



CONTACT

Community Services

WITH HELP COMES HOPE
Fifty Years!

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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A Message from Our Executive Director



On July 6, 1971, a volunteer working alone in the basement of a local church answered the first call to a grassroots ministry of trained and caring listeners. The group called Contact - Syracuse, drew their inspiration from Dr Gus Root of the School of Education at Syracuse University and the theories of psychologist Carl Rodgers, whose new ideas on the humanistic and person-centered approach were revolutionizing the field of mental health. What started that night has grown and evolved into Contact Community Services - a modern and vibrant agency serving 28 counties across New York, with a variety of community and school-based mental health programs.

In this lookback over 50 years of Contact Community Services, one is immediately struck by the richness of programs offered. Contact has touched thousands of lives with innovative programs, hundreds of volunteers, and millions of calls. We have tried to showcase what we think are the highlights of Contact. Though names and faces have changed over the years, the quality and excellence of Contact and the desire to improve and save lives has not. I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who had faith in Contact over the years – our volunteers, staff and board members, community partners, funders and donors. Thank you for your time, generosity, and support. And even as we look back over the last 50 years and how far we have come, we are not resting on our laurels. We are excited about the future and ready to take on the challenges of the next 50 years.

Antara Mitra
Executive Director



1970s

JULY 6, 1971
Contact Syracuse began as a 24-hour volunteer-based telephone counseling service located at Dewitt Community Church



1979
Moved to Facilities in Elmcrest Children's Center

1980s

1981
Onondaga County declares Sept 13, 1981 as **Contact Week**



1982
Contact becomes a **United Way** agency.

1983
Contact becomes an **Authorized Agency of Onondaga County**



1986
Eleanor Roosevelt Community Service Award for Kidsline

1987
Teen Talk weekly, call-in radio show for teens



1990s

1992
No Putdowns – Nationally adopted violence prevention program for schools developed by Contact



1993
American Association of Suicidology (AAS) Accreditation



1995
Parenting Matters radio talk show

1996
25th anniversary gala at Hotel Syracuse with 400 people raised \$32,000

1998
Moved to The Center on Genesee Street

2000s

2000
Expanded name to **CONTACT Community Services**



2002
Helpline, Onondaga County 24-hour information and referral after hours line

2003
Moved to Basil Rowe location



2004
Youth Emergency Services (YES) for Mental Health – 24/7 crisis/triage line



2009
Contact affiliates with the **Mental Health Association of Onondaga County**

2010s

2010
PAX GBG



2011
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

2012
Moved to current location on Court Street Road



2015
211 CNY

2016
Alliance of Information and Referral Systems Accreditation (AIRS)



2020s



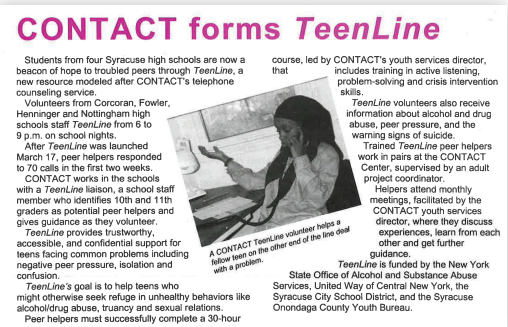
2022
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Crisis and Suicide Prevention

On the Phones

The promise of Contact has been the ability to call at any hour and find nonjudgmental support. From the early days of the all-volunteer telephone workers, Contact has developed specialized programs and hotlines and an extensive support system. Today, Contact is working with community partners to help create a system of care to reach all those in need.

CONTACT



Hotline

The Contact Hotline is our oldest program that has been running continuously since 1971. The only break in service recorded was after the Labor Day Storm of 1998, when the local phone service was disrupted for 24 hours. Hundreds of volunteers have trained at Contact over the years. The Hotline received 35 calls on the first day of operation and continues to grow in popularity averaging over 1,000 calls a month in its early years.

“One way we help is that kindness is irresistible. Our telephone counselors suspend judgement. They listen and understand and get into the world of the caller,” according to Mary Mol, Director of Volunteers (1993).

The Hotline in turn gave rise to more specialized telephone support programs like Kidsline (1985) and Teenline (1997).

16,094 calls answered in 2022

Youth Emergency Services (YES) for Mental Health

In 2004, we collaborated with Onondaga County Mental Health to launch a 24 hour hotline to provide crisis counseling and triage for youth ages 18 and younger. We worked with our partners - the Mobile Team for Onondaga Case Management Services, the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) at St. Joseph's Hospital, and county mental health clinics to help children in crisis. In its first year of operation itself, the hotline received 341 youth emergencies services calls.

Crisis Connect

Crisis Connect began in May 2018 as a collaboration between Contact, Liberty Resources, Inc. and the Access Team. The program serves as a central triage line for individuals in crisis and concerned parties. As the central triage point for these calls, Contact responds to individuals in Cayuga, Madison, Onondaga, Oneida, and Oswego counties experiencing a behavioral health crisis or concern and connects them to available services across the region. Contact provides crisis management/triage for all calls by de-escalating through active listening and providing referrals to the appropriate level of care.



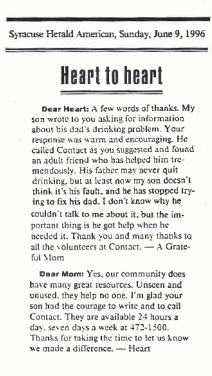
4,000 people in crisis were triaged in past 12 months

988 and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Contact joined the Lifeline network in September 2011. In 2018, through the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, FCC made plans to change the 10-digit Lifeline number to an easy to remember three digits. The Lifeline was renamed the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and 9-8-8 was officially implemented as the toll-free nationwide telephone number for the hotline on July 16, 2022. Contact remains a member of the network and responds to calls from 23 counties across the state. The 9-8-8 program has been integrated into the work we do with our community partners, including area mobile crisis teams, the 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center and area schools.

200 lives saved in 2022

17,500 calls answered in 2022



Crisis and Suicide Prevention



Telecare – Reassurance is a phone call away



TeleCare is a unique program that promotes socialization from the comfort of the client’s home and ensures safety and wellness. Telecare was launched in 2011 on Contact’s 40th anniversary as our gift to the community. Most clients of Telecare are elderly who live alone, and cope with chronic physical and/or mental health concerns. Those who live alone face the danger that a fall, stroke or sudden illness could leave them incapacitated or unable to seek immediate help. One of the most effective means of reducing isolation and health concerns is daily contact through a telephone reassurance call.

“When my mother had COVID-19 , I told her to dial 2-1-1 and Contact was able to help by connecting her with available resources in the community. There are many people in our community who are in need of the programs and services we offer - all free of charge. Contact has busted the door wide open in talking about mental health awareness. I hope to see Contact continue to expand and gain more awareness in the many years to come.”

Maria Rachetta-Wheeler
Branch Manager for NBT Bank

Youth and School Services

In the Schools

Contact has always recognized the importance of social emotional learning in children and youth. Early intervention can help increase resilience, self-regulation and reduce emotional crisis and suicidal thought and behavior later in life. Contact has worked closely with many schools offering programs and services in elementary through high school, realizing that good mental health begins early in life.



No Putdowns

In 1992, Contact developed an exciting new original curriculum to create positive school climate. The curriculum soon garnered national attention and was eventually adopted by school districts in 42 states and is still in use today. The program was designed for grades K-8th grade and helped school communities reduce verbal aggression and physical violence by building positive communication skills. In 1993, the program quickly grew to include parents since as Beth Drew, Director of Education Services at Contact at the time observed, “No Put Down is a way of life.”

Primary Mental Health Project



Primary Mental Health Project, or Primary Project as it is now called, is a program in its 24th year. First introduced in Syracuse City School district elementary schools, it is an early intervention program, designed to prevent school adjustment difficulties and to strengthen adaptive skills of children through the use of play. Four domain areas – task orientation, behavior control, assertiveness and peer social skills are targeted. Primary Project is now helping students and teachers in East Syracuse School District.

85% of children improved behavior in at least one domain.

Youth and School Services

21st Century Community Learning Centers

Contact continues to participate in 21st Century CLC programs partnering with different school districts over the years. This federally funded program seeks to provide tutoring, academic enrichment activities and youth development opportunities for children in low-performing and high poverty area schools. In 2000, when this federal grant was awarded to the Syracuse City School District, Contact helped to create eight (8) school-based community learning centers. In 2019 we partnered with the Liverpool School district, and in 2013 and 2022 we partnered with North Syracuse School District to bring this dynamic program to the students.



PAX Good Behavior Game

In 2010, we adopted our most impactful school-based program yet – the PAX Good Behavior Game or PAX GBG. The PAX Good Behavior Game is an evidence-based universal preventive intervention applied by teachers in the classroom and PAX Tools by parents at home. Sometimes described as a “behavioral vaccine,” PAX GBG creates lifetime benefits for students, schools, families, and society. It helps to build children’s self-regulation, resulting in improved focus and attention, improved test scores and other academic outcomes, reduced alcohol and other drug use, reduced psychiatric disorders, and reduced suicide. In 2018, the NYS Office of Mental Health recognized Contact and PAX GBG as leading program in state that promotes the mental health and wellness of children and youth.

“Students learn how to flip on their internal focus switches and it encourages them to demonstrate their best behavior during lessons. PAX teaches the students how to function in a team. A spleem doesn’t have a negative connotation. The students don’t want to let their team down and they are competitive about not getting spleems. It helps me to teach them self-regulation of their own behavior, without me having to be harsh about it.”

Kristen Duffy
Meachem 2nd Grade Teacher

95% reduction in number of disruptions during class.

11.5% decline in the days lost to disruption.

School Assistance Program (SAP)

Sometimes people wonder if counseling really works. We are here to tell you that the answer is YES! Just ask the students who seek out our SAP counselors at any of the high schools in the city. By providing early intervention and individual-centered services to students, counselors reduce the risk factors for substance abuse and other emotional health difficulties and increase a student’s coping skills related to stressors, thus enhancing opportunities for success in school and life. The counselors also help improve the school staff’s knowledge of student-related emotional health issues.

97% of students increase coping skills

82% delay substance use

“The Student Assistance Program let me talk to someone confidentially about using drugs and alcohol, which helped me to change.”

15-year-old high school student

Positive Action

Positive Action is a powerful social and emotional learning program adopted by Contact in 2019. An evidence-based system, it addresses the school’s entire eco-system – school, family and community. The underlying philosophy is that you feel good about yourself when you do positive actions; it teaches positive actions for the physical, intellectual, social and emotional areas – the whole self. Therefore, it achieves outcomes in so many areas. The solution to every problem is simple – positive actions. Positive Action is the true successor to No Put Downs.

Thank you for listening to me when I was down. I’m happy that I got to know you through my high school years. Keep getting kids involved in the things you did with me.”

Institute of Technology at
Central High School senior



“Thanks to (my SAP counselor) I’m much better now taking control of myself again and thanks to her help I haven’t had more suicidal thoughts. She probably saved my life.”

Nottingham High School student

Youth and School Services

Suicide Safer Schools (SSIS)

Launched in 2021, Suicide Safety In Schools, a mental health education program, provides crisis management and suicide safety training to the Onondaga County school communities, including students, parents, teaching staff and district administration in evidence-based practices, protocols and trainings. Trainings include Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR), More than Sad, It's Real: Teens and Mental Health, Suicide Safety in Schools, School Crisis Team Training and Talk Saves Lives. This program also provides large-scale awareness activities to promote Suicide Safety In Schools and Mental Health awareness.

10,144 Onondaga County students trained in "It's Real: Teens and Mental Health"

1,044 Parents and staff trained in student mental health issues



Information and Referral Services

Helpline to 211

Ever since its inception Contact's mission has been to improve the quality of life for people in our communities. So, when the opportunity arose to help people connect with social care needs like housing, food, childcare in addition to providing mental health connections, Contact was up for the challenge. Our information and referral services continue to grow and was recognized as an essential service during covid.



211 CNY connects

1,073 Agencies

3,828 Programs

211 CNY answers

31,434 Queries in 2022

Helpline

In 2002, Contact made an important expansion from only offering mental health support to also offering information and referral on social care needs. We became the agency answering after hours calls to the Onondaga County Helpline,. The county helpline helped those seeking resources and information about services available. With our extensive experience in managing a 24x7 call center and responding to individuals in need, Contact was well poised to take on this new challenge. In 2010, Contact took over the responsibility to answer the Helpline 24X7. The Helpline was replaced by 211 services in 2015.

211

In 2015, Contact was designated by the United Way of Central New York as the 211CNY call center for St. Lawrence, Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego and Onondaga counties.

211CNY provides 24-hour free and confidential information about health and human services resources available in a caller's community. Residents in the covered area can seek assistance or information on a wide range of issues, including basic needs, substance abuse, family services, mental health, legal aid, and holiday assistance.

In 2021, we were designated to be the call center for the twelve counties of the 211 Northeast Region by United Way of Greater Capital Region and in 2022, for the three counties of 211 Mid York by United Way of Mohawk Valley.

Community Education and Training

In The Community

One in four adults in the U.S. will suffer from a mental or emotional health disorder every year. There is a good chance that someday someone you know will need help. Contact has offered many different community trainings over our 50 year history to help us all be better prepared.



Community Education and Trainings

- Mental Health First Aid
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- ASIST*
- QPR*
- safeTALK*
- Talk Saves Lives*
- Anger Management
- Children 1st
- More Than Sad*
- It's Real: Teens and Mental Health*

*currently offered trainings

Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition

The Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition (OCSPC) is a collaboration of stakeholders devoted to creating a suicide safe community. Our mission is to link our community with suicide prevention resources to reduce stigma, promote help-seeking and save lives. With 40 members, representing local, county, state, and national organizations, the coalition undertakes numerous activities and outreach efforts throughout the year.

OCSPC's 2nd annual Chalk the Walk in September had close to 200 participants and effectively normalized mental health challenges and promoted community connectedness. OCSPC continues to be a crucial mechanism for sharing community resources and initiatives.

In the Community

27 free community trainings in 2022

3,195 people trained in ASIST, QPR and safeTALK from 2015-2019

On the Radio and in the Media

In The Community

Before the dawn of the digital age, radio was a primary source of entertainment and information for people of all ages across the country. Contact soon realized that the radio was the perfect medium to reach a large number of people simultaneously. For every one caller to the hotline or the radio show, there were hundreds more with the same question and concern.



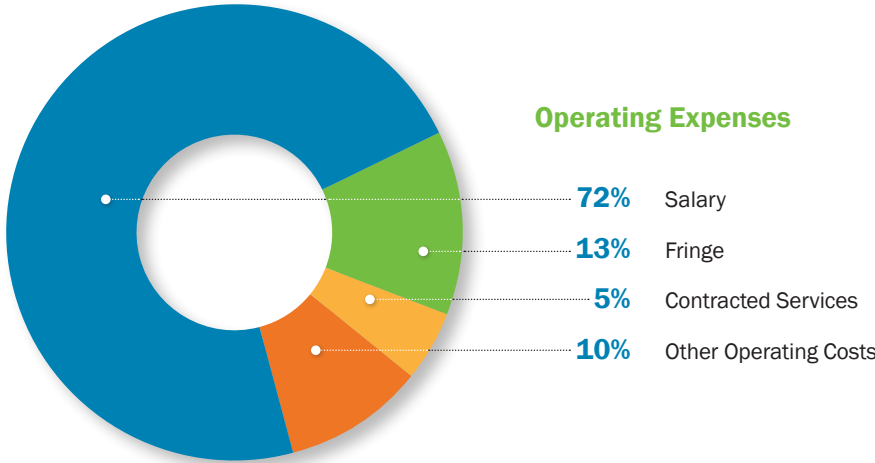
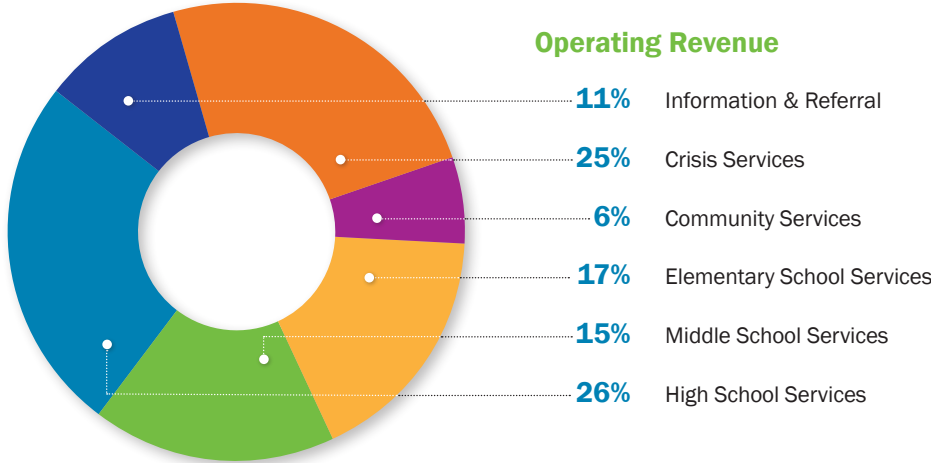
Teen Talk

For over twenty four years, 9 p.m. on a Sunday meant it was Teen Talk time. First started in 1987 on 93Q and later at Hot 107, hundreds of teens have dialed 1 800 245-TEEN to get help. They could talk to a professional therapists or connect with one of the teen hosts. Teens called in looking for advice on relationships, pregnancy, substance use, physical and sexual abuse, feelings of suicide- any topic they did not feel they could talk about to anyone in their personal life. And for every teen that called in, hundreds more were listening on the radio. Teen Talk attracted teens and parents alike, with over a thousand callers each year and a much larger listening audience throughout Central New York.



Parenting Matters

Launched in August 1995 on WYSR, this call-in radio show, hosted by Bill Baker and staffed by a rotating team of mental health professionals, aired on Tuesday mornings and provided parents a forum to discuss and learn about the challenges and rewards of raising children in today's world. WAER (Jazz-88), became the new home of the show in 1997- where it aired on Saturday mornings.



Total Operating Revenue

Information & Referral	\$585,350
Crisis Services	\$1,353,001
Community Services	\$305,991
Elementary School Services	\$900,760
Middle School Services	\$824,560
High School Services	\$1,371,635
Total	\$5,341,297

Total Operating Exepenses

Salary	\$3,773,130
Fringe	\$676,357
Contracted Services	\$237,268
Other Operating Expenses	\$534,139
Total	\$5,220,894

Board Officers

- Eric Larison**
President
Executive Director, NYS ASCD
Consultant, OCM BOCES
- Dr. Maureen Patterson**
Vice-President
Internship Coordinator, Education Leadership Programs
Le Moyne College
- Linda Barbuto**
Treasurer, Co-chair Fiscal and Investment Committee
Assistant Director, Office of Budget & Planning
Syracuse University
- Paula Freedman**
Corresponding Secretary
President, Freedman Associates, Inc.
- Alan Andrews, LCSW**
Ex-Officio President
Ilc Andrews and Associates

Board Members

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Chair of Board Nominating Committee
Partner (retd.)
Apter & O’Connor Associates
- Rebecca Hoda-Kearse**
Chair of Fund Development Committee
Executive People Officer, Title IX Coordinator
SUNY ESF
- Neil J. Smith, Esq**
Co-Chair of Fiscal & Investment Committee
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Mackenzie Hughes, LLP
- Michelle Breidenbach**
Reporter
The Post Standard
- Rashida Chambers**
Promise Zone Specialist
Syracuse City School District
- Kortney Dale**
Vice President, Child & Family Services
Liberty Resources, Inc.
- Dr. Joseph T. Himmelsbach**
Associate Clinical Professor
SUNY Upstate Psychiatry
- Helen Hudson**
President, Syracuse Common Council
City of Syracuse
- Chris Kosakowski**
Advocate
Vera House
- Patricia McBride**
City Clerk, Office of the City Clerk
City of Syracuse
- John Rey**
Business Development Manager
Oswego Teachers Employees Federal
Credit Union
- Dave Shaw**
Business Administrator
Newfield Central School District

Community Comments



“Contact provides me with a real way to give back to the community. With some guidance, people have a tremendous ability to figure things out and that is the most lasting kind of learning. To those who are struggling, you are worth living, your life is worth living and you have the power in you to create a life for yourself. I believe in you.”

*Cindy Sutton
Retired professor at
Hobart & William Smith College.*

“The most rewarding thing at the end of the day is feeling like you are actually helping someone. People don’t talk about mental health. We need to understand more about mental health issues instead of shunning them. I may not be able to make someone climb out of a ditch but what I can do is climb into the ditch with them and help someone realize they are not alone. If someone is struggling, reach out to Contact. They are there to help. They will listen. You are not alone.”

*Stuart Groom
Partner, JAS Recruitment*

“Volunteering at Contact has given me a wealth of information and resources ; the opportunity to reach out to others , not just on the phone during shifts, but with people I meet, family, and friends. Recently had a friend express concern for a family member whose child died by suicide. Due to the incredible ongoing training and skills learned at Contact, I was able to give this person the comfort and confidence to help her family member with appropriate resources and information regarding suicide, along with the most important resource, Contact.”

Margaret Zogg

“The purpose of the Contact hotline resonates with me because, like everyone, I’ve been through rough patches and needed help. I’ve always been fortunate to have a support system of family and friends - but not everyone has someone to call during a crisis or even just on a bad day. Many shifts, I take zero crisis calls, but every shift I connect with people who feel lost and need someone to listen. And for a caller who feels that things are spiraling out of control, I think of the Contact TW as the domino that doesn’t fall - corny but I believe it makes a lot of difference!”

Mandy Rudolph



Our Mission

Contact Community Services helps individuals and organizations create positive personal and social change to improve the quality of lives in central New York.