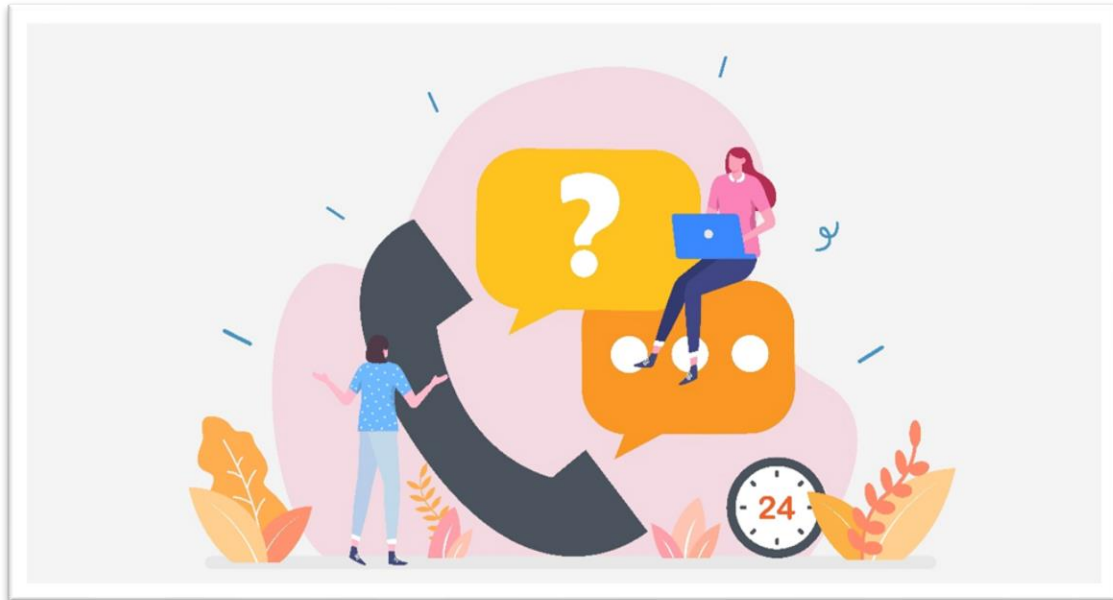


# YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## 2023 CHILDHELP PACTECH FOCUS GROUP



### Introduction



A key aim in year five of the Childhelp Prevent Abuse of Children Text and Chat Hotline (PACTECH) Project was to glean knowledge and perspectives from young adults (ages 18-24) about how better to reach more youth who may not typically seek out assistance from a helpline.

In 2018, Childhelp partnered with Arizona State University's Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (SIRC) for the Childhelp Prevent Abuse of Children Text and Chat Hotline (PACTECH) Project.

The PACTECH intervention offers text and chat services for help-seekers looking for information, support, and resources related to child abuse. The objective of PACTECH is determining best practices and protocols for the use of text and chat in the crisis helpline environment. This project is supported by Grant No. 90CA1855 from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACF), Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

This brief reports on the 2023 Childhelp PACTECH Youth Advisory Committee focus group. During the June meeting of the Youth Advisory Committee, SIRC conducted a focus group with the members to gather information about their experiences becoming a member, serving as a member, and asking for suggestions on how the Hotline could better reach and serve other young adults. This focus group served as the final in a series of focus groups that were conducted throughout the five years of the PACTECH project. Prior focus groups were conducted with members of the National Hotline Consortium and Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline Supervisors and Counselors. The prior focus group topical briefs are accessible at the Childhelp website: <https://childhelphotline.org/research/>

## Youth Advisory Committee



In year five of the PACTECH project, the Childhelp Youth Advisory Committee was formed with 11 members, ages 18-24, from across the United States to provide a voice about the most helpful ways Childhelp can reach and work with youth who have experienced maltreatment and/or trauma.

Youth Advisory Committee monthly meetings were facilitated by Childhelp staff. Each month the meeting focused on a new topic. Examples of topics discussed included communication outreach, website review, ideas for reaching less served populations, social media, and suggestions for more effective communication with young adults. Ultimately, hearing and incorporating young adults' ideas and perspectives is one way the hotline continues to grow to reach and serve more young adults.

***"I know the impact that the Youth Advisory Committee is having on Childhelp, and then that trickles down to have positive benefits for the people that use their services."***

*Childhelp Youth Advisory Committee Member*

## Youth Advisory Committee June 2023 Focus Group

SIRC team members joined the existing June 2023 Youth Advisory Committee meeting to conduct a 60-minute Zoom focus group. A SIRC facilitator and co-facilitator conducted the focus group. Three Youth Advisory Committee members attended the focus group on June 17, 2023. The members were asked nine questions in order to gather information about their experience with recruitment, being a member, goals, explaining the hotline to others, theories of why young adults sometimes find it hard to reach out, and suggestions for reaching more people their age. Analysis of the focus group discussion was conducted in June and July of 2023.

### Recruitment Experience

The Youth Advisory Committee members reported that the recruitment process was a neat opportunity for getting to speak to a lot of people. The interview was a welcoming experience. One member expressed having the opportunity during the process to share about local activities the member had conducted. Another member shared a challenge with the Facebook ad not being continuously available (i.e., popped up briefly but then couldn't find it again); this Youth Advisory Committee member was resourceful and went to the hotline website to find the application.

### Future Recruitment Suggestions

Members stated that the placement of ads matters. They recommended using Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok instead of Facebook if Childhelp is trying to reach young adults and kids. It would also be a good opportunity to partner with national and international organizations to reach more young adults. Examples given included the Boys and Girls Clubs, CenterLink and Ronald McDonald House Charities. Another idea was to utilize universities when recruiting because traditional college students are in the target age group. Additionally, outreach to youth centers and LGBTQ+ centers as possible sources might prove helpful.

*"There's not going to be a lot of kids our age on Facebook like that. So, I think if they utilize TikTok more or Instagram more."*

*Childhelp Youth Advisory Committee Member*

## Importance of Committee Membership

***“There is an age difference, you know, and sometimes there are different experiences that people may have based off of their age.”***

*Childhelp Youth Advisory Committee Member*

Members were excited about the opportunity to become part of such a meaningful organization. They expressed the importance of contributions by younger people such as themselves and thought that this young adult perspective was important to improve and expand the resources of the hotline. They liked adding their ideas as part of how the hotline serves young adults.

## Continuation of Committee Membership

Members expressed enjoyment in hearing from other people their age about their experiences and being connected to new people from across the country. They liked knowing their participation on the Committee was having a positive impact on the people who use the hotline services and on Childhelp as an organization. One member mentioned that although the time commitment is not great, the input is making a difference. Members are documenting their volunteer experience in e-portfolios, resumes and on their LinkedIn profiles as they are proud to be on the Youth Advisory Committee to help future generations. One member stated that being on the Committee aligns with goals of contributing back to the community.

## Committee Community Outreach Activities

Committee members have already been busy conducting outreach activities for the hotline. Activities that were mentioned included reviewing the Childhelp Hotline website and advertisements, providing feedback, asking friends for additional feedback, sharing resources from other agencies with Childhelp, and suggesting that there be more parent resources available on the website. The members felt that their perspectives could help the Childhelp Hotline serve younger kids better.

## Goals

Members expressed a desire to assist the hotline in reaching as many people as possible. They also want to help the hotline continue to be youth friendly and accessible. Further, they would like organizations to be well connected to ensure easy communication and resource sharing with help seekers.

## Describing the Hotline to Young Adults

One member stated that the hotline is youth centered and youth oriented. The hotline serves as a middleman, for example, instead of calling the police. Childhelp Hotline counselors are able to explain things from a kid's perspective but in an adult way. These factors help make the hotline a great resource.

***“There are a lot of other resources on there that people may find beneficial. It's a hotline like any other in the sense that you can call or text and get help. But it is very youth, centric and youth oriented.”***

*Childhelp Youth Advisory Committee Member*

## Reasons Why Young Adults Don't Always Reach Out

Young adults have heard of negative experiences regarding the long hold times when reaching out to helplines or hotlines. Privacy issues were mentioned as barriers for why youth may not reach out. For example, an abusive parent may have a tracker on the young person's phone which causes concern to the youth who wonders if the help is worth it if a parent later finds out.

Additionally, perspectives or definitions of abuse may vary since kids may not realize verbal abuse is abuse and therefore may not feel it is appropriate to contact the hotline for assistance. Moreover, abusive situations may have been normalized for some children or young adults. Intergenerational trauma and/or denial may play a role in young adults not reaching out for help. One member mentioned that the hardest part may be the fear of getting a loved one in trouble.

## Suggestions for Hotline to Reach More Youth Help-Seekers

The members had a variety of suggestions for how the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline could reach more young adults. They suggested more use of social media like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok for ads. They also said that emails might not be the best way to reach younger adults because not all younger generations check email regularly. Utilizing national organizations, as well as universities, might be great resources for advertising and recruiting to more young adults.



Childhelp could create QR codes to make hotline accessibility easier. For example, Department of Child Safety social/case workers could carry a small handout card or stickers with a QR code to share with their clients and others. Advertisements in counselors' and therapists' offices that serve young adults might work well to reach these audiences.

***"I think, where they put the advertisement matters."***

*Childhelp Youth Advisory  
Committee Member*

## Conclusion

Members of Childhelp's PACTECH Youth Advisory Committee presented useful information on their experiences and suggestions with the hotline. They believed that their perspectives as young adults assisted Childhelp in being able to better reach and serve more youth and young adults and allows them to make an important contribution to their communities. They contributed ideas on how services such as the hotline could continue to be made even more accessible and easy to utilize, suggesting additional ads and outreach strategies such as QR codes. Members reinforced that young adult voices are a critical asset for improving outreach and services

*This brief was prepared for Childhelp by the ASU Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (SIRC) researchers Diane Moreland, Dr. Marisol J. Diaz and Dr. Wendy Wolfersteig. A big thank you to the Youth Advisory Committee members and Childhelp staff for their time and dedication.*