COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: COUNSELLING SKILLS DURING COVID-19

Call for Participants for Community of Practice for March 3rd and 4th 2021
Background
During the Covid-19 pandemic, child helplines have experienced a surge of calls from children and young people in need of support. Globally, child helplines have seen call numbers increase by around 30%. Unfortunately, because of lockdown conditions as well as social distancing, a number of social services directed at children and young people are less or no longer available. Additionally, in many countries schools have been closed and children are obliged to stay at home. This has reportedly led to an increase in poverty, domestic violence and sexual violence perpetrated against children. You can read some of the stories from children and young people in our 2019 data report, “Voices of Children and Young People Around the World: Child Helpline Data for 2019”.

Look out for our soon-to-be-launched briefing papers, which aim to highlight more of the reasons why children and young people contacted our child helpline members throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are convening a Community of Practice to exchange knowledge on how child helplines can best identify and respond to the distresses faced by children and young people, particularly in the current context of COVID-19 – please continue reading below.

This activity is a component of the wider VESAC project (Voices in Eastern and Southern Africa during Covid-19) which aims at supporting members in Eastern and Southern Africa in their continued effort to respond to the increased contacts they have been receiving during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Child helplines and guidelines on best responses
Child helplines are key to providing guidance and support to children and young people, especially during crisis situations when an increased number of calls are recorded. The ability to listen to, understand and respond empathetically to a child's experience can make a tremendous difference.

Counselling requires an important set of skills, including rapport building, exploring feelings, considering options, developing plans and facilitating good endings in order to best respond to the need of each child. Through discussions and practice, we aim to explore how to best identify issues faced by children and young people during the current Covid-19 pandemic and how to use empathetic and effective communication tools to respond.

Objectives
- To explore and discuss key counselling techniques, including, but not limited to: Rapport Building, Exploring Feelings, Considering Options, Developing a Plan, Ending and Self-care.
- To explore and discuss how child helplines can become a key resource for children in the context of COVID-19, currently and in the aftermath.
- To build working partnerships between child helplines and expert organisations for ongoing discussion and knowledge exchange.

Outcomes
By the end of the meeting, the group will collectively compile a series of recommendations based on the discussions.
The Format of the Community of Practice
Communities of Practice are a form of peer-to-peer learning, held together by a shared concern or passion for a specific topic – in this case capacity building around counselling skills. This community of practice will be multi-sectoral in order to harness and share knowledge from different perspectives.

Due to the current travel restrictions, the discussions will take place online. The main language of communication will be English.

The discussion will be participant-led and we invite you to share expectations as well as themes you would like to discuss in your biography on Google Drive.

The Thematic Discussion
The core of communities of practice is the ownership and leadership of the participants. Therefore, only the overall topic, counselling skills, is established beforehand, not the details of the discussion. The tasks of the participants together with Child Helpline International are as follows:

- Identify issues that can arise when providing counselling and share possible solutions
- Identify a set of core counselling skills and tools that can help the counsellor support the child to the best of their ability.
- Exchange practices, experiences, theory and thoughts on how to identify issues and respond appropriately.
- Document and define ideas and discussions as a basis for upcoming capacity-building initiatives

This is a collaborative discussion among experts and practitioners who work with and for children and young people. The outcomes from these communities will be shared with the rest of the child helpline network through eLearning, training resources and advocacy reports/campaigns in order to create impact across our network.

In preparation
Dates: 3rd of March 13.30 - 16.30  
4th of March 13.30 - 16.30

More information regarding the agenda of the event will be received a couple of weeks prior to the event upon registration.

In order to best respond to your needs and for the discussion to be beneficial for all, we kindly ask you to:

1. Read the Counselling Practice Guide
2. Prepare your biography (as per the template), which will guide you to make a short introduction about yourself and what you would like to discuss during the conversations.
3. Share your preferred counselling guide and tools to discuss during the Community of Practice and upload it to the Google Drive folder

Share an anonymised case study that demonstrates good practice in counselling to the Google Drive folder. Please find all useful links in the annex.

Call for Participants
We are seeking participants who:
• Have a strong interest in solidifying existing knowledge and sharing practices around counselling skills.
• Have a strong interest in learning and sharing good practices.
• Have knowledge and experience relating to promoting the rights of children, or has a keen interest in learning more about these issues.
• Have knowledge and experience related to responding to children and young people in distress, such as psychologists, child helpline counsellors and other practitioners,
• Are comfortable in communicating in English.

Contact information
To register your interest and ask further questions, please contact laura@childhelplineinternational.org.

There are limited available spaces, so we invite a maximum of two participants per child helpline or organisation to take part.
ANNEX:

1. Biography Template

My name is (Your name) and I currently work as a (Role) in (Division/Unit) at/in (Organisation). My daily work includes (describe your primary work tasks). I joined this Community of Practice because (describe what you and your organisation aim to gain from the Community of Practice). What I bring to this Community of Practice is knowledge / experience in (add examples of what knowledge you bring to the Community of Practice). I am particularly interested in discussing (add your area of interest within the topic of the Community of Practice). You can learn more about me and my organisation on (OPTIONAL: add link to website or professional networking profile).

2. Google Drive folder for sharing biographies and counselling tools: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zMk0LBvgNbY65C9ZLtDJNuWDhJ0Hikuj?usp=sharing