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Georgia Department of Human Resources Crisis and Access Line goes step further to offer help

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ATLANTA – Through the Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL), the Department of Human Resources is taking significant steps to ensure that callers get help, not just connected. While similar call centers around the country only feature an information and referral approach, GCAL actually allows callers to speak with clinicians at any time and appointments are scheduled on the spot. Moreover, GCAL follows-up with callers to ensure they are getting the community or hospital services that they need. During the month of February, GCAL received over 10,000 calls, a number that is expected to grow as Georgia families and individuals become more familiar with the service which began in July of last year. GCAL is one of many new reforms designed to improve Georgia's Behavioral Health Care System.

"We know how difficult it is for many to ask for help. Therefore, when individuals do ask for help, we go a step further to make sure they get it," said Gwen Skinner, Director for the State Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases. "With the addition of a clinical staff that has access to a range of services throughout Georgia, getting help is much easier. Despite doing more, the new service has saved \$1.2 million compared to the previous system."

Before DHR implemented GCAL, Georgia had as many as 25 crisis access lines. Each system had very different approaches and callers were limited to getting help based on where they lived and when they called. During after-hours, calls were often answered by administrative staff and holiday coverage was mostly non-existent.

Now, Georgia has one crisis and access line. It not only operates 24 hours and 7 days a week, it now has a clinical staff. Callers have the ability to choose based on their preferences. They can also expect to receive an appointment, even if they call at 2 in the morning.

An additional feature is GCAL's data collection system which helps DHR in its service delivery planning. The data provides cues on who callers are, why they are calling, and ultimately how Georgia's behavioral health care system can best serve those with mental illness, developmental disabilities and addictive diseases.

For more information on the Georgia Crisis & Access Line, call 1-800-715-4225 or access [mygcal.com](#).