

Dear Mustang parent or guardian:

Around the Manitou Springs High School campus, you may have noticed brightly colored posters promoting “a personal, confidential crisis text line for teens.” Along with one other Colorado Springs-area school, Manitou High has agreed to serve as a “pilot school” for a mental health campaign from the Colorado Springs affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

The campaign publicizes the Crisis Text Line, a free, 24/7 counseling service run by the state of Colorado. By texting the word “TALK” to 38255 (or by calling 1-844-493-8255), anyone can reach a professional counselor and share what is on their mind. Whether it is anxiety, unhappiness, stress, concern for a friend ... it is all OK to talk about. The service is completely free, and no insurance is required. You can learn more about the text line at coloradocrisisservices.org.

The professional counselors strive to keep conversations confidential. But parents and students should know that if a counselor believes a texter — or someone close to him or her — is in imminent danger, a Community Response Team (including First Responders) will be mobilized. Unless this situation is unfolding at school, it is unlikely that school personnel will be notified immediately. You would be more than welcome to notify us afterward, and to involve school personnel in a longer-term safety plan.

Having easy access to a professional counselor really helps some teens (and some adults, who are also welcome to use the line). That said, no one envisions the text line as a replacement for the support that students find in their families or school community. It is just another tool meant to help teens feel understood, connected and secure.

As always, MSSD 14 offers our own support system at all schools. Our mental health teams are available for all students in need of support.

We also want to stress that the text line is truly for anyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, age or immigration status. Please feel free to find out more about this campaign at need2text.com. You can also learn about NAMI at namicoloradosprings.org, or by calling NAMI’s office at 719-473-8477. Thank you very much for your time.