.3% of chats the age of the chatter was unknown. In 81.3% of chats, the gender of the chatter was unknown, though in hotline calls only 32.9% of callers' genders were marked as unknown, suggesting that perhaps advocates are using vocal cues to assess gender on the telephone hotline which could inadvertently misgender callers. University affiliation was unknown in 34.2% of chats, with 15.4% identifying themselves as undergraduate students, 11.3% as graduate students, and 35.8% as faculty or staff. In about 5.7% of the chats, advocates suspected the chatter might be a prank or inappropriate chatter.

Table 1. Demographics of callers and chatters

	Crisis Chat (n=522)	Telephone Hotline (n=544)
Caller/chatter		
Survivor	71.0%	62.6%
Friend/Family	8.0%	16.7%
Other (e.g., professional)	21.0%	20.7%
Victimization Type		
Sexual assault	55%	53.3%
Adult sexually abused as child	6.3%	8.1%
Intimate partner violence	4.8%	10.5%
Child sexual abuse	1.0%	2.4%
Stalking/harassment	0.4%	1.7%
Age		
18-24	8.7%	12.6%
Not reported	80.3%	66.9%
Gender		
Male	3.4%	21.8%

Female	14.9%	44.9%
A different gender	0.4%	0.4%
Not Reported	81.3%	32.9%
University Affiliation		
Undergraduate student	15.4%	16.0%
Graduate student	11.3%	22.0%
Faculty/staff	35.8%	25.7%
Community member	3.3%	6.8%
Unknown	34.2%	29.5%
Suspected Prank/Inappropriate	5.7%	11.0%

Advocacy Reports also contained some information about the topics discussed in hotline calls and chats, especially the revised form which expanded the data collection to include more about the content of the interactions (see Table 2). In about 30% of chats, the hotline responder provided referral information for victim services, including CFS. Responders also provided referrals to other kinds of resources (e.g., shelter) in 12.5% of chats. Only about 13.6% of chats included safety planning, though conversation with program staff and volunteers revealed that there was inconsistent understanding of what constituted safety planning, for example was safety planning only relevant in cases of suicidal ideation or was any discussion of emotion or physical safety part of safety planning. We suspect, therefore, that discussions of safety were likely more common than this number indicates. The revised advocacy form also allowed hotline responders to select from a list of common topics that may have been discussed in the chat. The most common topics discussed were coping and grounding skills (27.8%), and myth busting or education about the dynamics of sexual assault (26.8%). Criminal justice, Title IX, and forensic medical processes were discussed less often (all under 10%). Though some research suggested that users of chat hotlines might exhibit more suicidality than phone hotline users (Gilat & Shahar, 2007; Predmore, et al., 2017), we found that only 3.1% of chatters discussed suicidal ideation compared to 6.4% of hotline callers.

Table 2. Topics discussed in Hotline Calls and Crisis Chats

	Crisis Chat (n=522; *n=97)	Telephone Hotline (n=544; *n=125)
Referral to victim services	29.5%	30.7%
Referral to other services	12.5%	18.4%
Safety Planning	13.6%	16.0%
Criminal Justice Process*	7.2%	20.0%
Title IX Process*	4.1%	4.8%
Forensic/Medical Process*	5.2%	10.4%
Coping/Grounding Skills*	27.8%	32.0%
Suicide or Self-Harm*	3.1%	6.4%
Myth-busting/Education*	26.8%	29.6%
Other Topics*	27.8%	22.4%

Note: Items indicated with an asterisk (*) were only available for a subset of the data that used the R-AR.

The R-AR also included questions assessing the hotline responder's perception of how helpful the interaction was for the caller/chatter, and their assessment of how prepared they were for the interaction. The mean score for perceived helpfulness of chats was M=3.58 (SD=1.44, n=78) and hotline calls was 3.62 (SD=1.25, n=103). When reviewing the explanations for scores, low scores were typically chats in which little or no conversation occurred and thus hotline responders did not feel as if they provided any meaningful support. The mean score for the question related to a chat responder's feeling of preparedness was M=3.99 (SD=1.10, n=76) and telephone hotline responders was M=3.90 (SD=1.01, n=104). Hotline responders cited their training, helpfulness of staff backup, and the availability of resource materials as reasons for their preparedness ratings. Hotline responders rated telephone hotline calls as similarly helpful (t=0.47, df=180, *p=.96*) and indicated that they felt similarly prepared (t=-.73, df=179 *p=.46*).

The R-AR also contained some process evaluation measures capturing the extent to which the staff and hotline responders answering the chat and hotline utilized training resources and contacted the staff back-up person for support (Table 3). The most common training resource used is the collection of materials in a shared space on the university's learning

management system. Similar percentages of hotline calls and chats prompted consultation with

the staff back-up person, with the exception of consultation about information and resources

which occurred more often on chat (45.2%) compared to hotline (12.1%). This may be due to

differences in the pacing of conversation and the ability to take time on chat to ask for

suggestions about the best referral.

Table 3. Measures of process from Revised Advocacy Report

	Crisis Chat (n=97)	Telephone Hotline (n=125)
Resources Consulted		
Resource Binder	7.2%	7.2%
Shortcuts	6.2%	1.6%
Shared drive/resource	35.1%	43.2%
Setting Boundaries handout	0%	4.8%
Difficulty finding resource	10.1%	10.4%
Consulted Staff Backup		
About technology problems	2.7%	3.3%
About information needed	45.2%	12.1%
About setting boundaries	8.2%	2.2%
About processing interaction	9.6%	12.1%
Other reasons	12.3%	12.1%

Expanding Sources of Evaluation Data: Transcripts

Early in the project, the research team and program staff began talking about the

possibility of using de-identified transcripts of chats as a source of evaluation data. The web-

based chat platform automatically produces and stores transcripts of all interactions, making

them a potential source of existing data about the program. We recognized that transcripts could

give us insight into the particular skills that hotline responders were using when answering chat,

the kinds of topics that emerged in chats, and other insights into the operation of the service.

However, given the potential for private information to be included in the chats, we agreed to

think carefully about the pros and cons of using transcripts as data. We held discussions in

several project meetings involving members of the research team and program staff, consulting with stakeholders as needed.

Together we identified several reasons why using chat transcripts would enhance the evaluability of the program. Crisis Chat was a new service, and there was little research or guidance available for how to effectively engage in crisis intervention in chat/text. Regular review of transcripts would provide unique insight into whether and how Crisis Chat was being delivered effectively and would help identify emerging training needs. The research team also felt that the relative paucity of information about how to engage in digital crisis intervention provided an opportunity for this project to contribute to the knowledge base and expand resources for a growing field, but only if we could harness transcripts as an opportunity to identify effective skills. We noted that numerous national digital crisis hotlines utilized some sort of transcript or live review of chats for quality assurance purposes, and sometimes made deidentified data available for research (Pisani et al., 2019; Schwab-Reese et al., 2019).

We also collectively identified our concerns related to use of transcripts. Researchers and program staff were concerned about the privacy implications of using transcripts, which are complete records of a conversation and therefore likely to contain intimate and private information that was disclosed for the purposes of seeking support, rather than for research. For example, even if any identifying information (e.g., names) were removed from the transcripts, details about a survivor's experience could still be recognizable to a survivor or others familiar with the survivor's experience if included in any research related products. We worried that this could unintentionally cause harm to survivors. Our goal in using transcripts, however, was not to understand survivor experiences, but to identify and evaluate effective service delivery practices. We realized that we could develop a robust de-identification and privacy protection protocol that

could reduce the risk to survivors by masking details above and beyond typical deidentification. Other concerns about use of transcripts centered on whether it would make the staff and hotline responders answering Crisis Chat feel self-conscious or uncomfortable at the idea of being monitored. While we certainly didn't want to do anything that made it harder to recruit and retain hotline responders, we also recognized that we could really help staff and hotline responders understand that the purpose of evaluation activities is to improve service delivery and ensure survivors are getting high-quality support and crisis intervention. In other words, we focused on the shared goal of supporting survivors and introduced evaluation as an opportunity to work together towards that shared goal.

Once we had program support for the idea of using transcripts, we turned our focus toward securing appropriate permissions and preparing a data sharing protocol. First, we had to discuss the use of transcripts with the program's funder to ensure that our protocol for data sharing was not violating any terms of the funding. We developed a protocol that clarified that program staff would download transcripts and remove all personally identifying information (e.g., names of people or places). A supervisor would review the de-identified transcripts to ensure that they had been properly de-identified before sharing with the research team via a shared and secure drive. Deidentified data could then be accessed by the research team for the express purposes outlined in the grant (identifying and evaluating Crisis Chat). We agreed that prior to use in any dissemination product (e.g., a publication), the research team would make a good faith effort to mask any additional details in chat users' conversations that are not essential to answering the research questions and could be potentially recognizable. Crisis Chat staff would have an opportunity to review and identify whether any further masking might be

necessary. Using this protocol, we secured permission from the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program review board to use the deidentified transcripts.

Analyzing Existing Transcripts. Our goal in analyzing the transcripts was to develop a fidelity rating tool that we could use in a Phase II process evaluation of the focal program. Our primary analytic goal, therefore, was to identify the components and characteristics of a successful implementation of the web-based chat hotline. We developed a codebook and initial coding scheme with this goal in mind. We drew on our conversations and understanding of the program, the program logic model, and existing research on crisis lines and sexual assault services when developing our codebook. Our coding framework consisted of three types of codes (see Table 4). Process codes were designed to capture actions that we anticipated would be part of chat in order to capture the delivery of crisis intervention in a digital medium (Saldana, 2021). For example, the code "answering" would be applied to the segment of the chat in which the hotline responder was answering the incoming chat, while "making referrals" would capture the times that the hotline responder provided information about services that the chatter might find helpful. We initially developed eleven process codes and later expanded this to thirteen codes. With process codes, we anticipated that we could use the codes to look, for example, at the variety of ways that hotline responders answered chats to identify the essential components of a strong chat answering.

Table 4. Codes Used in Transcript Analysis

Code	Brief Explanation
Process Codes	
Answering	The initial exchange and opening of the chat
Setting Expectations	Describing purpose of chat, confidentiality
Making referrals	Providing information about services or other resources
Building Rapport	Attempts to build connection, express empathy
Acknowledging Culture	Any discussion of identity (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender)
Educating	Provision of information (e.g., about sexual assault, healing)
Assessing Safety	Discussions of safety (physical or emotional)

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Closing	The final exchange that closes out the chat
Setting boundaries	When responder used skills to re-direct chatter or place limits
Using shortcuts	When responder used pre-generated system short-cut text
Chatting techniques	Techniques specific to providing support in a web-based format
Clarifying	Asking questions, probing for more information
Directing conversation	Responder leads chat in a way that isn't aligned with chatter

Descriptive Codes

Coping Skills	Discussions of how chatter might manage distress
Emotions	Discussions of emotions, such as the impact of the assault
Systems	Discussions about Title IX, criminal justice, other systems
Relationships	Discussions about chatter's relationships with friends, family, etc.
Definitions	Discussions of definitions of sexual assault
Academic Impacts	Discussions of how sexual assault may be impacting academics
Delayed Response	Pause > 2 minutes between chatter message and response
Miscellaneous	Discussions on topics that don't fit the other categories

Structural Codes

Chatter Type	Was the chatter a survivor, a friend/family member, a professional
Type- Sexual Assault	Was the chat related to a sexual assault
Type- Sexual Harassment	Was the chat related to sexual harassment
Type- Domestic Violence	Was the chat related to domestic violence
Type- Child Sexual Assault	Was the chat related to child sexual abuse
Type- Other	Was the chat related to a different kind of experience (e.g., stalking)
Type-Inappropriate Chatter	Was the chatter engaging with chat in a way that is not aligned with the purpose (e.g., an obscene chatter)
Race Ethnicity	What was the chatter's race/ethnicity
Sexual Orientation	What was the chatter's sexual orientation
Gender Identity	What was the chatter's gender identity
Disability Status	Does the chatter have a disability
Student Status	Was the chatter a student
Current Client	Was the chatter a current client of the program
Faculty or staff	Was the chatter a faculty member or staff of the university
Unexpected Disconnection	Did the chat end in a way that seemed unexpected
Date/Time	Day and time of the chat
Length	Length of the chat in minutes
Tech Issues	Did there appear to be technology issues/problems
Good Transcript	Did this transcript contain useful examples of phenomenon
Initial Response	Time between chatter's first message and the initial reply

The second type of codes we included in our framework were descriptive codes, which are words or phrases that capture the topic of a segment of conversation or what the communication is about (Saldana, 2021). We anticipated that these codes would allow us to examine whether skills such as building rapport and empathy vary depending on the context of

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the conversation. For example, when discussing "emotions", what kinds of skills were being used? We developed eleven descriptive codes that we thought would capture the most common topics of chats and later collapsed some codes and created new ones to arrive at eight descriptive codes.

The final type of codes were structural codes, which we used to capture demographics and other elements of the participants or the data itself (Saldana, 2021). We developed an initial 22 codes capturing whether the chatter was a survivor, or someone connected to a survivor, the type of victimization the survivor had experienced, mention of any other identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation), and features of the conversation such as whether there were technical difficulties and the date and time of the chat. We later refined this to 14 descriptors related to the chatter and six related to the chat interaction.

We accessed and uploaded 228 fully deidentified chat transcripts to the data analysis software program. A team of three coders met and applied the coding framework to three transcripts as a training exercise. After making some coding adjustments, we each coded a set of twenty transcripts individually and then met to compare results, discuss discrepancies, and refine the coding scheme. We repeated this process of coding transcripts individually and meeting to compare results and refine the coding scheme two more times. We made progress in aligning our ratings over the multiple iterations of refining the codebook but continued to have coding discrepancies. In examining the remaining discrepancies, we concluded that we agreed about the codes and rules for applying them, and that our differences stemmed from our unique interpretations of the data. We decided to move forward with coding the full set of 228 transcripts, with a primary and secondary coder assigned to each transcript to capture multiple raters' interpretations. The primary coder coded the transcript first and the secondary coder

would then review the code assignments for any additions, flagging any areas that might need further discussion. We met regularly to address these situations and make any final coding decisions. Ultimately, we were able to come to consensus about all coding decisions. We then sought to use these codes, exemplar quotes, and discussions (e.g., about what defined each code and what did not) to create an evaluation tool.

What We Learned. Reviewing these transcripts provided us with a solid understanding of the range of chats that hotline responders engage in as they answer Crisis Chat. Some chats were extremely short, with a chatter initiating a chat but never responding to any additional messages. Other chats are longer and include more in-depth discussion of topics related to sexual assault, relationships, and coping. Some chatters have a very specific question, for example how to sign up for counseling, and once that question is answered the chat concludes. Other chats seemed to end abruptly and without warning, though not necessarily in a way that suggested that a chatter was dissatisfied. In fact, more often it appeared that the chatter simply got what they needed from the chat and so navigated away from the chat portal, perhaps not feeling pressure to formally end the conversation as you might on a telephone call where one might be perceived as rude for simply hanging up without initiating an exchange of goodbyes. Seeing the range of chat lengths and types made it clear that we needed to think about flexible evaluation tools that could adapt to the range of chat types and that focused on essential components of chats that should be present in all (or most all) chats.

We identified elements of chat interaction that occurred with regularity and had clear boundaries, such as the opening and closing of a chat. We examined these routine moments in chats in order to identify the core elements that contributed to a strong execution of that segment of the chat. For example, we noted that some hotline responders were able to convey warmth

and welcome chatters, while others used a more neutral greeting or just immediately responded to a chatter's question without extending a greeting at all. Chatters varied in their initial messages, with some simply saying "Hi" and others initiating the chat with a specific topic or question. We noted that some hotline responders tailored their responses, for example following a "hi" with a greeting and invitation to the chatter to share their reason for chatting or offering a greeting and responding to the topic the chatter raised. Others either responded in-kind with a simple "hello" or offered a greeting and invitation that seemed not to acknowledge the details the chatter already shared. We noticed that some hotline responders answered chats in a way that invited further discussion and acknowledged and responded to the chatters' initial greeting, and these greetings seemed most aligned with program goals of engaging chatters. In closings, we similarly noted that closings that seemed more aligned with program goals of increasing help-seeking were those in which hotline responders adopted a warm tone, invited chatters to use the hotline or chat service in the future if needed, and asked if there were any additional topics.

Other chat elements may not appear in all chats but are still routine and can be clearly delineated within a chat. For example, we identified making referrals as a common element of many chats. In reviewing these chat excerpts, we noted that the core components included identifying that the chatter might benefit from a referral to additional support, gently introducing the idea of a referral, offering appropriate options and clear instructions about accessing the referral, and assessing if there are barriers that might prevent the chatter from using the referral. We noted that in some chats, it seemed that hotline responders were eager to offer referrals either without assessing the chatter's interest or in a way that seemed to close off opportunities for further discussion of emotions. For example, a chatter might mention having nightmares and difficulty sleeping and the responder might suggest counseling as a potential way of addressing

possible trauma responses. This would often divert the conversation to providing specific information about how to access counseling and seemingly cut off exploration of how the nightmares are manifesting and what a survivor might do to manage nightmares while waiting to get started in counseling. These observations sensitized us to both the elements that make an ideal answering, closing, or referral, but also to the subtle ways that these seemingly routine elements of chat interactions can influence the direction of the chat.

Our analysis of transcripts also identified a number of skills that were used throughout interactions, rather than in routine moments in a chat. For example, we identified a range of rapport-building skills that are typically identified as important to crisis intervention work with survivors of sexual assault (Decker & Naugle, 2009; Grossman, et al., 2019; Macy, et al., 2009; Munro-Kramer, et al., 2017; Wasco, et al., 2004). This included allowing the survivor to lead the direction of the conversation, providing validation and normalization, adopting a non-judgmental stance, and conveying empathy. Some of these rapport-building skills required some adaptation in the chat medium, for example active listening via telephone or in-person support might include non-verbal cues (e.g. head nodding) or minimal encouragers (i.e., the small verbal indications that we're listening and paying attention). In chat, hotline responders indicate they are actively listening by responding promptly and remembering details shared previously in the interaction. We noticed a number of interactions that featured numerous delays in responses from the hotline responder, which we defined as responses that came more than two minutes after the chatter sent a message to allow time for the hotline responder to read and compose a response. For example, sometimes after waiting a few minutes for a response, the chatter would send another message in an apparent attempt to re-engage the hotline responder. In reading the transcripts, we sometimes felt anxiety after reading an intensely emotional message and then

noting the time it took for the hotline responder to reply and wondered whether chatter's also felt

anxiety about how their message was being received. While we were not able in the scope of this

study to identify the effect that these delays have on outcomes for the chatter, we did wonder

whether delays, especially after the chatter shares emotionally charged content, could be anxiety-

producing for the chatter or could damage rapport by making the chatter feel as if the responder

is not engaged.

Other skills are even more unique to the chat context, such as the hotline responder

explaining a pause, for example when looking up referral information the responder might type

"I am going to find that information for you, so if I don't respond for a few minutes, know that

I'll be right back." Other chat-specific skills we identified included focusing on one topic or

"thread" at a time, using brief messages and clear phrasing, and explicitly checking for shared

understanding. Sometimes when a chatter would stop responding for a period of time, the hotline

responder would gently check on the chatter with a message like "take whatever time you need,

I'll be here when you are ready to continue" in an attempt to gently re-engage the chatter. While

each of these skills is a part of building rapport in a digital environment, we noticed that they

emerge differently in various chats, depending on the topics being discussed, the length of the

chat, and other factors. We identified how these skills, when used consistently and with

expertise, can enhance the quality of the interaction or can detract from the overall quality of the

interaction if not used well.

Finally, we looked at critical incidents, or chat interactions that represented a heightened

level of risk or intensity based on the topic or the chatter's needs. These were infrequent, but

could have higher stakes, such as when a chatter is expressing suicidal ideation. We felt these

incidents warranted additional analysis and attention because they can reveal areas for additional

training and oversight by the program supervisor or a need for policy or process changes. From our analysis we noted that these critical incidents fell into several categories, including safety risk (such as suicidal ideation, self-harm, or even a chatter who is acutely intoxicated), intense chats that include a lot of emotionally charged content, chats that might provoke a need to violate confidentiality such as a mandatory report of child abuse, and obscene chats. Due to the nature of these situations, these chats were often intense and might trigger processes that involve a need to consult with the staff backup person. Whether or not the hotline responder called backup won't be obvious from the transcript, but we did note that from an evaluation perspective it is important to know whether protocols are being followed. The transcript, in combination with the AR and other agency records, should allow for an assessment of whether the relevant protocols are being followed. In other word, triangulating data from multiple sources may be necessary for evaluating the implementation fidelity of Crisis Chat.

Reviewing and analyzing over 200 transcripts provided us with important insights into the nature of chat interactions and the skills that hotline responders were using to establish rapport and connection. We concluded that transcripts provide an important opportunity for future evaluation as they represent a record of the interaction between the chatter and hotline responder. While Advocacy Reports are records of the responder's perceptions of the interaction, the transcripts provide a more neutral accounting of what transpired in each chat and therefore provide an opportunity for use in a process evaluation of Crisis Chat.

Goal 3: Creating and Piloting the Fidelity Rating Tool

The third goal of this project was to develop and pilot a measurement tool to assess implementation fidelity which could then be used in a future process evaluation. Using the information learned from our analysis of chat transcripts, we developed a draft Fidelity Rating

Tool (FRT, Appendix A). The FRT is used via a transcript coding protocol to assess the presence and quality of specific skills identified to be important mechanisms for accomplishing Crisis Chat goals. The tool is modeled after hotline silent monitoring protocol in which the evaluator produces scores and ratings from passive observation of hotline interactions either live or using a recording/transcript (Hoffberg et al., 2020; Mishara, et al., 2007; Mokkenstorm, et al., 2016). Specific skills and categories included in the FRT were developed out of our process of reviewing 228 transcripts, but also by consulting existing research on hotlines and sexual assault services, reviewing the program's logic model, and through extensive discussion with staff at the focal program.

Creating an Implementation Fidelity Tool

To build the FRT, we identified the core components of Crisis Chat, both in terms of processes like answering the chat, and quality of service delivery, such as establishing rapport. We used the transcripts to help us identify measurable aspects of each component of Crisis Chat. Table 5 illustrates how we were able to use transcript excerpts to identify the key skills and what a good (or not as good) application of those skills might look like. After developing an extensive list of the core elements of Crisis Chat and a sense of what and how we might distinguish between more or less skilled implementation of the chat intervention, we began developing a form that would allow us to apply scores to each chat interaction for each designated chat element.

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Table 5. Illustrating how Transcripts Informed FRT Components

Components	Exemplar Quotes from Transcripts	Explanation
Crisis Chat Processes		
Answering	Hotline Responder: "Hi, this is an advocate with the [Name of Agency]. How can I help you today?"	The most inviting openings included: 1) warm greeting, 2) a response that aligned with the chatter's first message.
Closing	Hotline Responder: "You're welcome. Thank you for reaching out. Our chat service is open 10am - 10pm eastern time every day so feel free to chat again any time."	The most effective endings had: 1) mutual understanding that the chat was ending, 2) assessment of remaining needs, 3) reminder of chat/hotline availability
Supportive Communication Skills		
Rapport Building	Hotline Responder: "You've been through something really hard and upsetting ... How are you coping now? What is your support system like?"	Rapport was characterized by empathy, validation, normalization, non-judgmental and active listening, a warm demeanor, and following the chatter's lead.
Professionalism	Chatter: "hi my name is [chatter's name]" Hotline Responder: "Hello [name of chatter]. This is a volunteer. How can I help you today?" Chatter: [Inappropriate chat with foul language] Hotline Responder: "We need to keep this line open for people in crisis. I am ending this chat."	Professional skills include 1) prompt responses, 2) appropriate personal boundaries, 3) and setting limits when appropriate (e.g., obscene chat)
Cultural Humility	Hotline Responder: "Ok, I think I understand. But I don't want to make assumptions" Chatter: "you think you understand?" Hotline Responder: "Do you identify as LGBTQ? Because sexual assault is actually higher among the LGBTQ community"	Cultural humility includes 1) avoiding assumptions, 2) avoiding bias (e.g., about reporting), and 3) engaging with a chatter's identity when it comes up.
Chat Skills	Hotline Responder: "I'm not sure if you are still there or not, but if you have any questions or want to chat, please feel free to reach out." _____	Chat skills are when a hotline responder uses a technique that seems particularly relevant to providing crisis intervention digitally, such as splitting up longer messages, commenting

Hotline Responder: "Sorry, did we get cut off again?"
Chatter: "i guess so…"
Hotline responder: "I'm really sorry for the service tonight"

on process, and checking in when they have not heard from a chatter.

Topical Areas

Making Referrals	Hotline Responder: "Our advocates at the program can help talk you through some services that might help you feel more safe like a personal protection order as well." Hotline Responder: "[community SARV agency mentioned earlier] has free therapy services if you'd like their phone number" Chatter: "yes please." Hotline Responder: "Their number is [phone number]" Hotline Responder: "If you'd like to get to connected to a program advocate with the [name of agency]. I can provide hat[sic] information as well."	Effective referrals include 1) identifying and responding to the chatter's need, 2) gently offering the referral, 3) providing appropriate options, 4) giving clear information about how to access the referral, and 5) assessing for any barriers to using the referral.
Education	Hotline Responder: "I'm sorry you're feeling like that. With depression it gets really difficult to find things that help, but it's important not to give up hope." Chatter: "everyone just thinks of rape as vaginal" Hotline Responder: "That's the most common assumption, but oral rape is very real." Hotline Responder: "It is still sexual assault and that's a very difficult thing to go through."	Hotline responders often provide information about sexual assault to increase a chatter's understanding. Doing so successfully requires that the information is 1) accurate, 2) thorough, and 3) provided in a sensitive manner.
Safety	Hotline Responder: "The feelings you are feeling right now are valid. I am very sorry such a horrible thing happened to you. Thank you for reaching out and talking to me today. I really appreciate it. I have to ask, are you having any thoughts of suicide or hurting yourself?" Chatter: "no" Hotline Responder: "Thank you for answering. And thank you for your willingness to talk with me about these things that happened to you. Are you interested in referrals for services that might be able to help?"	When relevant, hotline responders should 1) directly address safety, 2) establish a safety plan, and 3) discuss safety in a sensitive and non-judgmental manner.

The FRT form includes meta-data, such as the date and time of the chat, the length in minutes and words, and how long the hotline responder took to respond to the initial chat. We also included a check list of common topics that might emerge in a chat. The Answering component of the FRT included items assessing whether the chat was answered with a warm and welcoming tone and whether it responded to the content of the chatter's initial message. Professionalism captured the use of appropriate boundaries, whether the responder was slow to respond, and when applicable whether the hotline responder was able to set limits or appropriately discuss confidentiality. Rapport building included whether the hotline responder followed the chatter's lead, engaged in active listening, used a warm tone, validated and normalized, was non-judgmental, and conveyed empathy. Education captured whether the hotline responder provided thorough and accurate information in a sensitive manner. Cultural humility captured the responder's ability to avoid bias and assumptions and engage appropriately with a chatter's identity. Chat Skills included specific skills that ease communication in the chat format, such as using brief and clear phrasing, explaining pauses, or checking in when the chatter is silent. Making Referrals captured whether hotline responders were able to identify and respond to chatters' needs for referrals, were able to introduce the referral gently, gave appropriate and clear referrals, and assessed for barriers to using the resource. Safety captured whether hotline responders assessed for safety and established a safety plan when indicated. Critical incidents captures those less frequent but potentially high stakes interactions. Closing captured whether the chat was ended with a mutual understanding that the chat was over, and whether the hotline responder assessed for remaining needs and reminded the chatter of the chat line and/or hotline as a future option. In addition to these process measures, we also included items to help us assess outcomes from the perspective of the evaluator. We included items that assess the chatter's

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engagement, such as whether the chatter expressed appreciation or frustration, whether the chatter seemed willing to use referrals, and whether the chatter's distress seemed to decrease during the interaction. Finally, we included ratings for overall use of supportive communication skills, overall helpfulness of the interaction, the overall degree of chatter-centeredness, and whether it seemed the chatter's needs were met. Each item was assigned a rating scale appropriate to that skill, and when possible consistent with the scale used for other items on the FRT.

Piloting the Fidelity Rating Tool

The draft FRT was then piloted using 50 transcripts. Three members of the research team independently read and scored each of the 50 transcripts using the FRT and then met to refine the measured skills, rating criteria, and overall processes. As a final step, individual FRT scores were compared with the R-AR reports to assess correlation among the research team's evaluation of transcripts and individual hotline responders' ratings of technical difficulties and overall helpfulness.

Analysis. We used SPSS (Version 27.0) to conduct descriptive analyses about the FRT pilot. Due to the exploratory nature of this formative evaluation and features of the dataset (including changes to the AR data collection form made mid-way through the project), we used listwise deletion to remove cases with missing data from analyses.

Results. Among the piloted transcripts, 70.7% of the chatters were survivors (mostly of sexual assault), 12.2% co-survivors (e.g., family, friend, romantic partner, etc.), and 17.1% other, which is similar to the larger AR dataset described earlier. As noted previously, it is not standard practice for hotline responders to assess demographics unless it is information shared freely by the chatter. Among the 50 piloted transcripts, very few demographics were therefore collected.

Of the information collected, we know that 27.5% of the chatters were students and 55.0% had an unknown student status. There were also nine female chatters and one chatter that identified as LGBTQ. The average length of the piloted chats was 20.2 minutes (SD=17.5 minutes) and the number of words ranged from 1 to 1,230 with an average of 354 words per transcript (SD=360). All chats were answered within the 5-minute window that the CFS provides for initial answering with 58% answered within about 1 minute, 93.8% answered under 3 minutes, and 100% answered under 5 minutes. The main topical foci of the piloted chats included emotions (56%), counseling (46%), and reporting (24%). Forty percent of the hotline responders contacted back-up during their chat session, predominantly for more information and resources to share with the chatter. Critical incidents, or chats with intense themes or possible safety risks, were rare and only occurred in four of the 50 piloted chats (8.0%). The critical incidents that did occur fell into the topical areas of safety/suicide, intense chat, and possible obscene or prank chat.

In the analysis of the pilot FRT data, we looked at frequencies and descriptive statistics of all items (see Table 6). Not every chat could be assessed for each item on the FRT, and as we rated and discussed these transcripts, we revised the scoring options on the FRT to be able to more explicitly differentiate those chats that could be assessed on each item from those that did not contain sufficient opportunity for assessing a particular skill. The items used in the pilot test had varying rating scales, for example some items used a five-point scale capturing the level of skill proficiency demonstrated while others were assessed in terms of whether the skills were used all of the time, some of the time, or none of the time. We also revised the scoring criteria for numerous items during the pilot. All ratings discussed here come from the items as originally designed, not from the revised items.

Table 6. FRT Item Scores

	Item n=	Score Range	M (or frequency)	SD
Answering				
Welcoming/Warm	50	1-5	3.38	.76
Respond to Content	48	1-3*	1.52	.58
Professionalism				
Maintains Boundaries	45	1-3*	1.07	.25
Number of Delayed Responses (>2min)	50	0-6*	No delays- 76% 1-2- 14% 3-4- 8% 5-6- 2%	
Longest Delay (in minutes)	12	3-6*	3 min-33% 4 min- 42% 5 min- 17% 6 min- 8%	
Sets Limits Appropriately	9	1-3*	1.78	.67
Confidentiality Addressed	14	1-3*	2.43	.51
Rapport Building				
Follows Chatter Lead	44	1-5	3.95	.65
Warm and Welcoming	44	1-5	3.73	.82
Active Listening	43	1-5	3.86	.68
Validation & Normalization	31	1-5	3.81	.95
Nonjudgmental	31	1-5	4.16	.74
Conveys Empathy	31	1-5	3.84	.94
Education				
Accurate Info Provided	21	1-3*	1.43	.51
Thorough Info	21	1-3*	1.90	.30
Presents Sensitively	21	1-3*	1.33	.48
Cultural Humility				
Avoids Assumptions	33	1-3*	1.12	.33
Avoids Biases about Reporting	12	1-3*	1.08	.29
Engages with Identity	5	1-3*	1.80	1.10
Chat Skills				
One Thread at a Time	44	1-3*	1.11	.32
Explain Pause	19	1-3*	2.05	.91
Check when Silent	8	1-3*	1.63	.92
Brief Messages	45	1-3*	1.09	.29
Use Clear Phrasing	44	1-3*	1.16	.37
Checks for Understanding	32	1-3*	2.81	.47
Making Referrals				
Respond to Chatter Need	32	1-3*	1.25	.44
Gentle Offering	32	1-3*	1.28	.46

Appropriate Referrals	31	1-3*	1.42	.62
Accurate/Clear Info	31	1-3*	1.65	.55
Assess & Address Barriers	31	1-3*	2.90	.30
Safety Planning				
Addresses Directly	22	1-4*	2.95	.30
Establishes Safety Plan	17	1-4*	2.94	.79
Sensitive & Nonjudgmental	4	1-3*	1.50	.24
Closing				
Mutual Ending	48		Yes- 54.2% No- 31.3% Unclear/Partial- 14.6%	
Assess Remaining Needs	35		Yes- 34.3% No- 54.3% Unclear/Partial- 11.4%	
Remind chat/hotline	35		Yes- 37.1% No- 48.6% Unclear/Partial- 14.3%	
Overall Ratings				
Supportive Communication	44	1-5	3.80	.73
Helpfulness	43	1-5	3.84	.84
Chatter-centered	43	1-5	4.05	.65
Needs Addressed	42	1-5	3.69	.78
Chatter Engagement				
Demonstrated Appreciation	41	1-4*	2.59	1.16
Became Frustrated	41	1-4	none	0
Distress from Start to End	36	1-5*	2.53	.70
Willing to Use Resources	30		Yes- 66.7% No- 3.3% Unclear- 30%	

Note: Higher numbers indicate a better application of the skill, except for those items marked with an asterisk (*), which indicates that this item score should be interpreted in reverse with lower scores indicating a more desirable response.

We found that Answering skills were rated moderately high, with most responders adopting a warm and welcoming tone. Professionalism skills were a bit more varied. Hotline responders typically maintained boundaries and most responded to all messages promptly, though confidentiality was rarely discussed directly or in detail. A small number of chats

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illustrated some persistent delays in responding to messages, sometimes with several minutes passing between a chatter's message and a response. This could lead to disengagement or diminished rapport, though we did not have a sufficient sample size in which to examine such a causal relationship. Generally, hotline responders exhibited strong rapport building skills, with each item having a mean score above 3.73 on a five-point scale. Education skills were used in a little less than half of chats and was generally accurate, thorough, and sensitive. Cultural humility was harder to assess given how rarely issues of identity came up in the chats. Generally, hotline responders did not make assumptions about identity, though we wonder whether responders could do more to invite discussion of identity-related issues. We also assessed skills that facilitate conversation in a text/chat-based format, such as using brief and clear phrasing, focusing on only one topic thread at a time, and explicitly checking in around pauses and silences. Each of these skills was used moderately consistently in this body of transcripts. In regard to making referrals, hotline responders typically responded to chatter's explicit needs, though did not always provide clear information about how to access the resource, nor assess for any barriers that might prevent the chatter from using the resource. Hotline responders only sometimes directly assessed safety and rarely established a formal safety plan. Generally, the chatters in these interactions did not have high physical safety needs, however we identified opportunities to think about safety more broadly, for example by assessing emotional safety. About half of chats had a clear mutual ending, and about a third of chats included an assessment of remaining needs or a reminder of the chat service and hotline as resources in the future. Hotline responders may find it helpful to include this information sooner in an interaction to account for chats that end without a clear closing.

During the pilot we used a five-point scale to rate overall helpfulness (M=3.84; SD=0.84; n=43), use of supportive communication (M=3.80; SD=0.73; n=44), chatter-centeredness (M=4.05; SD=0.65; n=43), and the extent to which chatter's needs seemed to be addressed (M=3.69; SD=0.78; n=43). We also examined overall helpfulness scores between the research team's evaluations and individual hotline responder ratings (n=34) and found a correlation of 0.617, $p < .001$, suggesting that while overall similar, the research team may assign different ratings than the hotline responders' self-assessment of their helpfulness.

Outcomes. Through the piloting process the research team was able to create refined definitions of all the items on the FRT and clarify the rating criteria for each item. The final version of the FRT (Appendix A) included 13 categories of chat-based advocacy skills including professionalism, rapport building (basic and advanced), making referrals, safety, and handling critical incidents. It captures process codes such as answering, closing, chatter engagement, chat skills, and cultural humility. Overall ratings are also used to summarize overarching skills such as supportive communication, helpfulness, chatter centered, and whether chatter needs were addressed. Through the process of refining the items, the research team created detailed documentation of the descriptions of each skill and guidance for how to apply the rating criteria. This detailed guide can be used to train others in using the FRT in further phases of evaluation research. We found the tool easy to use, and quick to complete, though longer transcripts did take more time to read thoroughly. The pilot analysis suggests that the FRT captures a wider range of process measures than the existing AR, and that ratings by a trained observer may also provide more neutral assessments than the AR's self-reported measures, such as the perception of helpfulness.

Challenges and Opportunities

This study was successful in using a utilization-focused approach to engage a campus-based advocacy center, CFS, in a formative evaluation of a new web-based crisis hotline staffed by student hotline responders. We created a logic model to guide the evaluation process, developed a process for acquiring de-identified transcripts, created and piloted a tool to assess implementation fidelity (FRT) and revised the advocacy reports (R-AR) to ensure practical information about the chatter population and interaction was being gathered. Despite a focus on one campus-based program, these tangible tools serve as useful benchmarks for campus and community organizations who may be developing web-based crisis hotlines, especially in response to the recent COVID-19 global pandemic.

Throughout this study, the team did experience some challenges. First, developing a process to ensure timely receipt of deidentified transcripts proved to be a more challenging feat than initially imagined. The CFS was responsible for downloading transcripts, manually removing identifying information, and then putting them into a secure folder in a shared drive to allow the study team access. This required time from program staff who faced competing demands on their time that were often more important and pressing, including meeting the needs of survivors. The initial PDF versions of the transcripts received by the study team also presented some challenges in the Dedoose software (Version 8.317) as they did not have optical character recognition (OCR) and thus we were unable to effectively code transcripts in this format. After exhausting our options for making the PDFs readable, the research team ultimately had to manually re-type all transcripts so that we had readable text documents. To eliminate this time-consuming process moving forward, we developed an alternate way for program staff to retrieve transcripts in a readable format for all future evaluation activities. The problem solving required

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to access transcripts in a usable format underscores the importance of including a formative phase in rigorous program evaluations wherein evaluation procedures can be designed, tested, and refined for use in real world practice settings.

A second challenge was that the study team found that it was necessary to engage in multiple rounds of coding to refine our coding scheme and develop a consistent understanding of codes and FRT items. This seemed to arise from different interpretations of web-based hotline skills and what makes them effective, with limited literature to guide our understanding. For example, we often coded different transcript excerpts with the code "Chatting Techniques" because we had different notions of when a chat-specific technique might enhance conversation. When should you explain a pause? When might it be helpful to check if you have shared understanding? How long of a message is too long and should be either communicated more briefly or split into multiple shorter messages? Ultimately, we decided that our different interpretations of when a chat-specific technique was warranted was itself useful analytically and that our goal shouldn't be consensus but should incorporate these different perspectives. This underscores the importance of building the research base on web or text-based crisis lines through rigorous evaluation research. Because we lacked clear guidance on established effective skills or practices, coding phases of the work took more time than anticipated. Ultimately, we think the extra time and discussion that we engaged in while refining coding schemes led to more nuanced information and contributed to the development of a stronger implementation fidelity tool.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic provided both challenges and opportunities during the study period from 2019-2021. Like most universities, Michigan State University abruptly transitioned classes and most services to a virtual format from March 2020 and throughout the

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2020-2021 academic year, which impacted the number of students who were on campus and in the surrounding community. Program staff had to spend considerable energy rethinking how to deliver their broad range of services virtually and ensuring that survivors' needs were being met in the context of a changing global pandemic. The research team similarly had to adapt our plans to accommodate the changing realities of the pandemic. For example, the research team decided to not move forward with interviewing survivors and chat users as was originally intended, given the significant disruption and stress that students were experiencing. Similarly, as the university transitioned all functions of the university to virtual and adapted programming, we suspended meeting with the Study Advisory Board. We continued to draw on stakeholder feedback in more informal contexts, but ultimately felt like the unique conditions of the pandemic meant that we needed to be flexible and accommodating of the additional demands that everyone was facing as a result of the pandemic. Data collection spanning the time period preceding COVID-19's emergence and the following months also provided us an opportunity to examine how the pandemic affected service delivery, as described earlier.

Conclusion

The goals of this project were to conduct a formative evaluation of a web-based hotline for sexual assault survivors, which consisted of three categories of activities: 1) generating an in-depth understanding of the program, 2) strengthening the program for further evaluation, and 3) developing and piloting evaluation measures that could be used in future evaluations. At the conclusion of this project, we feel confident that the program is a good candidate for future evaluation activities designed to build generalizable data about the potential of web-based hotlines to increase help-seeking and reporting, improve the help-seeking experience, and enhance the healing and well-being of survivors of sexual assault. The logic model we created

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provides a framework to guide evaluation activities, and new and existing data collection tools

are aligned with the logic model. Evaluation processes have been tested and refined, such that

future evaluations could be more easily launched. Program staff and volunteers have also

increased their engagement and commitment to evaluation as they have had opportunities to see

how the data they are collecting can be used to strengthen services for survivors. This

commitment from the program will ensure that future evaluation activities are seen as valuable

and worthy of time and energy.

Future Evaluation Plan

As part of the formative phase of evaluation, we worked with Crisis Chat to design a

rigorous process and outcome evaluation of a web-based hotline as a means of increasing help-

seeking, decreasing barriers, and improving the help-seeking experience for survivors of sexual

assault. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Phase II and III process and outcome evaluation that we

designed includes several elements that would support a future Phase IV replication study. In

other words, we were able to use this formative evaluation phase to help us devise a long-term

evaluation strategy capable of producing rigorous evidence to inform the victim service field

about effective means of providing web-based crisis support to survivors.

The process and outcome evaluation that we planned includes the following goals:

Goal 1) To conduct a process evaluation of Crisis Chat and further refine methods of

assessing implementation fidelity. Objective 1a) Monitor Crisis Chat implementation for fidelity

to the program as designed, including an assessment of whether and how digital crisis

intervention skills are consistently deployed in chats. Objective 1b) Regularly review fidelity

feedback with program staff in order to identify opportunities to improve fidelity through on-

going training of staff and hotline responders. Objective 1c) Design an algorithm for machine learning using transcript data to explore its feasibility as a strategy for assessing fidelity.

Goal 2) To conduct an initial outcome evaluation of Crisis Chat compared to the telephone hotline and assess strategies for gathering outcome data from users of both crisis hotlines. Objective 2a) Assess user satisfaction with Crisis Chat and short-term outcomes to determine the effectiveness of Crisis Chat, as compared to the telephone hotline. Objective 2b) Explore whether chat effectiveness varies by user demographics, chat factors such as length of interaction, and provider skills and behaviors. Objective 2c) Compare two strategies for inviting users to complete the post-chat survey in order to identify the relative strengths and challenges of each strategy for improving response rates and eliciting representative outcome data.

Goal 3) To produce a toolkit to assist other victim service programs interested in establishing text or web-based crisis hotlines. Objective 3a) Create a comprehensive set of resources to help programs plan, implement, operate, and evaluate a text or web-based crisis hotline. Objective 3b) Partner with local, state, and national organizations to disseminate the toolkit to victim service organizations.

Broader Impacts of the Project

While the primary goal of this project was to strengthen Crisis Chat for further evaluation, we also produced some valuable insights that have the potential to contribute to our understanding of effective means of supporting survivors whether or not additional evaluation is conducted. Because we were able to access data from the start of Crisis Chat, we were able to demonstrate that a web-based hotline will be used by survivors on a college campus. In fact, we found that nearly as many survivors accessed the web-based hotline as accessed the traditional telephone hotline. Notably, overall use of hotlines nearly doubled, suggesting that the addition of

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a web-based hotline may have expanded the overall reach of the advocacy program (see Moylan, et al, 2021). This is encouraging news for campus advocacy programs who are considering adding a text or web-based crisis hotline and could be used to help secure the funding and resources necessary to invest in the program infrastructure. Our review of programmatic data also provides helpful information about how a web-based crisis hotline might be similar to a telephone hotline, and ways it might be different. For example, we found that chat interactions last for a longer duration than hotline calls, but that hotline responders appreciated the flexibility of the chat format which allowed them to privately answer the chat even if others were nearby. This is especially important for programs that rely on volunteers or staff who answer chats while engaged in other tasks, as is typical for local organizations that don't generate a call or text volume that necessitates full-time, dedicated staff.

Our review of chat transcripts also gave us valuable insight into what actually happens on web-based crisis hotlines. We saw moments of beauty, in which a survivor reaching out for help was met with a kind and compassionate response. For those who doubt that empathy can be expressed via chat, we saw moments that illustrate the potential and possibility for transformative help-seeking. More specifically, we also engaged in a systematic process of trying to identify what skills should be present in these interactions. While this study was not designed to test whether those skills are linked with better outcomes for survivors, we believe that even identifying core chat skills is valuable given the relative dearth of information available to guide program implementation. Our Fidelity Rating Tool and the associated training guide provide a wealth of information for those thinking about how to implement web-based crisis support. The categories and associated skills that we identified in that tool could easily be incorporated into training for hotline responders.

Ultimately, these lessons learned will be enhanced should we have the opportunity to fulfil our phased evaluation plan in its entirety. We were not able to assess program outcomes in this study, nor did we collect satisfaction data from chat users. These are necessary next steps for developing our understanding of whether and how web-based crisis hotlines are an effective means of improving the help-seeking experience for survivors. We believe we've created a solid foundation for combining multiple sources of data to create an enhanced understanding of the efficacy of web-based crisis hotlines, including advocate self-reported perspectives on the AR, outside observation and assessment of transcripts with the FRT, and satisfaction and outcome data from chat users. The challenge of increasing help-seeking and reporting, improving the help-seeking experience, and enhancing the short- and long-term benefits of help-seeking remain important goals in the victim service field. Web-based crisis hotlines are an emerging practice with the potential of further strengthening the victim support network, but only if we have rigorous evidence to help communities deliver high quality services. This project is an important first step in building that rigorous evidence base.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Tools

Includes:

Interview Guide

Advocacy Report

Revised Advocacy Report

Fidelity Rating Tool (pilot version)

Fidelity Rating Tool (final version and user guide)

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant ID Number _____   Interviewer Initials _____

Date Interview Conducted _____   Length of Interview _____

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

As we talked about before, this interview will take approximately an hour to an hour and a half to complete. We are doing these interviews to gain a better understanding of whether and how a web-based crisis hotline might help decrease the barriers to seeking help after sexual assault, increase reporting and help-seeking, and improve the help-seeking experience. I really appreciate your willingness to talk with me today and share your perspectives. The information you provide will be extremely helpful.

If it's ok with you, I would like to record this interview. It's going to be hard for me to get everything down on paper, so the tape can help me later on filling in anything I might have missed. The only other people who might listen to this recording will be the project supervisors. May I record our discussion?

Everything we discuss today is private—your name will not be connected to anything you say. Your name is not on this interview or the recording.

As we're going through the interview, if you need to take a break or stop, just let me know. If there are any questions that you don't want to answer, just say so, and I will move on to the next section. You do not have to answer all of the questions in this interview.

Before we get started I need to get your consent to be interviewed (go through procedures to obtain informed consent).

Do you have any questions before we start?

Section 1: Involvement in Interview

I'd like to start by asking you a few questions about how you heard about the study and why you decided to participate.

1. How did you hear about the study?
2. Why did you decide to participate?
3. Did anything make you reluctant to participate?
    a. *Probe, if yes:* What were those concerns
    b. *Probe:* How can we address your concern(s) as we go through the interview?

Section 2: Introduction

So that I can understand a little more about who you are, I'd like to ask a question about your connection to [university].

4. Can you tell me a little bit about your role or your relationship to [university]?
    a. *Probe*: Are you involved in any groups/offices on campus that focus on issues related to relationship violence or sexual misconduct?

Section 3: Exploring Survivor Help-Seeking

Next, I'd like to ask you some questions about your perspectives on the reasons why a survivor of sexual assault may or may not reach out for help from campus and community resources and the experiences they have when they do seek help. I'm going to ask the questions in a general sense because not everyone that we're interviewing will have personal experience. If you do have personal experiences related to seeking help for a sexual assault on this campus or in any other setting that you would like to share, you may choose to do so at any time. Sharing personal experiences isn't required and you can always choose to skip any question.

5. From your perspective, what do you think are some of the reasons that a survivor of sexual assault might not report or seek help from campus or community resources?
    a. *Probe*: Are there subgroups of students that experience different kinds of barriers?
    b. *Probe*: Is there anything about the current way that policies or programs are structured that might discourage reporting and help-seeking, whether deliberately or inadvertently?

6. What do you think that [university] could do to try to increase the number of survivors who seek help from the available resources?
    a. *Probe*: Are there ways that the policies and programs could be improved to promote help-seeking?

7. How would you describe the typical experience a survivor has when they do seek help for a sexual assault at [university]?
    a. *Probe*: What role do you think the [program] plays in shaping that experience? Or what role could they play?

8. What do you think can be done to improve the experience that survivors have when they do seek out resources?
    a. *Probe*: Are there changes in policies or programs that could be made to improve the response?
    b. *Probe*: What would a good response look like?

Section 4: Exploring Crisis Chat

As you may know, [program] has started a web-based crisis hotline. I'd like to ask you a few questions about your perspectives on this program.

9. [*Ask if not Staff/Volunteer*] How familiar are you with the web-based hotline?
    a. *Probe*: Where have you heard about it?
    b. *Probe*: What do you know about how it works?
    c. *Probe*: Have you heard students or others talk about it?

10. What do you think some of the potential benefits of the web-based hotline might be on [university]'s campus and in the surrounding community?
    a. *Probe*: What are some outcomes that you think might happen as the result of the web-based hotline?
    b. *Probe*: Do you think the web-based hotline will contribute positively to the work that you and others are doing related to relationship violence and sexual misconduct? How?

11. What do you think might be the downsides of the web-based hotline?
    a. *Probe*: Do you foresee any unintended consequences of using technology mediated services for crisis intervention, advocacy, and support?

12. As you know, we are working towards an evaluation of the web-based hotline. What things do you think would be important to know about the web-based hotline, [program], [university], survivors or the community as we plan our evaluation?
    a. *Probe*: Are there certain things you think we should measure? How would we know if the web-based hotline is successful?

Section 5: Web-based hotline Operation [ASK ONLY IF STAFF/VOLUNTEER]

Now I'd like to ask you some more detailed questions about how the web-based hotline works.

13. Can you try to walk me through the steps that staff and volunteers take to carry out the web-based hotline?
    a. *Probe*: How are shifts scheduled? How does the scheduled staff/volunteer transition into their shift?
    b. *Probe*: What happens when a chat comes in? What if there are multiple chats? How is a chat concluded?
    c. *Probe*: What paperwork or reporting processes are in place?

14. Can you describe the process from a survivor's perspective? How might they experience the steps in the process?

15. Can you tell me about a time that your shift went really smoothly?
    a. *Probe*: What was "smooth" about the shift?

16. Can you tell me about a time that the shift did not go smoothly?
    a. *Probe*: What happened? What do you think are the reasons for the lack of smoothness?
    b. *Probe*: What could be changed to address what went wrong in that shift?
    c. *Probe*: What do you think are potential stumbling blocks for the web-based hotline?

17. How is crisis chat different than the telephone crisis hotline?
    a. *Probe*: Did your training prepare you for those differences? Is additional training needed?
    b. *Probe*: Are changes to the web-based hotline process needed to adjust for those differences?
    c. *Probe*: Have you noticed differences in the clients or the issues raised?

Section 6: Conclusion

18. Do you have anything else you think I should know?

19. Do you have any questions for me?

Michigan State University
Sexual Assault Program
SACI ADVOCACY REPORT

DATE OF CONTACT: _____ / _____ / _____

CALL/PAGE TIME: _____ ☐ AM ☐ PM

SACI ADVOCATE NAME:

(last) _____

(first) _____

LENGTH OF ADVOCACY:
_____ hour/s _____ minutes

TYPE OF SERVICE:
☐ Hotline   ☐ Medical Advocacy

Direct Services

☐ Assistance in Filing Victim Compensation Application
(Simply providing an individual with an application does NOT qualify)

Information/Referral
☐ Information about criminal justice process
☐ Information about victim rights, how to obtain notifications, etc.
☐ Referral to other victim service programs
☐ Referral to other services, supports and resources
  (legal, medical, faith-based organizations, etc.)

Personal Advocacy/Accompaniment
☐ Victim Advocacy/Accompaniment to Medical Care
☐ Victim Advocacy/Accompaniment to Medical Forensic Exam (SANE)
☐ Law Enforcement interview advocacy/accompaniment
☐ Intervention with employer, creditor, landlord, or academic institution
☐ Transportation Assistance (Provided by Agency)
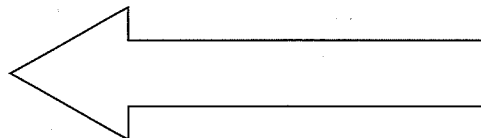☐ Interpreter Services

Emotional Support or Safety Services
☐ Crisis intervention (in person, includes safety planning, etc)
☐ Hotline/Crisis Line Counseling

Criminal/Civil Justice System Assistance
☐ Notification of criminal justice events
  (Case status, arrest, court proceedings, case disposition, and release)
☐ Victim impact statement assistance
☐ Prosecution interview advocacy/accompaniment
☐ Law enforcement interview/advocacy/accompaniment
☐ Criminal advocacy/accompaniment

PLEASE COMPLETE REVERSE SIDE

⬅

SURVIVOR/VICTIM INFORMATION
Type of victimization
☐ Adult Sexual Assault
☐ Adults Sexually Abused/Assaulted as Children
☐ Domestic and/or Family Violence
☐ Violation of a Court (Protective) Order
☐ Child Physical Abuse or Neglect
☐ Child Pornography
☐ Child Sexual Abuse
☐ Teen Dating Victimization
☐ Stalking/Harassment
☐ Human Trafficking: Sex
☐ Human Trafficking: Labor
☐ Elder Abuse/Neglect
☐ Hate Crime: Racial/Religious/Gender/Sexual
  Orientation/Other _____
  (Please Explain)

☐ Prank/Crank Caller
☐ Other **Must Specify:**
_____

Age: ☐ 0-12 yrs. ☐ 13-17 ☐ 18-24
         ☐ 25-59   ☐ 60 and older
         ☐ Not Reported

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
            ☐ Other _____
                    (Brief Description)
            ☐ Not Reported

Special Classifications of Individuals

Deaf/Hard of Hearing	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown
Homeless	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown
LGBTQ	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown
Veterans	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown
Victims with Disabilities (Cognitive/Physical/Mental)	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown
Victims with Limited English Proficiency	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown
Immigrants/Refugees/Asylum Seekers	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unknown

Race/Ethnicity
☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black/African American
☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
☐ White Non-Latino/Caucasian
☐ Some Other Race
☐ Multiple Races
☐ Not Reported

Student Status: ☐ MSU   ☐ MSU International
                    ☐ LCC   ☐ High School
                    ☐ Non- student   ☐ Unknown
                    ☐ Other

Michigan State University
Sexual Assault Program
SACI ADVOCACY REPORT

CALL/PAGE FROM:
☐ Answering Service
☐ Olin Health Center
☐ Sparrow Hospital
☐ Law Enforcement
☐ Other:

_____

**PROBLEM WITH ANSWERING
SERVICE/PAGER/PHONE (Select all that apply)**
☐ Long Wait/Hold
☐ Operator Insensitivity
☐ Pager Unreadable
☐ No Page Received
☐ None
☐ Other:

_____

SERVICE PROVIDED TO (Select ONE)
☐ Primary Survivor/Victim
☐ Co-survivor (family, friend, romantic partner etc)
☐ Residence Hall Staff
☐ Medical personnel
☐ Law enforcement personnel
☐ Other:

_____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Did this assault happen on the campus of MSU or
university owned property, or sanctioned event?**
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Unknown

Was this assault reported to the police?
☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Unknown

Was crime victim compensation information provided?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Was safety planning provided?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

If Yes, Describe:

MSU Center for Survivors
SACI ADVOCACY REPORT

DATE OF CONTACT: _____ / _____ / _____

CALL/CHAT TIME: _____ □ AM □ PM

SACI ADVOCATE NAME:

(last) _____

(first) _____

LENGTH OF ADVOCACY:
_____ hour/s _____ minutes

TYPE OF SERVICE:

□ **Hotline**   □ **Crisis Chat**   □ **In-Person**

Direct Services
□ Assistance in Filing Victim Compensation Application
(Simply providing an individual with an application does NOT qualify)

Information/Referral
□ Information about criminal justice process
□ Information about victim rights, how to obtain notifications, etc.
□ Referral to other victim service programs
□ Referral to other services, supports and resources
  (legal, medical, faith-based organizations, etc.)

Emotional Support or Safety Services
□ Crisis intervention (in person, includes safety planning, etc)
□ Hotline/Crisis Line/Crisis Chat Counseling

Initial reason for chatting/calling:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Was safety planning assessed and/or provided?
□ Yes   □ No
Describe:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

PLEASE COMPLETE REVERSE SIDE

SURVIVOR/VICTIM INFORMATION

Type of victimization (may check more than one)

- □ Adult Sexual Assault
- □ Adults Sexually Abused/Assaulted as Children
- □ Domestic and/or Family Violence
- □ Violation of a Court (Protective) Order
- □ Child Physical Abuse or Neglect
- □ Child Pornography
- □ Child Sexual Abuse
- □ Teen Dating Victimization
- □ Stalking/Harassment
- □ Human Trafficking: Sex
- □ Human Trafficking: Labor
- □ Elder Abuse/Neglect
- □ Hate Crime: Racial/Religious/Gender/Sexual Orientation/Other _____
  (Please Explain)
- □ Prank/Obscene/Abusive Caller/Chatter
- □ Other **Must Specify:**

_____

Age: □ 0-12 yrs. □ 13-17 □ 18-24
□ 25-59   □ 60 and older
□ Not Reported

Gender: □ Male □ Female
□ Other _____
        (Brief Description)
□ Not Reported

Special Classifications of Individuals

Deaf/Hard of Hearing	□ Yes	□ No	□ Unknown
Homeless	□ Yes	□ No	□ Unknown
LGBTQ	□ Yes	□ No	□ Unknown
Veterans	□ Yes	□ No	□ Unknown
Victims with Disabilities (Cognitive/Physical/Mental)	□ Yes	□ No	□ Unknown
Victims with Limited English Proficiency	□ Yes	□ No	□ Unknown
Immigrants/Refugees/Asylum Seekers	□ Yes	□ No	□ Unknown

Race/Ethnicity
- □ American Indian/Alaska Native
- □ Asian
- □ Black/African American
- □ Hispanic or Latino
- □ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- □ White Non-Latino/Caucasian
- □ Some Other Race
- □ Multiple Races
- □ Not Reported

Student Status: □ MSU □ Undergrad □ Graduate
□ International
□ MSU Faculty/Staff
□ Community Member
□ Unknown

MSU Center for Survivors
SACI ADVOCACY REPORT

SERVICE PROVIDED TO:
☐ Primary Survivor/Victim
☐ Co-survivor (family, friend, romantic partner, etc.)
☐ Other:
_____

TOPICS DISCUSSED:
☐ Criminal Justice process/reporting/experience
☐ OIE process/reporting/experience
☐ SANE or Medical process/options
☐ Coping or grounding skills
☐ Suicide/Self Harm
☐ Myth busting/education
☐ Other/Briefly explain:
_____
_____
_____

REFERRALS GIVEN:
☐ Center for Survivors Sexual Assault Hotline
☐ Center for Survivors Crisis Chat
☐ Center for Survivors Therapy/Support Groups
☐ Center for Survivors Advocacy
☐ MSU Sexual Assault Healthcare Program
☐ MSU Safe Place
☐ MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)
☐ EVE, inc.
☐ Sparrow Hospital/SANE
☐ The Firecracker Foundation
☐ Michigan Sexual Assault Hotline (MCEDSV)
☐ RAINN
☐ 1 in 6
☐ Crisis Text Line
☐ Other:
_____

RESOURCE USE:
☐ Resource Binder
☐ Crisis Chat Shortcuts
☐ D2L
☐ Setting Boundaries Handout
☐ Other/Briefly Explain:
_____
_____
_____

DIFFICULTY FINDING RESOURCE:
☐ N/A
☐ Yes, briefly explain:
_____
_____
_____

SURVEY LINK PROVIDED:
☐ Yes, link was provided with code: _____
☐ No, please explain: _____
_____
_____

PROBLEMS WITH ANSWERING SERVICE/TRILLIAN/PHONE:
☐ Long Wait/Hold
☐ Operator Insensitivity
☐ App(s) or Tech crash/freeze/malfunction
☐ Change of Chat Status (invisible, online)
☐ No Chat Notification(s)
☐ Poor Wifi/Cell Service
☐ Other/Briefly Explain:
_____
_____
_____

How helpful do you think this was for the caller/chatter?

1	2	3	4	5

1 being the least helpful, 5 being the most helpful
Briefly explain:
_____
_____
_____

How did you feel during/after the call?

1	2	3	4	5

1 being completely unprepared, 5 being completely prepared
Briefly explain:
_____
_____
_____

CONSULT WITH BACKUP:
☐ N/A
☐ Tech Issue
☐ Information/Resource
☐ Help w/ boundary setting or wrap up
☐ Process/Feedback
☐ Other/Briefly explain:
_____
_____
_____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Fidelity Rating Tool (pilot version)

Date: / /	Time: : am/pm	Length: minutes	Words:

Answering Time: minutes No Answer	Technical Difficulties: Y/Maybe/N

TOPICS DISCUSSED DURING THE CHAT:

Support from family/friends	Emotions/Coping	Academics
Reporting	Healthcare	Counseling
Housing/Accommodations	Managing school/work	Other:___

ANSWERING	CLOSING
Welcoming/warm tone: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Mutual ending: Yes No Unclear/Partial N/A
Respond to message content: Full Partial No	Assess remaining needs: Yes No Unclear/Partial N/A
PROFESSIONALISM	Remind chat/hotline: Yes No Unclear/Partial N/A
Maintains boundaries: All Some None N/A	Shared survey link: Yes No Unclear/Partial N/A
Prompt responses (# responses >2min):	**CHAT SKILLS**
Longest delay: min	One thread at a time: All Some None N/A
Sets limits appropriately: All Some None N/A	Explain pause: All Some None N/A
Confidentiality addressed: Full Partial No	Check in when chatter silent: All Some None N/A
RAPPORT BUILDING	Brief messages: All Some None N/A
Follows chatter lead: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Uses clear phrasing: All Some None N/A
Warm & welcoming: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Checks for understanding: All Some None N/A
Active listening: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	**MAKING REFERRALS**
Validation & normalization: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Respond to chatter need: Full Partial None. N/A
Nonjudgmental: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Gentle offering: Full Partial None N/A
Conveys empathy: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Appropriate referrals given: Full Partial None N/A
EDUCATION	Accurate/clear info for referral: Full Partial None N/A
Accurate info provided: All Some None N/A	Assess & addresses barriers: Full Partial None N/A
Thorough information: All Some None N/A	**SAFETY**
Presents sensitively: All Some None N/A	Addresses directly: Full Partial No O/E N/A
CULTURAL HUMILITY	Establishes safety plan: Full Partial No O/E N/A
Avoids assumptions: All Some None N/A	Sensitive and nonjudgmental: Full Partial No O/E N/A
Avoids biases about reporting options (e.g., OIE, law enforcement): All Some None N/A	**CRITICAL INCIDENTS**
	Type of incident: None Safety Risk Intense Chat Mandatory Reporting Obscene/Prank
Engages with identity by following chatters lead: All Some None N/A	Potential for confidentiality breach: Yes No
	Was the situation fully assessed: Full Partial No
	Uses setting boundary skills: Full Partial No
OVERALL RATINGS	**CHATTER ENGAGEMENT**
Overall empathy: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Chatter demonstrated appreciation:
Overall helpfulness: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Strong Moderate Low None
Overall chatter-centered: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Chatter became frustrated:
Chatter's needs addressed: 1 2 3 4 5 n/a	Strong Moderate Low None
Notes (continue on reverse):	Chatter distress from start to end: Significantly decreased, somewhat decreased, same, somewhat increased, significantly increased
	Chatter willing to use resources: Yes No Unclear

Evaluating a Web-Based Crisis Hotline for Sexual Assault Victims: Reducing Barriers, Increasing Help-Seeking, and Improving the Help-Seeking Experience

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FIDELITY RATING TOOL

Date: / /	**Start Time**: : am/pm	**Length**: minutes	**Words**:
Answering Time: minutes No Answer		**Transcript #**:	

ANSWERING						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Welcoming/warm tone						
	FULL	PARTIAL	NO	N/A		
Respond to message content						

PROFESSIONALISM					
	ALL	SOME	NONE	N/O	N/A
Maintains boundaries					
Sets limits appropriately					
	FULL	PARTIAL	NO	NOT INDICATED	N/A
Confidentiality addressed					
Delayed responses (# responses >2min:		Longest delay			

BASIC RAPPORT BUILDING						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/O	N/A
Following chatter's lead							
Warm and welcoming							
Active listening							

ADVANCED RAPPORT BUILDING						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/O	N/A
Validation & normalization							
Nonjudgmental							
Conveys empathy							

EDUCATION						
	FULL	PARTIAL	NO	CHANCE OF HARM	N/O	N/A
Accurate information provided						
Thorough information						
Presents sensitively						

CULTURAL HUMILITY						
	FULL	PARTIAL	NO	CHANCE OF HARM	N/O	N/A
Avoids assumptions						
Engages with identity by following chatter's lead						

CHAT SKILLS					
	ALL	SOME	NONE	N/O	CHANCE OF HARM
One thread at a time					
Explain pause					
Check in when chatter silent					
Brief messages					
Uses clear phrasing					
Checks for understanding					

MAKING REFERRALS					
	FULL	PARTIAL	NO	N/O	N/A
Respond to chatter need					
Gentle offering					
Appropriate referrals given					
Accurate/clear info for referral					
Assess & addresses barriers					

SAFETY						
	FULL	PARTIAL	NO	N/O	N/A	Unaddressed safety need	Potential for increased risk
Addresses directly							
Establishes safety plan							

CRITICAL INCIDENTS					
TYPE OF INCIDENT: None Mandatory Reporting Safety Risk Intense Chat Obscene/Prank					
		YES		NO	
Potential for confidentiality breach					
	FULL	PARTIAL	NO/NONE	N/O	N/A
Was protocol followed					
Was the situation fully assessed					
Uses boundary setting skill					

CLOSING				
	YES	NO	UNCLEAR/PARTIAL	N/A
Mutual ending				
Assess remaining needs				
Remind chat/hotline				
Share survey link				

OVERALL RATINGS							
	1	2	3	4	5	N/O	N/A
Overall supportive conversation							
Overall helpfulness							
Overall chatter centered							
Chatter's needs addressed							

CHATTER ENGAGEMENT					
	Strong	Moderate	Low	None	N/A
Chatter demonstrated appreciation					
Chatter became frustrated					
	Significantly Decreased	Somewhat Decreased	Same	Somewhat Increased	Significantly Increased	Unable to asses	N/A
Chatter Distress							

TOPICS DISCUSSED DURING CHAT				
Support friends/family	Reporting	Housing	Emotions/coping	Healthcare
Managing school/work	Academics	Counseling	Other (Explain):	

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES	Yes	No	Maybe	CHAT END TIME
				: am/pm
COMMENTS ON TRANSCRIPT				

FIDELITY RATING TOOL USER'S GUIDE

This tool is designed to assess what happens in a chat hotline interaction using transcripts. The tool has several components including:

- Metadata, such as the date and time of the chat, the number of words
- Routine Chat Moments
  - Answering, which assesses the start of the interaction
  - Closing, such as whether there was a mutual ending
- Specific Skill Assessments, including professionalism, rapport building, providing education, cultural humility, chat-specific skills, making referrals, assessing safety, managing critical incidents
- Overall assessments of the interaction, including helpfulness, chatter engagement, and topics discussed

Not all segments of the tool will be relevant to all chats.

Below we detail each item on the tool, providing a definition or description of what should be assessed along with guidelines for the scoring options for each item. It is important to carefully review the scoring criteria for each item prior to using the tool. We recommend referencing this document often while assigning ratings to ensure consistent implementation of the tool.

Note that the purpose of the tool is to capture nuance. A chat that is adequate should fall in the middle on scaled items. Higher and lower ends of the scale should capture exceptional or flawed responses, respectively. *Therefore, we expect most chats to rate in the middle, with fewer garnering ratings that are truly exceptional or flawed.*

META-DATA

These fields appear at the start and end of the tool, depending on whether they are most easily assessed and recorded when first beginning a transcript or after completing the full review.

Start of Chat:

Date: Enter date of chat in format MM/DD/YYYY

Start Time: Enter start time in 24 hour clock format, HH:MM (2:30pm = 14:30)

Words: Transcripts contain a word count based on the chat interaction, use the provided word count rather than manually finding word count using MSWord tools.

Answering Time: Calculate the number of minutes between the chatter's first message and the advocate's initial response. Enter the number of minutes (rounded to nearest minute). If the chatter exits prior to receiving a response, select "No Answer."

End of Chat:

Topics: Choose all of the options that best describe the topic(s) included in the interaction.

Technical Difficulties: Did there appear to be technical difficulties such as delayed messages, connectivity issues, or unexpected and unintended disconnections? Options are Yes (clear technical difficulty), Maybe (unclear), and No (no apparent technical difficulties).

End time:

Enter the time of the last posted communication by either the advocate or chatter. There may be additional system generated messages (like "unanswered message" or "visitor ended chat")- do not use these timestamps. Use 24 hour time format HH:MM (e.g., 2:30pm is entered as 14:30).

ANSWERING

Answering codes should be applied to content within the first exchange(s) of the transcript. Typically, this includes the chatter's initial message and the advocate's response.

Welcoming/Warm tone: Advocate should answer the chat in a way that conveys warmth and engages the chatter.

1	No evidence of warm, welcoming tone: Tone is cold or could even be perceived as hostile. No welcome or introduction is provided.
2	Little evidence of warm, welcoming tone: Brief message with ambiguous tone, no welcome or clear introduction to the hotline, no question or attempt to open conversation
3	Neutral evidence of warm/welcoming tone: There is either an introduction to the crisis chat service or an expression of a willingness to help. The tone of the answering is not off-putting, but it is also not especially warm or welcoming. An average tone.
4	Fairly warm and welcoming tone: There is a welcome and introduction of Crisis Chat. Some warmth is expressed, along with willingness to help. Overall good use of skill.
5	Strong evidence of warm, welcoming tone: Tone is warm and inviting, makes an offer of help, and then responds with empathy and an invitation for further discussion. Exceptional use of this skill – advocate went above and beyond.
N/A	No answer or chatter disconnected before advocate could answer.

Respond to Message Content: Advocate should answer the chat in an appropriate way based on the chatter's first message.

Full	Advocate should respond in full to the chatter's opening message. If the opening message is just a greeting (e.g. "hello"), the advocate should include a greeting ("hello"), a welcome ("thank you for reaching out") and/or an introduction to Crisis Chat (e.g. the shortcut), and an invitation or conversation opener ("how can I help you today?"). If the opening message contains any details or asks a question, the advocate should greet, welcome/introduce, and acknowledge and respond to the content of the chatter's message (e.g. by answering a question, asking a follow up question, or expressing empathy).

Partial	A partial responding to message content might be when an advocate responds with empathy (so acknowledges the message) but does not invite further conversation by either providing information or prompting with a question. In other words, the advocate partially responds to the chatter's message but does not fully respond. May or may not include an introduction to crisis chat.
No	No response to a chatter's initial message is for instances where the advocate does not engage with the chatter's initial message, for example by only providing a generic greeting even if a chatter has asked a specific question.
N/A	No answer or chatter disconnects before the advocate has a chance to answer.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism assesses for tone and demeanor consistent with the role of an advocate or hotline responder. These skills should be assessed on the totality of the chat interaction.

Maintains Boundaries: The advocate should maintain personal/professional boundaries, consistent with their training and agency protocols. This includes not sharing personal information, keeping the focus on the chatter, and maintaining an appropriate tone and demeanor for the role.

All	Strong evidence that professional boundaries are maintained: Advocate clearly and empathetically maintains appropriate personal boundaries. Advocate consistently focuses on the chatter and does not give advice.
Some	Evidence that some professional boundaries were blurred, generally in a mild or moderate fashion: Advocate may minimally share information that crosses boundaries, but the information does not significantly disrupt the interaction.
None	Evidence that professional boundaries were not maintained at all, or that there were significant lapses in boundaries: Advocate does not establish boundaries or provides their personally identifying information and/or advice.
Not Indicated/ No Opportunity	Use this option when the chat was of a nature that boundaries did not come up or were not really pertinent to the interaction (e.g., a brief chat in which the advocate shares specific information in response to a chatter's question)
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to cross boundaries, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Sets Limits Appropriately: The advocate should appropriately, and when necessary, maintain the limits of the Crisis Chat service. This may mean re-directing chatters who are using the service inappropriately, operating within the scheduled service hours, and so on.

All	A strong example of appropriately setting limits requires that the advocate clearly conveys the purpose and scope of Crisis Chat. Advocate may front load this information, or may address limits as they arise during the chat.
Some	A moderate example of appropriately setting limits requires that the advocate empathetically engages with setting limits as they arise, yet either does not fully convey the limits or is inconsistent or delayed in their response.
None	A negative example of appropriately setting limits the advocate either sets limits abruptly, curtly or provides inaccurate information. Alternately, the advocate does not set limits when the circumstances of the chat appear to warrant such limits.
Not Indicated/No Opportunity	Use this option when the chat discussion never required setting limits or redirecting a chatter.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to set limits appropriately, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Confidentiality Addressed: Advocates are not expected to address confidentiality unless/until it becomes relevant, for example of a chatter asks about confidentiality, or shares information that might lead to a violation of confidentiality.

Full	Strong evidence that confidentiality is addressed: Confidentiality is fully addressed when the advocate fully explains confidentiality and shares the primary exclusions to confidentiality (e.g., mandatory reporting, imminent threat of harm) or shares a link to the Crisis Chat confidentiality policy
Partial	Partial evidence that confidentiality is reasonably addressed: For example, the advocate may state that the chat is confidential or may list some but not all exceptions to confidentiality.

No	Evidence that confidentiality should have been addressed or the chatter was provided inaccurate information regarding confidentiality.
Not Indicated/No Opportunity	Chat where the discussion about confidentiality did not come up due to topics discussed and/or no need for mandatory reporting.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to address confidentiality, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Delayed Responses: Count the number of hotline responder messages that occur more than two minutes after the chatter sends a message. If the responder explains the delay, for example by saying "it will take me a few minutes to find that information for you," do not include it in the count. You should only count *unexplained* delays of over two minutes. If the chatter sends multiple messages, use the first message timestamp when assessing for delays.

Longest Delay: Enter the duration (rounded to the nearest minute) of the longest delay included in the count of delayed responses. If there are no delayed responses, enter N/A.

BASIC RAPPORT BUILDING

Rapport building refers to skills used to build a relationship and engage with the chatter. These are core skills that should be used throughout the entire chat conversation. As such, ratings for these skills are based on the degree to which the skill is effectively used and the consistency of use across the full conversation (including answering). Specific skills are defined below, followed by the common rating scale used for assessing each skill in this section.

Follow chatter lead:
Advocates should allow chatter to direct the focus of the conversation, within the boundaries of appropriate use of Crisis Chat. If a chatter raises a topic, advocates should engage with that topic. Advocates should seek input from a chatter about what the chatter would like to discuss, for example by asking "what would you like us to talk about?" If the advocate thinks it would be helpful to introduce a new topic, they should do so in a way that ensures the chatter is willing to discuss the new topic, for example by asking "it might be helpful to talk about some of the misconceptions people have about sexual assault- is that something that you would like to do?"

Warm & personable:
The advocate should adopt a warm and welcoming tone throughout the interaction with the chatter. Expressing kindness, thanking the chatter for reaching out, being personable, and remaining engaged and present are all examples of how an advocate might convey warmth and welcome.

Active listening:
In the context of chat, active listening might be expressed through demonstrations of paying attention, such as recalling details, prompt responses (no unexplained prolonged delays), and asking appropriate follow-up questions. Other examples include: Using something the chatter has said to further engagement. Attending all of the details shared by the chatter at some point during the chat (e.g., returning to ideas that have not been fully explored). Minimal encouragers might be used, such as short messages of encouragement designed to show that the advocate is paying attention.

1	Little to no evidence of this skill throughout the entire interaction, even when the use of the skill would have been helpful and appropriate. May use contradictory behaviors that could disrupt the potential for a beneficial experience.
2	Only minor evidence of the use of this skill throughout the interaction. May occasionally use contradictory or ambiguous behaviors that could harm the relationship.
3	Neutral evidence of the use of this skill, or occasional clumsy use of the skill. Use of the skill is adequate, such that the effect is not damaging but also not exemplary. Or may mostly use the skill, but have a few instances where their use of the skill was strained.
4	Generally consistent and good use of the skill across the interaction. Advocate demonstrates understanding of the skill and when to use it. May be a few examples of

	more ambiguous use of the skill, but overall the skill was used proficiently.
5	Very strong use of the skill across the whole interaction. Exceptional use of this skill – advocate went above and beyond. Demonstrates understanding of the skill and facility in employment of the skill. Consistently strong use of the skill.
No Opportunity	Limited conversation that did not provide opportunity for this skill to be used (e.g. chatter requests specific information and advocate provides it and no other discussion occurs).
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

ADVANCED RAPPORT BUILDING

Some rapport building skills are more advanced and advocates will not have the opportunity to employ them in every interaction, particularly in shorter or more focused interactions. These skills may not be present in every interaction. If there is not an opportunity to employ these skills, please use the "No Opportunity" option. When present, these skills may be used throughout the entire chat conversation. As such, ratings for these skills are based on the degree to which the skill is effectively used and the consistency of use across the full conversation (including answering). Specific skills are defined below, followed by the rating scale used in this section.

Validation & normalization:

Expressing understanding and acceptance of the chatter and their experiences and perspectives. Understanding and conveying that someone's emotional responses is a recognizable and understandable response to the situation. For example, the advocate might say that wanting to avoid reminders of the assault makes sense as a self-protective measure.

Nonjudgmental:

Important for counteracting society's tendency to blame victims, conveying a non-judgmental response to survivors is essential for establishing and maintaining connection. Non-judgement is characterized by believing survivors, conveying understanding and acceptance, gentle reframing of self-blame, and avoiding statements that are (or could reasonably be misinterpreted to be) conveying judgement or blame (e.g. "why" questions).

Conveys empathy:

Empathy is "the ability to see, feel, experience, and understand what a person is feeling and experiencing as if it were your own problem, but without allowing it to become your own" (from program training materials). Involves the advocate conveying that they hear and understand the chatter's experience ("perspective taking" and recognizing emotion) in a way that fuels connection.

1	Little to no evidence of this skill throughout the entire interaction, even when the use of the skill would have been helpful and appropriate. May use contradictory behaviors that could disrupt the potential for a beneficial experience.
2	Only minor evidence of the use of this skill throughout the interaction. May occasionally use contradictory or ambiguous behaviors that could harm the relationship.

3	Neutral evidence of the use of this skill, or occasional clumsy use of the skill. Use of the skill is adequate, such that the effect is not damaging but also not exemplary. Or may mostly use the skill, but have a few instances where their use of the skill was strained.
4	Generally consistent and good use of the skill across the interaction. Advocate demonstrates understanding of the skill and when to use it. May be a few examples of more ambiguous use of the skill, but overall the skill was used proficiently.
5	Very strong use of the skill across the whole interaction. Exceptional use of this skill – advocate went above and beyond. Demonstrates understanding of the skill and facility in employment of the skill. Consistently strong use of the skill.
No Opportunity	Limited conversation that did not provide opportunity for this skill to be used (e.g. chatter requests specific information and advocate provides it and no other discussion occurs).
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

EDUCATION

One of the functions of crisis chat advocacy is to provide accurate information that helps to educate the chatter, when it is appropriate to do so. This may include general education about options for help-seeking or post-assault support, information about common responses to experiencing sexual assault or coping techniques, as well as "myth busting" or helping to reframe common, inaccurate ideas about sexual assault. There are several skills associated with education. Those are detailed below, followed by the rating criteria.

Note: Conversation about a specific referral, especially when it includes information meant to help the chatter access the resource, should be captured under "Making Referrals."

Accurate information provided:
Did the advocate provide information that is accurate and correct, as well as appropriate for the context of the conversation?

Thorough information:
Was the advocate able to provide information in enough detail and depth to respond to the chatter's need?

Presents sensitively:
Was the advocate sensitive in both their decision to engage in education and the manner in which they shared information? For example, was the information presented in a gentle and non-judgmental manner to a chatter who indicated openness to receiving information?

Full	Education was provided and this skill was consistently demonstrated during all education-related conversation.
Partial	Education was provided and this skill was used intermittently or with mixed efficacy throughout all education-related conversation.
None	Education was not provided and this skill was not employed at all during a chat, even when it might have been helpful or appropriate.
Chance of harm	Education was provided or attempted, but the use of this skill potentially could lead to harm.
No Opportunity	No education was provided as there was no opportunity and/or education was not indicated or appropriate given the content of the chat.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

CULTURAL HUMILITY

Cultural humility involves creating an environment that is safe, inclusive, and comfortable for all chat users, regardless of race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other personal identities and characteristics.

Avoids assumptions: Throughout the interaction, advocates should avoid judgements and biases, whether or not the chatter has disclosed any information about their identities. This means, for example, not assuming pronouns or being sensitive about the role of law enforcement.

Full	Advocate creates an inclusive environment by avoiding judgments and biases and refraining from making assumptions.
Partial	Advocate largely avoids judgments and bias. While the advocate may make some minor assumptions, these do not appear to harm the rapport or otherwise detract from the interaction. Advocate may acknowledge their misstep and attempt to repair any damage.
Chance of Harm	Assumptions or biases seem to have harmed the rapport or detracted from the helpfulness of the interaction.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Engages with identity by following chatter's lead: When the chatter does disclose information related to their identity, the advocate should follow the chatter's lead in acknowledging and incorporating that information into the interaction.

Full	A positive engagement with identity includes engaging with the chatter when they bring up aspects of their identity without asking invasive questions. Furthermore, advocate validates the chatter's identity and acknowledges how it may shape their life experiences.
Partial	Advocate only minimally engages with the chatter about their identity and how it may shape their life experiences. While the advocate could have better followed chatter's lead, rapport does not seem harmed nor does it detract from the overall interaction.
Chance of Harm	When a chatter introduces an aspect of their identity and the advocate either does not engage or engages in a way that could have harmed rapport or detracted from the overall helpfulness of the interaction.

No Opportunity	There was no opportunity to use the skill because issues of identity were not raised by the chatter, nor would it have been otherwise indicated or appropriate for this skill to be used.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

CHAT SKILLS

Engaging in crisis intervention in a digital medium may require using specific skills to enhance clarity and effectiveness of text-based communication. These are skills that may be deployed throughout the chat, as needed, and therefore ratings should be based on the totality of the interaction.

Below each skill is described, followed by a rating scale to be used for all items in this section.

One thread at a time:
In order to keep the chat clear and easy to follow, it is best practice for the advocate to use one thread at a time. This means the advocate should try to focus on one topic rather than introduce or engage in multiple conversation "threads" at the same time.

Explain pause:
In order to enhance clarity and reduce misunderstanding, the advocate should explain any pauses in their communication. This could include when an advocate is looking for resources, checking in with a supervisor, or even getting to a safe place to chat. For example, the advocate might say "it may take me a few minutes to find that information, but I am still here and you are welcome to send me messages as I look for that."

Check in when chatter is silent:
The advocate should check in with the chatter when there is prolonged and unexplained silence (>2 minutes) by asking if the chatter is still there, reminding the chatter that the advocate is still present, asking if there is anything else they can help them with, or by asking how they are doing. This should be done gently and as an expression of care, for example by saying "take all the time you need- I just wanted you to know that I'm still here for you."

Brief messages:
The advocate should use short, concise messages to convey information as opposed to including a large amount of information in one chat message. For example, this may mean breaking up longer content into shorter digestible pieces while still keeping conceptually linked content together.

Uses clear phrasing:
The advocate should use clear phrasing and avoid technical jargon, slang, colloquialisms, or abbreviations that might not be clearly understood by the chatter. This includes not using emojis.

Checks for understanding:

The advocate should check in to make sure that information shared is clear to the chatter and seek clarification from the chatter when necessary with explicit phrases such as "Does this make sense?", "Is that clear?", "Is this what you meant?", "Am I understanding you correctly?"

All	This chat skill is consistently and appropriately used throughout the entire interaction.
Some	This chat skill is used intermittently throughout the interaction, or is sometimes performed in a way that is potentially damaging to rapport.
None	This chat skill is not employed at all during an interaction, although there were opportunities when it could have been useful
Chance of harm	This chat skill is attempted to be used, yet could potentially lead to harm.
No opportunity	There was no situation when this skill was needed and/or would have been beneficial and therefore there was no opportunity to use this skill.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

MAKING REFERRALS

When appropriate, the advocate should connect chatters with resources that can provide support or meet chatter needs.

Responds to chatter need: Referrals that are offered should be consistent with the chatter's need, either as explicitly requested by the chatter or in response to information the chatter has offered that may indicate a resource could be helpful. Offering referrals should also be consistent with chatter needs, meaning that advocates should not rush to offer resources without allowing for sufficient processing time.

Full	Advocate has fully assessed what referrals a chatter may need without rushing to making referrals and allowing time for processing.
Partial	Advocate may have made a misstep in responding to the chatter's need yet is ultimately able to fulfill the chatter's need. For example, when a chatter discusses triggers, the advocate may offer a referral to a therapist, but then later returns to the issue of triggers and how to cope with them. Alternately, the advocate may meet some chatter needs, while other needs are left unmet.
None	The *advocate does not meet the chatter's referral* needs that are within the realm of Crisis Chat's purview.
No Opportunity	There was no opportunity for the advocate to use these skills as referrals didn't come up, wouldn't have been appropriate, or were not indicated.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Gentle offering:

Referrals should be offered in a gentle manner that conveys warmth and care for the chatter, while also respecting the chatter's autonomy to decide whether and how to use resources.

Full	Advocate uses a warm and caring tone when assessing or offering referrals. Advocate may ask the chatter if they are open to the referral or uses language that reiterates the chatter's autonomy.

Partial	Advocate makes referral without first asking chatter of their openness to referral, insists that the chatter has to follow-up on the referral or has rushed to provide the referral, but otherwise conveys warmth and care
None	Advocate assumes the chatter wants and needs the referral and/or rushes to provide the referral.
No Opportunity	There was no opportunity for the advocate to use these skills as referrals didn't come up, wouldn't have been appropriate, or were not indicated.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Appropriate referrals given:

Referrals offered by the advocate were appropriate for the chatter's situation.

Full	Strong evidence that the referrals were appropriate and sufficient efforts were made to ensure that referrals met chatter needs and that chatter was eligible for the resource. All of the most relevant referrals were offered or discussed.
Partial	Moderate evidence that the referrals were appropriate would include that the referral is what the chatter wants, yet advocate may not have first assessed the chatter's eligibility (e.g. offered counseling at the Center without asking of chatter is a student). Alternately, some appropriate referrals were offered, but the advocate did not offer other relevant resources.
None	The advocate offered a resource that is not appropriate or did not offer any resources for the chatter's situation (when an appropriate resource does exist).
No Opportunity	There was no opportunity for the advocate to use these skills as referrals didn't come up, wouldn't have been appropriate, or were not indicated.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Accurate/clear info re: referral:

When a referral is offered, the advocate provides accurate and clear information about the referral. This might include contact information, eligibility criteria, and information about how to access services. Sufficient information should be provided to enable the chatter to access the resource.

Full	All pertinent information to access the resource has been accurately and clearly described for the chatter's situation. Information was presented clearly.
Partial	Enough information was provided so that the chatter could access the resource, and if the information wasn't comprehensive it would not act as a barrier. Some minor lack of clarity or inaccuracies might be present, but would not serve as a barrier to accessing the resource.
None	There was not enough information to access the referral, whether through providing inaccurate, confusing, or omitted information.
No Opportunity	There was no opportunity for the advocate to use these skills as referrals didn't come up, wouldn't have been appropriate, or were not indicated.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Assesses and addresses barriers:

When indicated, the advocate should assess and address any barriers to accessing a referred resource. We are not expecting advocates to ask about barriers unless it is indicated (e.g., hesitancy, or something a chatter has shared like "I hate support groups." If some barrier is indicated, the advocate should sufficiently explore the nature of the barrier and help identify strategies to mitigate the barrier, if possible.

Full	Advocate asks about potential barriers **or** responds to a chatter's indication of a barrier. Advocate problem solves with the chatter on how to overcome a barrier or find a more appropriate resource.
Partial	Advocate may acknowledge a potential barrier but does not problem solve. Alternately advocate might assess and address some barriers but not others.
None	Advocate does not assess and address a barrier that is evident. For example, a chatter expresses hesitancy about calling to make a therapy appointment and the advocate does not explore alternatives or help the chatter identify strategies for overcoming hesitancy.

No Opportunity	There was no opportunity for the advocate to use these skills as referrals didn't come up, wouldn't have been appropriate, or were not indicated.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

SAFETY

A core function of Crisis Chat is to help survivors find and maintain safety in the wake of trauma. Safety refers both to physical safety (such as threat posed by an abusive perpetrator) and emotional safety (such as trauma responses or suicidality). When indicated, advocates should assess safety risks and engage a chatter in exploring options for enhancing safety. When an imminent life-threatening safety risk is identified, further action may need to be taken (see section on Critical Incidents).

Addresses safety directly:

Advocates should directly address issues of safety when they are introduced. This may mean picking up on more subtle communications about safety and asking follow up questions to assess whether there is a risk to physical or emotional safety.

Full	When indicated, the advocate holistically inquires about chatter's current physical and emotional safety. Follow-up questions should be asked that determine whether a safety plan or coping skills should be offered.
Partial	The advocate may only indirectly address safety, or may address only a subset of safety risks that are indicated.
No	The advocate does not inquire about chatter's safety status at any point within the interaction, although physical or emotional safety may have been relevant in the conversation.
Unaddressed safety need (Omission)	The chatter has given indicators that there may be pressing current or future safety concerns, yet advocate does not probe the chatter's circumstances despite the potential for significant risks. For example, a chatter indicates possible suicidal intent (like a desire to sleep and never wake up), but the advocate does not explore the feelings to determine the chatter's immediate and long-term safety.
No Opportunity	Brief conversation with no opportunity to explore safety or safety did not appear relevant to the conversation
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Establishes safety plan:

When a safety risk has been identified, the advocate should attempt to engage the chatter in an exploration of the risk and strategies for mitigating the risk, potentially including safety planning.

Full	Chatter has indicated safety risks and advocate offers and establishes a comprehensive safety plan. As appropriate, safety planning incorporates current and future safety, whether physical and/or emotional. If necessary, advocate explains what a safety plan is and empathetically and sensitively engages chatter in their safety needs.
Partial	Advocate may conduct some safety planning assistance, though it is not comprehensive either in terms of the risks that are addressed or the strategies that are identified. Advocate may defer to referrals for safety without addressing safety in the moment.
No	There is no inquiry or offer to establish a safety plan despite the content of the interaction indicating that a safety plan may be relevant.
Potential for Increased Risk (Endanger)	There may be an offer of a safety plan or course of action related to safety needs, yet the safety plan or course of action could potentially increase danger to the chatter.
No Opportunity	Brief conversation with no opportunity to explore safety or safety did not appear relevant to the conversation
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Critical Incidents refers to events or disclosures in a chat interaction that might require mandatory reporting, checking in with a supervisor, or that could be emotionally upsetting to the advocate such that the advocate might benefit from a debriefing. These incidents will likely be infrequent but might require careful navigation of protocols and setting boundaries.

Types of critical incidents include:

1) **Safety risk** – serious, imminent, and/or life threatening safety risk, such as potential self-harm or chatter is at risk in current environment/location

2) **Intense chat** – chatter provided a vivid description of abuse that they experienced or that someone else experienced, or the topic of the chat is otherwise emotionally intense

3) **Mandatory reporting** – information disclosed in the chat interaction could trigger a mandatory report, such as in the case of child abuse

4) **Obscene/prank** – chatter is describing a situation which is made up, often with intense details and a graphic story

Did the critical incident involve the potential for a confidentiality breach?

The advocate may need to breach confidentiality due to mandatory reporting of child or elder abuse or an imminent safety risk to themselves or others. Generally the transcript will not include information sufficient to determine if a decision to breach confidentiality was made, so this item should be assessed based on whether information shared might have led to a confidentiality breach, such as discussion of child abuse which might require a report to CPS.

Yes	Information was shared that might have required a breach of confidentiality.
No	No information was shared that would indicate a potential for a breach of confidentiality

Was the situation fully assessed?

Did the advocate ask detailed questions to understand the situation and potential risks (e.g., assessing for self-harm, the age of the individual experiencing abuse, or whether the chatter was in need of medical attention). In the case of an obscene or prank chat, the advocate is encouraged to set boundaries or end the chat as soon as indicated, so there may not be prolonged assessment.

Full	The situation was fully assessed - the advocate gathered sufficient information to understand the situation, ensured the chatter/others were safe, and asked questions to determine whether or not mandatory reporting might be necessary.
Partial	The situation was partially assessed – for example, the advocate may have assessed the safety of the chatter but did not determine if mandatory reporting was necessary.
None	The advocate did not gather sufficient information to understand the situation and determine whether additional action might be necessary.
No Opportunity	Critical incident was not present in this interaction
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Uses boundary setting skills:

When indicated, setting boundaries during a critical incident or challenging chat might involve: 1) outlining the role of Crisis Chat and the advocate, 2) maintaining boundaries politely and professionally, and 3) warning the chatter that there will be consequences if they continue inappropriate behavior (and then ending the call if the chatter does not respond after two warnings). Other techniques that may be helpful during these situations include focusing on the feelings of the chatter and using resources for long-term support, steering, and redirecting the conversation to what the advocate can assist with, and using normalization and validation techniques as appropriate. Setting boundaries and the skills used may vary based on the circumstances of the interaction. For example, with an obscene chatter, the advocate might firmly set a boundary and end the chat, while in the case of a survivor who is angry with the university the advocate might focus on feelings, normalize anger, and gently de-escalate the chatter.

Full	Boundary setting was indicated in this interaction and the advocate engaged in this with a high degree of skill. The advocate used strategies as outlined in training and as appropriate given the interaction.
Partial	Boundary setting was indicated in this interaction and the advocate either partially set boundaries or did so in a clumsy way. For example, the advocate may have waited too long to set boundaries or did so in a way that was overly passive and ineffective.

None	The chat interaction may have indicated that boundary setting was needed, but the advocate did not effectively set boundaries, or set boundaries in a way that was inconsistent with their training.
No Opportunity	Critical incident was not present in this interaction and therefore boundary setting was not required.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

CLOSING

Closing refers to the ending of the conversation, and thus ratings for this section should be based on the final exchange(s) of the interaction. Chat interactions may not have a clear ending, as sometimes a chatter disengages without any indication of their intention to end the interaction. At other times, there is a clear, mutual understanding between the chatter and advocate that the interaction is ending. Whenever possible, the advocate should include a final assessment of any remaining needs and a reminder about resources such as Crisis Chat and the hotline.

Mutual ending:

There was a mutual ending to the conversation where both the advocate and chatter recognize the conversation is ending

Yes	Both the chatter and the advocate engage in an explicit process of ending the chat conversation.
No	Either the chatter or the advocate does not engage in the closing of the chat, such that there does not seem to be a mutual understanding or ending.
Unclear/ Partial	It is unclear whether or not the interaction concluded in a way that was mutually understood to be an ending.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Assess Remaining Needs:

Ideally, before the conversation ends, the advocate should attempt to assess whether the chatter has any remaining needs or questions.

Yes	The advocate attempts to assess whether the chatter has any remaining needs or questions prior to the end of the interaction.
No	Though there was an indication of an imminent end of the interaction, the advocate does not attempt to assess remaining needs.
Unclear/ Partial	The advocate either partly assesses remaining needs or it is otherwise unclear whether this happened.

No Opportunity	Chatter leaves before closing could be initiated or chatter is initiating good-bye and appears to have all needs met
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Remind Chat/Hotline:

Whenever possible, at the conclusion of the interaction the advocate should remind the chatter about the ability to use the hotline at any time or Crisis Chat during open hours by sharing contact info, hours, and phone numbers/websites.

Yes	The advocate reminds the chatter that they are welcome to contact chat and the hotline if they need further support. Ideally the advocate should include the phone number and/or website, as well as operating hours.
No	Though the conversation had a clear ending, the advocate did not invite the chatter to contact chat/hotline again if they have further questions or need more support.
Unclear/ Partial	The advocate only reminds the chatter of one service (e.g., chat but not hotline), or provides incomplete information.
No Opportunity	Chatter leaves before closing could be initiated.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Share Survey Link:

When a chat occurs during an evaluation phase that includes collecting chatter satisfaction data, the advocate should share the link to the survey at the conclusion of the chat using a pre-generated message/shortcut, as specified in training materials.

Yes The advocate provided the link and message.	**No** The advocate either did not provide the link, or did not provide adequate/full information.

OVERALL RATINGS

Overall ratings reflect a general evaluation of the entire chat, focusing less on specific skills and more on the chat interaction as a whole unit. These ratings should in many ways summarize and therefore be logically consistent with previous ratings.

Each of the overall rating areas is detailed below, followed by the scoring criteria.

Overall supportive communication: This overall rating assesses the use of supportive communication throughout the chat by the advocate. Supportive communication captures the extent to which the advocate engaged in a way that promoted the empowerment of the chatter and established a relationship that could lessen the survivor's feelings of isolation and shame. This rating therefore reflects the use of rapport building skills such as following the chatter's lead, warm & personable, active listening, validation & normalization, nonjudgmental, and conveying empathy.

Overall helpfulness: The overall helpfulness rating reflects an assessment of the extent to which the advocate seems to have been helpful to the chatter. For example, was the advocate able to engage the chatter, provide support and information, and respond to the chatter's needs?

Overall chatter centered: The overall chatter centered rating captures whether the chat is tailored to the behaviors, circumstances, and specific needs of the chatter. This captures the extent to which the advocate remained non-directive, followed the chatter's lead, and supported the chatter so they can make the best decisions possible.

Chatter needs addressed: This rating reflects an assessment of whether the chatter's needs were addressed in the course of the chat interaction, at least to the extent that could be expected in a brief interaction. If the chatter requested specific information, were they provided that information? Was the advocate able to identify the chatter's needs and provide support, information, or resources specific to those needs? Were there any expressed or implied needs that were not addressed in the course of the interaction?

1	Little to no evidence of this skill throughout the entire interaction, even when the use of the skill would have been helpful and appropriate. May use contradictory behaviors that could disrupt the potential for a beneficial experience.

2	Only minor evidence of the use of this skill throughout the interaction. May occasionally use contradictory or ambiguous behaviors that could harm the relationship.
3	Neutral evidence of the use of this skill, or occasional clumsy use of the skill. Use of the skill is adequate, such that the effect is not damaging but also not exemplary. Or may mostly use the skill, but have a few instances where their use of the skill was strained.
4	Generally consistent and good use of the skill across the interaction. Advocate demonstrates understanding of the skill and when to use it. May be a few examples of more ambiguous use of the skill, but overall the skill was used proficiently.
5	Very strong use of the skill across the whole interaction. Exceptional use of this skill – advocate went above and beyond. Demonstrates understanding of the skill and facility in employment of the skill. Consistently strong use of the skill.
No Opportunity	Limited conversation that did not provide opportunity for this skill to be used (e.g. chatter requests specific information and advocate provides it and no other discussion occurs).
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to use skill, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

CHATTER ENGAGEMENT

While most items in this tool assess the advocate's role in the chat interaction, these items capture the degree to which the chatter seemed to be engaged in the conversation. Ratings should be based on the full conversation and draw on clear/explicit indications of engagement, rather than attempting to interpret more ambiguous interactions.

Chatter demonstrated appreciation: Chatter indicated some sort of appreciation at some point during the interaction, such as saying "thank you" or "this has been really helpful."

Strong	Chatter demonstrates a clear, unambiguous, and strong sense of appreciation, e.g., "Thank you very much, this has been really helpful" or "I feel so much better now."
Moderate	Chatter indicates some appreciation, but it is more modest or subdued in tone, e.g., "Thank you so much."
Low	Chatter indicates only minor or vague appreciation, chatter appears somewhat ambivalent, or may seem to be engaging in performative appreciation as a social nicety rather than a genuine demonstration of appreciation, e.g., "thanks".
None	There is no indication of appreciation from the chatter.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to assess, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Chatter became frustrated: At any point during the chat, did the chatter indicate frustration about the chat or the advocate? This refers to the chatter's apparent feelings about the chat itself, and whether or not the chat is meeting their expectations.

Strong	Chatter appears to be upset with the chat or the advocate, perhaps stating their displeasure in clear and unambiguous terms.

Moderate	Chatter indicates some degree of displeasure, but it is either somewhat moderated in tone or seems to resolve to some degree.
Low	Chatter communicates some minor frustration with the chat or advocate, but that frustration is short lived or easily resolved.
None	Chatter does not indicate any frustration.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to assess, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Chatter distress from start to end: Using the full chat, assess the degree to which the chatter's distress level changes during the interaction. Compare their apparent distress at the end of the chat to their apparent distress earlier in the chat.

Significantly decreased	Chatter's distress seems to have decreased quite a bit and chatter is feeling notably better by the end of the call.
Somewhat decreased	Chatter's distress appears lower at the end of the chat, but the decrease seems moderate or minor.
Same	Chatter's distress level seems to stay about the same across the chat.
Somewhat increased	Chatter distress seems to rise somewhat over the chat interaction, though the increase seems minor or moderate in degree.
Significantly increased	Chatter distress seems to increase markedly throughout the chat.
Unable to assess	Unable to determine chatter distress from beginning to end as there is insufficient information upon which to make a determination.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to assess, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Chatter willing to use resources: Does the chatter indicate some willingness or interest in using the resources or referrals that were discussed during the chat?

Yes	Chatter appears willing to use at least some of the resources given. For example, the chatter might say "I will call tomorrow, thank you."
No	Chatter indicated that they would be unlikely to use the resources they were provided. For example, the chatter might say "I don't like support groups" after being told about group options.
Unclear	It is unclear whether the chatter seemed willing to use resources that were shared during the chat.
No Opportunity	No resources or referrals were shared with the chatter.
N/A	No conversation therefore no opportunity to assess, such as an interaction that never progresses past an initial answering.

Appendix B

Program Description

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University Context

Crisis Chat is operated by the Center for Survivors (CFS, formerly known as Sexual Assault Program) at Michigan State University. MSU is a large, state university with about 50,000 students and 15,000 staff and faculty. The university draws students from all over the state, country, and world. It is a primarily residential campus, in that most first year students live on-campus in dorms, and most then move to off-campus apartments/houses in surrounding neighborhoods where they live with peers. There is a large and active fraternity and sorority system on campus. Football, basketball, and other sports are prominent. MSU is, therefore, in many ways like other large state universities.

Approximately one year prior to the start of this grant, MSU experienced an institutional crisis that uniquely shapes the context of sexual assault work at the university. In January 2018, over 100 young women and girls read victim impact statements in the sentencing of Larry Nassar, a former sports medicine doctor who practiced at MSU and served as a US Olympic Gymnastics Team doctor. Nassar sexually abused over 500 girls and young women under the guise of medical treatment. The victim impact statements were powerful and harrowing and the scope of the impact of Nassar's actions (and the inaction of institutions like MSU when told of concerns about his actions) became clear as one victim after another stood up to tell their story. The statements were broadcast widely, and within days the university president, Lou Anna Simon, stepped down amid criticism of her leadership and MSU's handling of complaints about Nassar. The interim president brought in to replace Simon, former Michigan governor John Engler was criticized from the initial announcement. During his tenure, Engler repeatedly made public comments that disparaged survivors and discounted their concerns. He was fired by the board of trustees during the initial months of the grant. The new acting president, Satish Udpa,

was appointed to fill the role for the few months until a permanent president could be announced. Udpa immediately began his tenure with an apology to survivors, marking a shift in tone that was widely heralded as a welcome change. A permanent president, Dr. Samuel Stanley, has since stepped into the role, meeting with survivors and appointing special advisors to address relationship violence and sexual misconduct on campus. While many of these events were meaningful to those most engaged in the issues, it's not clear how widely the student body followed the twists and turns. Nearly everyone at MSU, however, is familiar with the Nassar case and the damage that has transpired as a result of the university's mishandling and continual missteps. Numerous investigations of MSU and MSU staff have occurred (some remain ongoing), including criminal indictments, state attorney general investigations, and federal Clery and Title IX investigations.

Also during the grant period, several regional and national shifts have caused MSU to make changes in their response to sexual assault. The Sixth Circuit Court ruled that universities must offer respondents a live trial with cross-examination in order to protect the due process rights of those accused of sexual assault. MSU had been using a single investigator model, meaning that an investigator collected evidence, talked to all parties in the case, and produced a report that was shared with the claimant and respondent for their feedback. The investigator would incorporate feedback and then make a decision as to the responsibility of the respondent. If found responsible, the respondent would then be sanctioned by a hearing board. Both parties had a right to appeal the decision. The court ruling obligated MSU to design and implement a hearing process with live cross-examination in a very short time period, which overlapped with the initial six months of the grant. In addition, during the time of the grant, the Department of Education (ED) opened their new proposed Title IX regulations for public comment and final

regulations are likely imminent. There is, therefore, a sense that additional changes would likely be coming to MSU once the ED releases the final regulations.

The period preceding this project is one in which the issue of sexual assault has been prominent at MSU. Shortly after Simon resigned and Engler was appointed, Engler approved large increases in funding for SA prevention and response services on campus. This brings an opportunity for MSU to utilize the energy among those who have watched in frustration as university officials continued to make seemingly harmful decisions and capitalize on new resources. However, there is also considerable distrust of MSU administration and a legacy of a culture that many think has silenced and ignored SA and other issues that threatened the institution's reputation.

Center for Survivors

Within this university context sits the Center for Survivors. Social work interns and staff in the MSU Counseling Center founded the program in 1980. In 1986, the program was first awarded VOCA funding to pay for a volunteer coordinator. For decades, the program vacillated between two and three full time staff.   In 2015, the program was awarded additional VOCA funding for staff positions and funding from MSU for two therapist positions. From then on the program continued to rapidly expand to meet the needs of survivors. Located in the student services building, CFS takes up over half of a wing on the second floor (and will be expanding to use the full space within the coming year). The Center for Survivors offers free counseling and therapy, delivered by a team of 9 therapists and social work interns. In Fiscal Year 2019, 546 survivors received individual therapy through the CFS. CFS also has advocates who provide information and support to survivors who are engaging in the Title IX or criminal justice processes. CFS employs three advocates and in the same fiscal year, 201 survivors utilized CFS

advocacy services. CFS also offers a variety of support groups and alternative treatments like trauma-informed yoga, ear acupuncture, and creative, arts-based groups. Justice recently joined CFS as a canine advocate who brings joy and comfort to staff and survivors. CFS is in the process of designing and implementing a campus-based Sexual Assault Healthcare Program with the help of a national consultant. They recently hired a Campus Sexual Assault Response Team Coordinator to work on the Sexual Assault Healthcare Program and to work towards establishing a campus Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). The SART coordinator also supervises the advocates and volunteer coordinator. A clinical supervisor supervises the therapists. Among CFS staff, multiple gender identities are represented, as well as racial diversity, religious diversity, and sexual orientation diversity.

CFS staff have also gone to great lengths to make their waiting room/lounge a comfortable and inviting space. It is not unusual to see students sleeping or doing homework in the CFS lounge as it is a rare place of safety and comfort for some students. The lounge has couches and tables, a single-cup coffee maker and plenty of coffee, hot chocolate, and tea to choose from, coloring books and materials, educational resources, CFS branded pins, and self-care items (soaps, shampoo, etc). The lighting is soft (not harsh institutional lighting) and the floor is sometimes littered with Justice's dog toys. A bowl of dog treats sits near the entrance so visitors can greet Justice with an enticing treat. Also near the entrance is the desk of an administrative staff person who can check clients in for appointments and alert the advocate or therapist, answer questions, and assist with other matters. Also in the suite is a group room with comfortable couches and chairs, a conference room with a long table and plenty of chairs, and a break room/kitchen. The bathroom has numerous scented hand soaps and lotions available, consistent with CFS's focus on self-care and using sensory stimulation as a grounding technique.

As the result of a history of underfunding, CFS has struggled to ensure that the large, diverse campus is aware of their services. In fact, in the aftermath of the Nassar case, many people suggested that MSU needed a sexual assault center, where survivors could get counseling and support, seemingly unaware that such a center already existed on campus. MSU struggles more widely with information dissemination to the large, diverse, and decentralized university community, but the apparent neglect of SA issues on the campus likely compounded the lack of knowledge about CFS.

CFS Service Philosophy

CFS utilizes an **empowerment** approach in all of their services. In particular, services are designed to restore power, control, and choice to the survivor, which is seen as a necessary component for healing the trauma and the profound disempowerment of experiencing a sexual assault. Services promote **reconnection** by establishing a relationship between the CFS staff or SACI volunteer and the survivor that lessens survivors' feelings of isolation and shame. When training new SACI volunteers, CFS staff describe empowerment and reconnection as the two most important goals in every crisis interaction.

SACI volunteers provide **validation** by showing a concern for survivors' well-being, communicating empathy, offering emotional support, and providing information about SA and healing. SACI crisis intervention should also be **stabilizing** by helping to establish physical safety and emotional safety through help with managing sometimes overwhelming emotions.

CFS Hotlines

CFS operates a 24/7 telephone hotline staffed almost entirely by volunteers, a group known collectively as SACI (Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention). Volunteers take 24-hour shifts on the hotline, during which they carry a cell phone and a binder with referral information,

policies, and other materials while they go about their regular day. This means volunteers may have the phone in class, at home, and anywhere else they go during their shift. When a caller dials the hotline number, an answering service answers the call and connects the caller with the SACI hotline phone. If the answering service is unable to reach the hotline phone, they can direct the call to the backup phone, which is always carried by a CFS staff member. While the answering service is working to transfer the call, the caller is placed on hold. The process of connecting a caller can take a number of minutes before the call is successfully connected to an advocate. In fiscal year 2019, there were 220 telephone hotline calls.

CFS also operates an online crisis chat from 10am to 10pm daily. More details on the operation of Crisis Chat, the focal service of this grant, will be described later.   In fiscal year 2019 (the first year of the service), there were 173 Crisis Chats.

CFS describes both the hotline and Crisis Chat as crisis intervention services for those experiencing a temporary inability to cope. Crisis intervention, according to CFS, focuses on the immediate crisis and works to support the hotline user in accessing their own resources to cope with the immediate crisis and connecting them with other available resources to support their coping long term. It is not intended for deeper therapeutic processing, such as might be done with the CFS therapy services. When a caller or chatter desires deeper processing, the SACI advocate can refer them to CFS or other counseling services after helping to stabilize any immediate crisis or heightened emotions. Similarly, the crisis lines provide information and answer basic questions about things like reporting a sexual assault, but for in-depth questions, SACI volunteers can refer callers and chatters to the CFS program advocates. These advocates have knowledge that is more expansive and can work with clients to support them through reporting, evidence collection, investigations, requesting interim measures, and so on. These

processes are complex and, especially during the time period of this grant, constantly changing, such that staff advocates are best suited to answer any nuanced questions.

History of Crisis Chat

The origins of CC started in 2016 when two staff began to talk about the need to reach underserved populations, the general cultural shift from phone to text for communication, and a desire to expand avenues of access for survivors. CFS as a program values creativity, offering a number of unique and innovative interventions to reach and serve survivors, including trauma informed yoga, ear acupuncture, self-care events, and a canine advocate. Program leadership, therefore, encouraged the idea of starting a web-based crisis hotline and staff began investigating options for creating such a service. This was a lengthy process. Staff called and spoke to other programs that offered web or text based crisis lines, researched possible tech platforms, put together budgets, developed protocol, and wrote policies. Identifying appropriate technology proved difficult, as no technology seemed perfect, some options were too expensive to be feasible, and the process of looking into each option was time consuming. Eventually, CFS staff recognized that the project could not move forward until a technology platform was selected, and decided to choose the best available option despite it being imperfect.

Crisis Chat Technology

After reviewing a number of options, CFS selected Olark as the chat platform for CC. Olark offered the best features (e.g. website integration), despite not being designed specifically for crisis hotline use. Olark is typically used on desktop computers and does not currently have a mobile application. Olark is reportedly working on a mobile app, but this does not seem to be imminent. Because CFS utilizes volunteers to answer both the hotline and CC, CFS needed a way to make Olark function on mobile devices that would allow volunteers to access CC from

almost any location. CFS selected a mobile application called Trillian that enables CC to be mobile. Essentially, Trillian communicates with the Olark servers to deliver the chat to the mobile platform in a chat interface. The interface is similar in appearance to many other internet chat platforms. The chat window for volunteers shows a list of active chats in a column on the left. On the right is the active chat window that shows the chatter's messages and the volunteer's replies. When someone is typing a reply, the other party sees blinking dots similar to other popular text and messaging platforms.

For the most part, these two systems work smoothly together, and both have helpful customer service available for troubleshooting problems that may emerge. There are, however, some disadvantages to the two-application system. For example, Olark allows shortcuts on their computer interface. You can create pre-established text responses for common chat topics (e.g. information about how to report a sexual assault to MSU and the police) that can then be sent by the volunteer by entering a short, simple code. Trillian, however, doesn't recognize these shortcuts. The iPad and iPhone that volunteers use allows for shortcuts to be programmed into each individual device, however these shortcuts autofill whenever the combination of letters is entered even if the volunteer is just using that combination of letters in normal dialog. This means that the longer text will pop up anytime the combination of letters is typed, which is distracting and sometimes even frustrating when the volunteer has to remove auto-populated text that they did not intend to include. Volunteers can edit and alter the shortcut text as desired, for example to personalize the message to the chatter's particular situation.

There were several technological challenges that emerged early in the implementation process (either before launch or shortly after launch). Within the first few days after launch, CFS staff discovered that the two systems were not consistently delivering the chats to the

iPad/iPhone and alerting the user that a new chat had appeared. The CFS staff member leading the technological aspects of the project spent days trying to figure out what was happening, putting on hold some of her other work so that she could problem solve what turned out to be a thorny issue. Navigating the two systems' tech support was challenging. Both companies were very helpful but neither could figure out the problem, despite a great deal of effort. Ultimately, each suspected that the glitch was on the other end and the cause of the problem remains unclear to this day. CFS operated Crisis Chat through Olark via desktop computer in order to keep from missing any chats during this time. This was disappointing so soon after launch and added pressure for a workable solution. Eventually, the CFS staff member wrote some computer code to create a workaround that remains in place today. She describes the code as quite simple. When a chat comes in, the iPad and iPhone will sound an alert tone every 15 seconds until a reply has been sent. This seems to have resolved the problem by eliminating the need to rely on the initial detection by Trillian of a chat arriving in Olark. The solution also provides additional opportunities for SACI volunteers to detect the waiting chat, as Trillian's one brief text notification sound could be accidentally missed. If Olark had a mobile app, this workaround would presumably no longer be needed, as it seems the problem emerged from some technological glitch in how the two systems communicate with one another.

One benefit of Olark, and a reason it was selected as the primary chat platform, is that it interfaces with WordPress, the platform MSU uses for websites. This allows CFS to easily integrate CC on the website using a WordPress plugin. When someone navigates to CFS's website when CC is operational (currently between 10am and 10pm) there is a button in the bottom right corner that says "Need help? Click to chat!" and "Chat with an advocate." Clicking that button opens a chat window that has a preprogrammed message that says "One of our

advocates will respond in 3-5 minutes once you send your first message!" CFS staff added this message after they realized that some people who initiated a chat appeared to abandon the chat when they did not get an instantaneous reply. The "3-5 minute" message then sets an expectation that a reply is coming but may take a few minutes. This change seems to have helped reduce the number of false starts. The volunteer is notified of a chat only when someone writes and sends a chat after viewing the "3-5 minute" message. CFS considered an automatic reply to a chatter's first message that conveyed the same information about a 3-5 minute wait. An automatic reply, however, would disable the every 15-seconds alerts as there would no longer be an unanswered chat in the queue, which would increase the potential for a chat to go unnoticed (an outcome that CFS considers unacceptable).

Early in implementation, CFS staff also realized that the Olark WordPress plug-in used cookies in order to maintain a history of chat conversations. If cookies are enabled, a user could end a chat, leave the website, and then if the chatter or anyone else on the computer navigated back to the website and opened chat, the entire history of all previous chats would appear in the chat window. This was an obvious safety risk in the context of sexual assault, where any unauthorized access to the transcript could seriously jeopardize a survivor's privacy, confidentiality, and physical safety. To protect safety, the CFS staff automatically disabled cookies for all users. Previous chat history is not available when a new chat is opened. This does mean that if someone accidentally closes the webpage during a chat, they will need to re-initiate a chat and the transcript of the conversation in progress will no longer be available to the chatter.

CFS vetted their system with MSU's IT department, and with general counsel, both of whom approved the technology, and in the case of general counsel the broader program, policies, and procedures.

Crisis Chat Operation

The volunteer coordinator maintains a schedule of coverage for both the hotline and Crisis Chat. Volunteers schedule themselves for shifts monthly using the CFS volunteer management system or by emailing the volunteer coordinator directly. Volunteers sign up for their preferred shifts based on their own availability and preferences. Volunteers may select all hotline shifts, all Crisis Chat shifts, all outreach shifts, or a combination of the three. CFS asks volunteers to take a combination of any two shifts a month and commit to one year as a volunteer. If a volunteer signs up for a shift and is no longer able to cover that shift, they are responsible for finding a substitute to take the shift. Volunteers can find a replacement by sending a message to the listserv or posting on the private SACI volunteer Facebook group. Hotline shifts are 24 hours and Crisis Chat shifts are 12 hours, running from 10am to 10pm, though the exact start and end times may vary slightly depending on when a volunteer arranges to pick up or drop off the bag.

When on a shift, volunteers carry a laptop style bag that includes the phone (and iPad with Bluetooth keyboard case for Crisis Chat), charging equipment, and a binder with information on procedures and resources. Volunteers are responsible for arranging to pick up the bag from the previous volunteer and drop off the bag to the next scheduled volunteer. Generally this is done by contacting the volunteer on the shift before/after their own and arranging to meet up somewhere (usually on campus) to exchange the bag. Volunteer contact information and the full schedule is available online, and both volunteers are responsible for initiating arrangements for exchanging the bag. If the volunteer is unable to reach the designated volunteer, they can contact the Volunteer Coordinator or the backup staff member. Upon receiving the bag or at the time the shift starts, the volunteer should log in on a provided login sheet, where they also sign

out when handing the bag over to the next volunteer. This allows the Volunteer Coordinator to track the number of volunteer hours for grant reporting purposes. Upon receiving the bag, the volunteer should also check that all the equipment is charged (including the Bluetooth keyboard) and that all materials are present.

Volunteers/Backup turn on the CC system at 10am and turn off the system at 10pm manually through the Trillian app and changing the status. Instructions for changing the status are included in the binder. The CFS staff on backup double checks that this happens to insure that the service is not accidentally left on all night.

Crisis Chat is initiated when someone visits the CFS website, decides to chat, and clicks the link/pop-up. A window appears that says "One of our advocates will respond in 3-5 minutes once you send your first message!" The CC User then types a message. It can be short, like "hi", or a long description of the chatter's needs/situation/question. As soon as chatter sends a message, the volunteer will receive a notification on the iPad and iPhone that there is an incoming chat waiting for a response. The iPad and iPhone will issue the alert tone (like a text notification) every 15 seconds until the volunteer responds to the chat. The CFS staff person on backup also receives this notification. Backup will text/call the volunteer to ensure they picked up the chat. If not, the back-up staff will answer the chat. This ensures that CFS does not miss a chat due to faulty wifi/signal, the volunteer missing alerts, or the alerts not working appropriately.

Either the volunteer or the back-up staff responds to the chat, which stops the every-15-second tones. Every time the chatter sends a message/reply, the alerts will occur every 15 seconds until the volunteer responds. Volunteers may elect to turn off the sound during an active chat, but then must remember to turn the sound back on after the chat is complete so that new

chats initiate the audible alerts. The course of the chat interaction is largely driven by the chatter's communication.

Crisis Chat Record Keeping

After the ending of a chat, the SACI advocate fills out an advocacy report. Blank forms are in the CC binder and volunteers are supposed to ensure that the binder contains an adequate number of blank forms when starting and ending their shift. They can arrange to get more blank forms by contacting the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers place completed forms in the binder. The Volunteer Coordinator collects the advocacy reports at a regularly scheduled weekly meeting with volunteers or by contacting a volunteer at the end of the month and asking them to come in to drop off the reports. At this time, the Volunteer Coordinator can also replenish the blank forms as needed and ensure that all other materials and equipment is present and in working order. The advocacy form primarily serves as a way to collect the data that CFS reports to funders and therefore should not contain any identifying information. The same form is used for CC and for the telephone hotline. Forms stay in the binder across shifts in order for volunteers to see a record of recent chats and to promote continuity (for example if a chatter reached out the previous evening and reaches out again the next day, the volunteer has some record of the interaction).

If a call or chat was upsetting in some way or if the volunteer has questions or needs assistance, the volunteer can contact backup to debrief. Certain situations may require a call to backup, like when the volunteer encounters an abusive chatter. In these situations, alerting backup allows for tracking and connecting with the telephone hotline to let them know in case the person tries to call the hotline. In the case of abusive chatters, the volunteer may also need to let the next volunteer know in case the abusive chatter tries to contact again.

Crisis Chat Volunteer Training

CFS trains volunteers three times a year (spring, summer, and fall). Volunteers are recruited through their social media page, word of mouth, tabling at campus events, and announcements on various listservs. Volunteers are often students, but they can be staff, faculty, or community members as well. Potential volunteers fill out an application, participate in an interview, and if accepted as a volunteer they are invited to a 30-hour training, held over the course of two weeks on evenings and weekends. Generally, between 18-25 volunteers will go through training each session, although some may drop out for various reasons. Trainings are typically held in the Student Services building, using either a large meeting room in the basement, or when technology is not cooperating in the CFS conference room, which is smaller and more intimate.

The training covers a range of topics, including:

- Information about Sexual Assault: definitions, dynamics, common responses, neurobiology of trauma
- Understanding SA in context: History of the movement, rape culture
- How oppression and privilege shape SA experiences, including specific sessions covering dynamics for identity groups (communities of color, people with disabilities, international students, LGBTQIA+ students)
- Skills: supportive communication, cultural humility, crisis intervention, boundary setting, suicide assessment and safety planning
- Campus resources (Safe Place, campus DV shelter; LGBT Resource Center)
- Self-care
- Logistics of volunteering

Modalities for training include a mixture of didactic lecture, multimedia components, interactive discussion, and active role playing to allow volunteers to practice the skills they are learning. Each segment of training (about four hours) is led by a pair of current CFS staff and interns. This both divides the work of training up amongst the staff so that no one person is responsible for all training, but also exposes the volunteers to most of the staff that they will

interact with during their volunteer shifts. CFS provides volunteers with training materials, including a booklet of worksheets and handouts that staff frequently refer to during training.

CFS Crisis Chat Training

In the training, CFS staff teach that crisis intervention happens through conversation (verbal and nonverbal) and in the context of a relationship or connection with another person. Crisis intervention is about managing feelings in the current moment and stabilization of the person. It is not meant to be mental health treatment designed to promote long-term healing. CFS staff help volunteers understand that crisis intervention, therefore, is not counseling, nor is it about solving problems and giving advice. Crisis intervention should be *client-centered*, which means that the volunteer follows the client's lead and the interaction is then tailored to the client's stated needs. The volunteer should allow the client to set the pace, flow, and intensity of the conversation.

A core skill for crisis intervention is the use of *empathy*. CFS staff defined empathy as the ability to see another's feeling ("It sounds like you're feeling scared"). The training included a Brene Brown video on empathy that suggests that empathy fuels connection, and connection is what makes people feel better. Empathy requires us to take on the perspective of another person, be non-judgmental, and to recognize emotion and communicate our understanding of the emotion another person is experiencing.

Specific skills discussed in training include using *open-ended questions* and statements that invite reflection on feelings and thoughts. Active listening skills including *paraphrasing* and *reflecting* back as ways to communicate understanding. CFS staff cautioned volunteers to avoid asking "why" questions which may inadvertently imply that the survivor is inferior, inadequate, or otherwise mistaken. Volunteers should not impose their personal values, nor ask questions

that a survivor could perceived as blaming. Volunteers should use care not to send avoidance messages which implicitly and sometimes explicitly communicate that we want someone to stop talking about their feelings. Other messages to be avoided are messages that inadvertently discount or diminish the experience of the survivor ("at least you weren't raped"). Volunteers should not promise that everything will be ok, as that invalidates that the current situation is hurtful and the client is not ok at the moment. Solution messages should be avoided because they indicate that we don't trust that the survivor can make a good decision.

Another key role of crisis intervention is to share information and dispel myths in a gentle manner. To that end, volunteers are trained in the neurobiology of trauma, the Title IX process and reporting options, medical options (including a medical-forensic exam), and common myths about sexual assault. Volunteers are told that they don't have to remember all of the details, particularly about how OIE and the criminal justice system work, and that they can refer clients to a CFS advocate if someone has detailed questions about reporting options that the volunteer can't answer. A volunteer makes the referral to an advocate by providing the client the phone number for CFS and telling the client to call and ask for an appointment with an advocate during business hours.

Setting boundaries skills, include *steering and redirecting*, such as "can we get back to…", *focusing on feelings* ("it sounds like you are feeling…"), *validating* ("it's ok to feel angry"), and *normalizing* ("a lot of people who contact us feel the same way"). *Defining the role* of the hotline and crisis chat volunteer and the service as crisis (and not long-term therapy) is another boundary skill. Wrapping up skills include *summarizing* ("have we talked about everything?"), *next steps* (review options and decisions), *thank them* for contacting hotline, *remind them* of resources discussed, and ensuring *safety ("if you get upset again tonight, do you*

have a sense of what you will do to stay grounded?”).

With callers and chatters who present with more difficulties, volunteers are trained to *establish a time limit*, encourage them to *call back* at another time when they are able to interact in a productive way, *set a boundary* (”I can't continue talking to you if you are yelling”), *describe the behavior* that needs to change and give an opportunity for them to change their behavior. If after two warnings they continue the behavior, the volunteer can end the call. The volunteer should still remind the caller that they may call back whenever they are able to respect the boundary. These messages should be delivered with a calm and nonjudgmental tone. Volunteers are trained to recognize that passivity is not effective and may actually reinforce the behavior, so it is important to address boundaries assertively when they are abused. Boundaries should be understandable and enforceable. Another technique that volunteers are trained to use in these situations is the feel-felt-found technique: “I can understand that you feel angry. I've talked to others who felt that way. I have found that a few minutes of deep breathing is helpful for keeping the anger at a manageable level”.

Based on the small amount of existing research, some of which comes from suicide hotlines, CFS trains volunteers to expect that chats may differ from calls. For example, they anticipate that chat may involve more detailed information-sharing due to increased comfort and reduced inhibition. CFS expected to find higher suicidality among chatters, though they do not think that has been true so far. Due to the nature of written communication, they expect longer pauses between responses and an increased potential for distractions and unexpected disconnections. In fact, SACI volunteers have found that there is not always a clear end to the chat conversations. Sometimes this is due to an abrupt disconnection (e.g. lost wifi/cell signal), but other times the chatter just stops responding without officially ending the chat by closing the

window or clicking the "end chat" button.

In Crisis Chat communication, volunteers are trained to use professional language, and avoid non-obvious abbreviations and emojis which may not be shared language. Volunteers are instructed not to use all caps (which is considered the equivalent of yelling in online communication). The iPad and iPhone have some chat shortcuts that allow the advocate to share common information without having to retype it every time. Volunteers may want to indicate what is happening if they need a few minutes to reply, such as "I'm going to take a minute to find that information for you, I will send a message as soon as I have the info". Long text can be broken up into shorter pieces to improve comprehension. Volunteers may want to use phrases to indicate that they are listening "I am still here", and should clarify when meaning is not clear "are you saying that…". Volunteers should acknowledge a pause after five minutes (if not sooner), by saying something like "please take the time you need to think, but I wanted to be sure you know that I'll be here when you are ready to continue talking".

Potential Challenges

Crisis chat is a new program that is well-supported by the Center for Survivors. Staff and volunteers are committed to its success and have dedicated resources (e.g. staff time) to setting up and maintaining the program. There are, however, a few areas that we believe are potential challenges for Crisis Chat to overcome in order to be effective and sustainable.

First, CFS uses two applications developed not for crisis lines specifically, but for more general chat platforms. This was clearly the best option available to CFS after they did careful research and reviewed the available options. Using two platforms, however, creates the potential for instability and increases opportunities for data to be vulnerable. An example of these shortcomings emerged shortly after launching CC when notifications were not consistently being

delivered to the iPad/iPhone. While each app provider had customer service that was helpful in trying to diagnose the problem, ultimately both felt the problem originated with the other provider and the problem was never diagnosed and solved. CFS had to create their own workaround by coding a short script that increased the frequency and consistency of alert tones.

Additionally, CFS lacks sufficient tech support. Crisis Chat was launched successfully in part because one of the advocates at the time had a background in computer science engineering and therefore had the skills to vet technologies, set up the platforms, and troubleshoot problems. MSU may have appropriate tech support resources, but CFS has not yet been able to secure reliable support. The advocate who worked on the launch of CC has since left CFS to pursue a technology-related career, leaving the program more vulnerable. At this point, any number of things could go wrong with the technology and CC might have to shut down until someone can be identified to help troubleshoot. Some known technology risks are on the horizon, such as the need to eventually transfer the website to a new website hosting platform. Currently CFS uses WordPress which has a plug-in for Olark that allows for CC to be easily accessed from the CFS website. The university is migrating to another provider, however, and when CFS is forced to make that change, someone will need to figure out how to adjust CC to the new platform. Securing permanent and reliable tech support is essential for CC's success.

Awareness of CC is a second area of vulnerability. As part of the launch of CC, CFS had flyers created and the service was advertised on the university webpage and relevant social media pages. However, there has not been a sustained campaign to ensure that community members know about CC. The campus prevention office regularly tells students about CFS and CC, and yet many students seem unaware of its existence. Communication at MSU is difficult due to the size of the institution and a lack of effective communication channels, so some of

these challenges are likely bigger than CFS. CC is prominent on CFS's website, but if students are unaware of CFS, they may not make their way to the website. Developing a sustained, targeted marketing campaign may increase awareness and therefore utilization of CC. A campus-wide climate survey found that while awareness of CFS was high (85% among female undergraduates, for example), awareness of CC was significantly lower (48% among female undergraduates).

The third challenge we have identified is the lack of evidence-based guidance for how to deliver effective crisis intervention services in a text-based medium. CFS reviewed relevant research and found little concrete guidance. Their general crisis intervention training is detailed and skills based, but there is little to help volunteers translate those skills to a digital medium. As a result, volunteers worry about the lack of personal connection and feel some insecurity about how they are providing support on CC. CFS staff and volunteers have expressed concern both about how well they are conveying empathy as well as their ability to accurately read the tone and emotion in chatters' communications. Differences in text-based communication is briefly described in training, but the general sense of apprehension suggests that staff and volunteers are not confident in the best ways to engage in supportive crisis intervention in a digital medium.

CFS Openness to Evaluation

In addition to the feasibility of various kinds of data, the larger question of CFS's orientation and commitment to evaluation is also relevant to assessing the evaluability of Crisis Chat. So far, we have found CFS staff to be excited and curious about the potential of evaluation. When asked about what they hope to get out of the evaluation, they identify a desire to understand if the program is meeting its goals, and can name specific questions they would like to see answered. Staff have been open and generous with their time. Perhaps because of their

inclusion in an academic context, CFS staff seem acquainted with the research endeavor and open to collaborating with academic partners. The organization doesn't seem to have existing formalized evaluation or quality improvement structures in place, aside from quarterly client feedback surveys sent to clients who have received therapy services. However, they do identify areas for growth and improvement and make concrete plans for how to address these needs. For example, they recently revamped their entire volunteer training after identifying the need to improve aspects of the training.

Burnout is a potential barrier to openness to change. CFS has seen an increase in their client base during a time that the university context has continued to cause harm to survivors and has indicated a lack of institutional support for the work that CFS engages in. CFS has attempted a variety of means to address the potential for burnout, both informal opportunities to socialize and de-stress, as well as more structured programming to address secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue. Burnout could lead to staff turnover, which could affect evaluation efforts. Additionally, the high client volume, difficult nature of the work, and the difficult institutional climate could lead staff to feel overwhelmed, and feel as if they lack the time to devote to evaluation activities.

CFS seems to be located in a supportive unit on campus (Student Health and Wellness) with supportive leadership. However, there are pending budget cuts in the larger unit that may affect CFS, and other on-going institutional restructuring could impact the program as well. CFS has good working relationships with other key stakeholders, including the university's Title IX office, prevention program, counseling center, and campus police force. Representatives from each of those offices are included on the evaluation advisory board as a formal way to create buy-in and incorporate stakeholder perspectives into the evaluation. CFS may want to continue

reaching out and engaging with stakeholders in the communities they want to better reach with Crisis Chat.

The university is still in the midst of transition and under scrutiny related to its handling of sexual assault. This both means that some administrators are eager to publicly support resources for survivors, and others are more fearful of additional lawsuits or negative press. Historically, SA services were underfunded and neglected on campus. University leadership and state funders have increased CFS's resources and staffing, but demand for services remains high and staff feel strained. There is also on-going distrust of MSU by survivors and the broader community, with much of MSU's activity seen as public relations and not evidence of a deep commitment to change.

With this grant, CFS has access to financial resources and expertise to conduct an evaluation. They would otherwise likely lack the resources and staff expertise to engage in the sustained, and in depth evaluation that we are pursuing. Crisis Chat, as a program, is at a good place for a formative evaluation, which should improve the outlook for later phases of evaluation.

Potential Data Sources

CFS currently utilizes a few means of collecting data from clients that we could use or altered to enable a more thorough evaluation of crisis chat. There are, however, some potential barriers to collecting certain kinds of data.

Advocacy Reports. SACI advocates and staff complete advocacy reports after each hotline call and Crisis Chat. CFS has agreed to allow the research team to access these forms (after CFS ensures that any identifying information is redacted). The form is identical for the phone hotline and Crisis Chat, which allows the research team to compare the two services. The

content of these forms is largely dictated by the data needs for reports to grant funders. Any data being collected is useful from an evaluation standpoint, however, the extent of the data is limited and lacks detail that would benefit an evaluation. Some valuable information is not regularly being collected, including the general topics covered in the interaction. CFS has agreed to revise this form for the purposes of this evaluation. We will likely have to retain the items used for grant reporting, so we may face some limitations in how many additional items we can add to the form in order to reduce the paperwork burden.

Even with revision, however, there are limits to the data collected on the advocacy report. First, it is necessarily the volunteer or staff person's perspective of the conversation, and is therefore subjective and vulnerable to self-report bias. Second, the forms are completed by up to 75 staff and volunteers, potentially leading to inconsistency across reporters. The volume of calls and chats is relatively low, so each volunteer is typically filling out only a couple reports a shift. This means the burden of paperwork is low. However, volunteers might answer the hotline or Crisis Chat while in class or at work, and may wait to fill out the report. The quality of data may vary as a result.

CFS has a policy of not asking for information that does not emerge organically in the context of the conversation. This is consistent with their client-centered philosophy of service in which the needs of the person in crisis dictates the direction of the interaction, not the needs of the provider. This means that information is often missing on the advocacy reports, particularly information about the demographics of the service user, details of the assault, and other details that a chatter may not share. This limits our ability to use agency data to answer questions about who is using Crisis Chat, for example. This is a barrier given CFS's interest in Crisis Chat as a way to better serve typically underserved survivors. CFS may want to discuss the relative costs

and benefits of asking additional questions in order to better track if they are successful in their goal of reaching underserved students.

Client Satisfaction Survey. There is potential to use an existing basic satisfaction survey available in Olark's platform. However, the questions included are not specific to Crisis Chat or even crisis hotlines. There may be potential to change the questions or add a user survey of CFS's own design to Crisis Chat. However, currently very few users complete the built in survey. It is common for chats to end without a formalized "good bye." This means that if a user does not click the "end chat" button, they do not get the prompt to take the survey.

Crisis Chat Transcripts. Another potential source of data includes the transcripts of chat interactions on Crisis Chat. Olark retains copies of transcripts. Prior to the initiation of the grant, CFS was not retaining transcripts both out of a desire to protect the confidentiality of clients as well as due to no intention of utilizing the transcripts for any purpose.

CFS agreed to retain transcripts for potential use as data, but some serious reservations remain. First, there is the question of whether or not to retain transcripts out of concern for client privacy and confidentiality. It is important to note that Olark does retain the transcripts on their own servers. Even if CFS deletes them at their point-of-use, Olark likely retains the transcripts on a server somewhere as it is generally easier and cheaper for apps to retain data than to go in and delete data. Users have the ability to save their own transcript, which is potentially useful as it allows them to save referral information and provides a tangible reminder of messages of support that they can use later. We are unsure whether users are saving their transcripts. There are data and privacy concerns, as well as potential liability concerns with the retention of verbatim transcripts of interactions. CFS has attempted to review the apps for privacy and has reviewed the apps and protocol with the university's general counsel who have approved the

service. In other words, whether or not CFS retains the transcripts internally, they exist and are potentially liable to subpoena or other legal means of acquiring them. Transcripts generally do not include identifying information like a name, so it would be difficult for someone to subpoena a particular user's transcript, except possibly with the exact date and time of the conversation or the user's IP address. CFS is designated a confidential service on MSU's campus and is bound to strict confidentiality by its funders, and therefore the institution would argue that the transcripts are not subject to subpoena (or FOIA).

An additional concern about the use of transcripts for evaluation purposes is whether users have agreed to this use of the data, and how CFS should inform them of the potential for data to be used for evaluation. Currently the terms of service are broad and do not specifically address how transcripts will be used, but staff remain concerned about whether it is a violation of user's privacy to access the transcripts for evaluation. CFS staff and the research team are both open to continuing to discuss the ethical implications of using transcripts.

Furthermore, CFS staff are also concerned about volunteers' sense of comfort if they knew that CFS staff or evaluators were going to be reviewing transcripts. Staff are concerned that volunteers will feel surveilled and be nervous if they knew that someone was checking up on what they said. Staff has indicated that they want volunteers to feel empowered and confident, not that they are going to get in trouble or be micro-managed. The research team has spoken with CFS staff about the potential for using transcripts as quality improvement to ensure that survivors (and their allies) are getting the best support possible. CFS staff indicate some openness to this possibility, but also voice reservations. We have agreed to continue having conversations about this as we move forward with the grant.

Other potential data sources. Other data sources exist, including the potential of

including knowledge of Crisis Chat, use of Crisis Chat, or other questions to intake paperwork for advocacy and therapist clients at CFS. Referral sources could also collect information about Crisis Chat (e.g. was Crisis Chat option shared with potential users who interfaced with other offices on campus). Prevention staff could collect data about knowledge of Crisis Chat or willingness to use it at their prevention programs. Individuals from these offices are included on the evaluation advisory board and can therefore consult on the opportunities for data collection strategies. Additionally, the CFS website and Olark platforms may also collect analytic information that we could access and use for evaluation purposes.

Appendix C. Logic Model
Crisis Chat, Center for Survivors, Michigan State University

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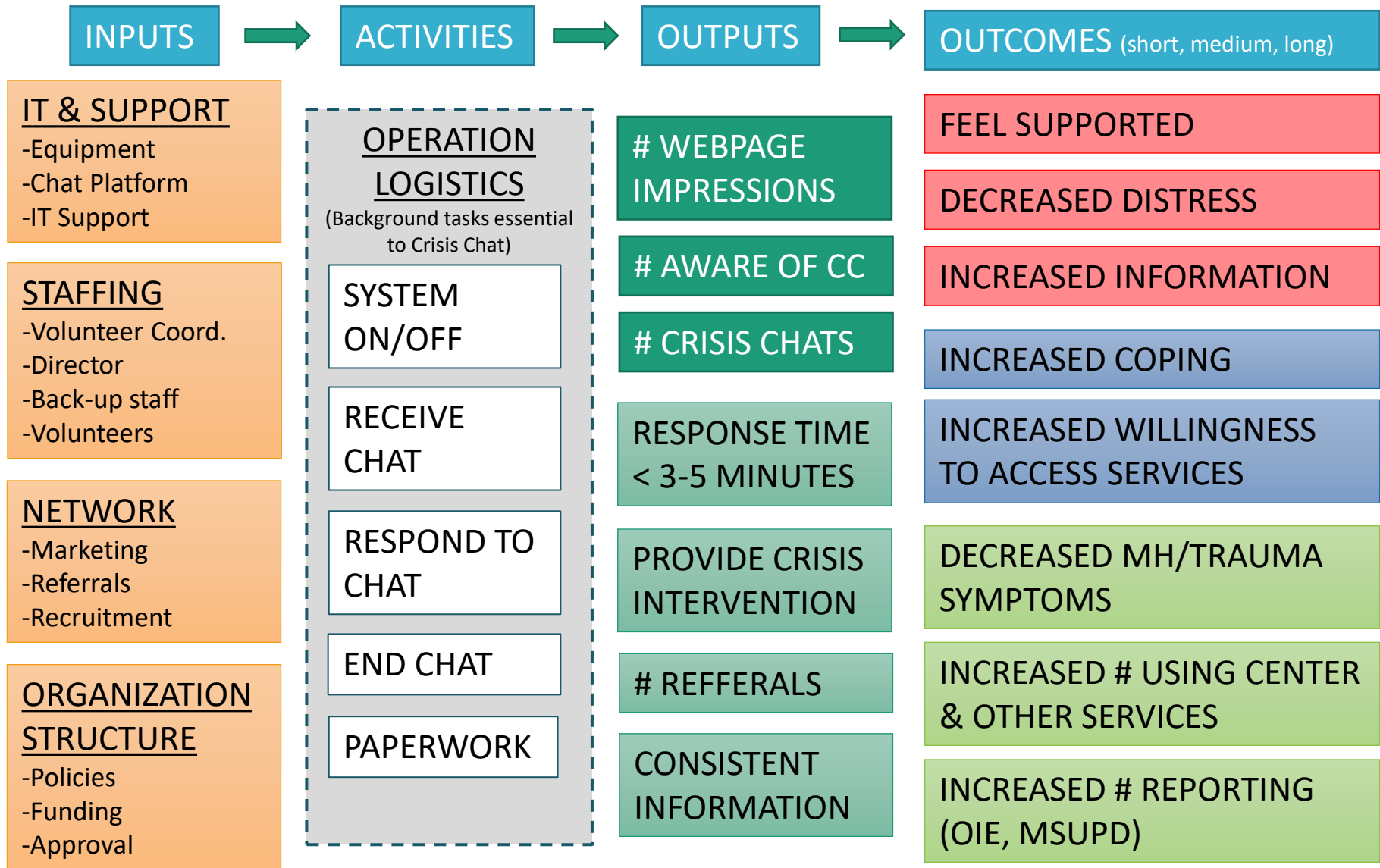
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Crisis Chat Logic Model

INPUTS	→	ACTIVITIES	→	OUTPUTS	→	OUTCOMES (short, medium, long)

INPUTS

IT & SUPPORT
- Equipment
- Chat Platform
- IT Support

STAFFING
- Volunteer Coord.
- Director
- Back-up staff
- Volunteers

NETWORK
- Marketing
- Referrals
- Recruitment

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE
- Policies
- Funding
- Approval

ACTIVITIES

OPERATION LOGISTICS
(Background tasks essential to Crisis Chat)

- SYSTEM ON/OFF
- RECEIVE CHAT
- RESPOND TO CHAT
- END CHAT
- PAPERWORK

OUTPUTS

- # WEBPAGE IMPRESSIONS
- # AWARE OF CC
- # CRISIS CHATS
- RESPONSE TIME < 3-5 MINUTES
- PROVIDE CRISIS INTERVENTION
- # REFFERALS
- CONSISTENT INFORMATION

OUTCOMES

- FEEL SUPPORTED
- DECREASED DISTRESS
- INCREASED INFORMATION
- INCREASED COPING
- INCREASED WILLINGNESS TO ACCESS SERVICES
- DECREASED MH/TRAUMA SYMPTOMS
- INCREASED # USING CENTER & OTHER SERVICES
- INCREASED # REPORTING (OIE, MSUPD)

ASSUMPTIONS:

Chat-based services offer:
- Lower barrier to entry
- Increased Access
- Increased privacy
- More control
- Greater comfort

INPUTS- WITH BRIEF EXPLANATION

IT & SUPPORT

-Equipment: iPads, iPhones, chargers, keyboard case, bag, binder, desktop for office access

-Chat Platform: Secure/ confidential, ability to be mobile, sufficient notification, embeds in website

-IT Support: Dedicated person and time; has understanding of Center tech needs and how various tech components need to work together; troubleshooting and planning

STAFFING

-Volunteer Coordinator: recruit, train, supervise volunteers; monitor operation; reporting

-Back-up Staff: assist with coverage, sustainability

-Director: securing funding, approvals, ensuring long-term stability

-Volunteers: Sufficient pool of trained and committed volunteers to provide adequate coverage

SERVICE NETWORK

-Marketing: Help designing effective message; Help developing products/assets; Help distributing and monitoring marketing

-Referrals: Network of referrals, time to maintain relationships, updated info

-Recruitment: partners to help with volunteer recruitment

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

-Policies: Suicide protocol, confidentiality policy, program policies

-Funding: staff, equipment and upgrades, data plans, platform, marketing

-Approvals: University support (IT, General Counsel, Division)

ACTIVITIES- WITH BRIEF EXPLANATION

OPERATION LOGISTICS- Background tasks essential to Crisis Chat

ADVERTISE CRISIS CHAT
Orientation, SARV, and other POE events; website; social media; residence halls; etc

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS
Tabling, events, mailing lists; interest meeting; applications, interviews, background checks

TRAIN VOLUNTEERS
Design curriculum; Update; Center staff deliver training 3x/year

SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS
Weekly Monday Meetings; weekly office hours; debrief as needed with back-up or Volunteer Coordinator

SHIFT SIGN-UP
SACI volunteers sign-up for shifts; VC ensures coverage; back-up fills in as needed; Volunteers find substitute as needed

EXCHANGE BAG
SACI volunteers connect and agree on meeting time/place; sign-in and check contents; back-up does same thing

SYSTEM ON/OFF
Log-in and turn system on at 10am; turn off (invisible) at 10pm, Back-up double checks

RECEIVE CHAT
SACI has iPad/iPhone on and hears notification; Back-up checks with SACI

RESPOND TO CHAT
Respond to initial message within 3-5 minutes; respond to subsequent messages promptly; utilize crisis intervention skills; provide information and resources

END THE CHAT
Remind of hotline/chat; assess for remaining needs; chatter or SACI ends the chat in system

PAPERWORK
Complete advocacy form; forms returned to Center; Volunteer Coordinator compiles into report

OUTPUTS- WITH BRIEF EXPLANATION

WEBPAGE IMPRESSIONS
Advertisements should increase # of webpage visits; # impressions between 10 10 (see pop up)

AWARE OF CC
Advertisements should increase awareness of Center and CC

CRISIS CHATS
Number and duration of chats; trends, services provided

RESPONSE TIME < 3-5 MINUTES
Center/SACI response sent within five minutes of chat initiation

PROVIDE CRISIS INTERVENTION
Utilization of crisis intervention skills

REFFERALS
Provision of appropriate referrals for information and/or services

CONSISTENT INFORMATION
Provision of accurate and consistent information

OUTCOMES- WITH BRIEF EXPLANATION

Short-term | Medium-term | Long-term

FEEL SUPPORTED
Perceive interaction as supportive, feel believed, advocate was helpful

INCREASED COPING
Gained skills/knowledge about common trauma symptoms and ways to cope

DECREASED MH/TRAUMA SYMPTOMS
Lower levels of symptoms of mental health distress and trauma, such as isolation, depressed mood, hyperarousal, etc.

DECREASED DISTRESS
Feel less upset, feel more in control

INCREASED WILLINGNESS TO ACCESS SERVICES
Willing to consider other Center services, non-Center services; openness to reporting to OIE and/or LE

INCREASED INFORMATION
Received information about sexual assault and common responses, coping techniques, reporting options, supports/services available

INCREASED # USING CENTER & OTHER SERVICES
Engage in services (counseling, advocacy, groups) at Center for Survivors or other similar services offered elsewhere

INCREASED # REPORTING (OIE, MSUPD)
Report to OIE, MSUPD or local law enforcement, engage in criminal or campus adjudication processes.

ASSUMPTIONS- WITH BRIEF EXPLANATION

CHAT HAS LOWER BARRIER TO ENTRY
Perception that using CC is less of a burden, more acceptable, less stigma, etc.

CHAT OFFERS INCREASED ACCESS
Ability to access in the moment when triggered; increased language access; integrates with assistive technology; don't need phone minutes, etc

USING CHAT IS MORE COMFORTABLE
Aligns with preference for text/email communication; easier to write than speak aloud

CHAT OFFERS INCREASED PRIVACY
Increased anonymity; ability to engage in more public and shared spaces

CHAT USERS HAVE MORE CONTROL
Increased ability to direct conversation, shape narrative

USE OF CHAT

Appendix D.

Dissemination Artifacts

The dissemination of this work in traditional academic venues as well as in settings applicable to advocates and survivors has been a very important component of this project. The research team believes that this work must be distributed to researchers, advocates, as well as administrators/policy makers that influence the creation of policies and programs to address sexual violence. Table D.1 includes a summary of dissemination tactics thus far. Additional dissemination activities will continue beyond the project period.

Table D.1. Dissemination Activities as of September 30, 2021

Type of Dissemination	Date	Citation	Intended Audience
Presentation	August 2019	Fedewa, T., Naber, K., & Moylan, C. A. (2019). Designing and operating a web-based crisis line on a college campus. Presentation at National Sexual Assault Conference, Philadelphia, PA.	Practitioners
Submitted Presentation	January 2022	Moylan, C., Carlson, M., Munro-Kramer, M. L., & Campbell, R. Identifying essential skills for digital crisis intervention: Lessons from an online sexual assault hotline. *Society for Social Work and Research.*	Researchers/ Academics

Submitted Presentation	June 2022	Munro-Kramer, M. L., Moylan, C., Carlson, M., & Campbell, R. Creating a fidelity rating tool for a web-based sexual assault hotline. *Nursing Network on Violence Against Women, International.*	Forensic nurses and nursing researchers
Published Manuscript	June 2021	Moylan, C. A., Carlson, M. L., Campbell, R., & Fedewa, T. (2021). "It's Hard to Show Empathy in a Text": Developing a Web-based Sexual Assault Hotline in a College Setting. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.* doi:10.1177/08862605211025036	Researchers/ Academics
Media Coverage	August 2021	"Tech Tuesday: Text based hotlines are on the rise" (WLNS) https://t.co/wkSHWQJsmh?amp=1	Broader Community
Media Coverage	August 2021	"Text-based communications effective in supporting sexual assault survivors" (MSU Today) https://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2021/crisis-chat	MSU and broader community