

TESTIMONY
Senate Appropriations
SB 2012
January 26, 2023
Jennifer Illich

Chairman Bekkedahl, and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today about the life-saving work of FirstLink. My name is Jennifer Illich, and I am the executive director of FirstLink. I am here to express support for SB 2012. FirstLink is the only designated center in North Dakota to answer the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, and 211 information and referral phone lines. FirstLink services are imperative to build a strong mental health system that provides the care, support, and services needed to help people build better lives throughout North Dakota.

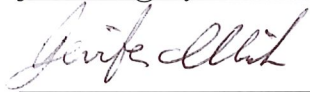
FirstLink answering the 211 information and referral and 988 suicide and crisis phone line is part of a long-term effort to build complete mental health and suicide and substance prevention crisis response system in North Dakota. The overwhelming majority of callers can be stabilized over the phone. Those who need more support are connected to appropriate mental health services. FirstLink serves as a hub of information and a connector to other non-profit and behavioral health centers. We screen and triage for open access, and subacute stabilization centers and deploy mobile crisis units for the Human Service Centers throughout North Dakota. The attached information shows the number of contacts and connections.

FirstLink needs increased support to continue operating 24/7 and meet all the demands of our community members that are connecting with us. We must add FTE to our team to keep up with the increases in call volume. We need to update our technology services because every second counts when talking to someone that is suicidal, has a substance use challenge, or is experiencing a behavioral health crisis. We need to add redundancy to ensure that our phone lines never go down. We need to have a diverse and culturally competent workforce and pay our staff professional wages to provide quality service to those reaching out for help and to help with staff retention.

I hope you will consider supporting SB 2012, so we can support our most vulnerable neighbors in a moment of crisis. I will restate what Dr. Wehbi stated in his testimony on January 16, 2023, we are working together to make North Dakota the healthiest state in the nation.

I sincerely thank you for listening and for your ongoing support, and I look forward to your questions.

Jennifer Illich
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FirstLink
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FirstLink Annual Budget Needs	
Payroll expenses	\$ 1,622,984.00
Education and outreach	\$ 93,480.00
Operating expense	\$ 202,902.00
Professional fees	\$ 123,966.00
Total	\$ 2,043,332.00



2022 Statistical Report
Statewide HSC

TOTAL # OF HSC CONTACTS from HSC Fwd Lines

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
Information	675	731	725	952	883	781	643	641	542	497	680	896	8646	100%
Referral	202	301	289	366	413	269	210	212	199	168	299	512	3440	40%
Listening & Support	12	10	8	11	13	12	13	12	8	4	8	11	122	1%
Crisis Intervention	126	133	166	166	125	190	141	120	95	76	87	102	1527	18%
	335	287	262	409	332	310	279	290	240	249	286	271	3550	41%
TOTAL	675	731	725	952	883	781	643	641	542	497	680	896	8639	100%

CONTRACT TYPE (HSC)

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
Hang Up/Static	85	90	133	190	239	134	69	99	80	62	116	174	1471	17%
Inappropriate	8	1	20	43	64	5	6	4	2	2	2	1	161	2%
Sexually Inappropriate	1	2	3	3	0	4	1	1	0	0	1	1	17	0%
Telemarketer	9	13	4	6	6	3	5	5	3	3	3	8	17	8%
Wrong Number	4	1	2	4	5	11	4	1	5	4	6	19	66	1%
TOTAL	107	107	162	246	314	157	85	110	90	71	132	216	1797	21%

ABANDONED RATE %

	1%	2%	2%	1%	4%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	AVG:	3%
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HSC LINE / CONTACT METHOD (HSC)

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
Bedlands	3	0	0	2	3	10	5	14	8	12	12	7	76	1%
Lake Region	3	0	3	0	4	9	33	37	38	22	53	48	250	3%
North Central	48	70	33	42	44	24	18	38	29	38	27	57	468	5%
Northeast	63	52	32	51	51	48	18	28	33	30	97	132	635	7%
Northwest	67	34	24	36	20	27	37	29	34	46	52	48	454	5%
South Central	62	54	49	62	87	77	54	45	49	41	56	83	719	8%
Southeast	311	369	488	564	570	462	367	323	243	221	240	395	4553	53%
West Central	118	152	96	195	104	124	111	127	108	87	142	126	1490	17%
TOTAL	675	731	725	952	883	781	643	641	542	497	679	896	8645	100%

DAY OF THE WEEK (HSC)

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
Sunday	129	99	152	105	180	114	123	90	87	97	88	83	1347	16%
Monday	135	117	61	107	156	93	86	87	58	59	58	115	1132	13%
Tuesday	67	98	88	138	131	84	64	93	79	57	74	67	1040	12%
Wednesday	66	87	94	83	121	132	65	76	59	56	82	149	1070	12%
Thursday	61	58	104	146	66	110	57	83	74	54	158	170	1141	13%
Friday	72	159	81	198	96	91	88	82	83	53	133	182	1318	15%
Saturday	145	113	145	175	133	157	160	130	102	121	87	130	1598	18%
TOTAL	675	731	725	952	883	781	643	641	542	497	680	896	8646	100%

GENDER (HSC)

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
Female	369	389	457	586	434	298	302	316	268	285	372	469	4545	53%
Male	238	252	164	232	230	347	279	234	195	150	197	238	2756	32%
Non-Binary	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0%
TOTAL	607	642	621	818	665	645	581	551	463	435	569	707	7304	84%

AGE RANGE (HSC)

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
6-17	2	2	1	1	2	4	0	2	1	2	2	3	22	0%
18-35	201	171	143	212	141	110	118	143	138	124	191	230	1922	22%
36-65	387	450	460	594	472	406	377	353	271	274	361	453	4858	56%



2022 Statistical Report
Statewide HSC

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
<i>Referral</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<i>Listening & Support</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<i>Crisis Intervention</i>	428	335	378	393	425	414	435	448	435	377	367	449	4884	56%
TOTAL	428	335	378	393	425	414	435	448	435	377	367	449	4884	56%
NON-PRODUCTIVE CALLS														
<i>Hang Up/Static</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0%
<i>Inappropriate</i>	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0%
<i>Sexually Inappropriate</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0%
<i>Telemarketer</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<i>Unresponsive (TEXT ONLY)</i>	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0%
<i>Wrong Number</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	9	0%
HSC CONTACT Method														
<i>Badlands</i>	55	37	39	33	53	47	40	27	21	32	26	29	0	0%
<i>Lake Region</i>	42	34	29	52	54	42	37	35	40	18	41	27	451	5%
<i>North Central</i>	5	5	9	9	16	15	26	29	30	29	26	43	242	3%
<i>Northeast</i>	20	9	9	18	14	14	42	30	31	29	23	25	264	3%
<i>Northwest</i>	15	5	14	8	8	4	4	6	10	10	7	19	110	1%
<i>South Central</i>	7	9	7	11	27	8	14	7	5	14	8	5	122	1%
<i>Southeast</i>	53	71	83	85	79	81	74	116	91	82	83	108	1006	12%
<i>West Central</i>	43	29	42	33	34	34	39	40	35	50	45	44	468	5%
TOTAL	240	199	232	249	285	245	276	290	263	264	259	300	3102	36%
DAY OF THE WEEK														
<i>Sunday</i>	77	63	69	54	73	77	81	63	75	91	70	80	648	7%
<i>Monday</i>	77	33	45	61	81	49	55	58	54	46	47	42	574	7%
<i>Tuesday</i>	47	40	38	39	59	40	50	61	56	46	48	50	592	7%
<i>Wednesday</i>	59	36	66	45	52	64	52	48	64	41	48	74	649	8%
<i>Thursday</i>	55	56	57	65	46	63	61	50	57	45	46	70	671	8%
<i>Friday</i>	72	62	53	88	72	71	76	78	81	68	75	81	877	10%
<i>Saturday</i>	428	335	378	393	425	414	435	448	435	377	367	449	4884	56%
TOTAL	223	175	196	219	232	218	255	227	239	232	213	243	2672	31%
<i>Female</i>	141	121	137	130	153	137	134	157	152	143	152	203	1760	20%
<i>Male</i>	64	39	44	44	39	58	46	64	43	1	2	3	447	5%
<i>Non-Binary</i>	428	335	377	393	424	413	435	448	434	376	367	449	4879	56%
AGE RANGE														
<i>0-5</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
<i>6-17</i>	5	7	15	6	9	7	5	2	13	4	6	7	86	1%
<i>18-35</i>	194	133	140	141	138	156	143	203	183	125	151	162	1869	22%
<i>36-65</i>	219	181	121	240	269	239	276	231	223	241	210	274	2724	32%
<i>66+</i>	10	14	9	6	9	11	11	12	15	6	0	6	109	1%
TOTAL	428	335	285	393	425	413	435	448	434	376	367	449	4788	55%
REFERRAL SOURCE														
<i>Self</i>	302	225	245	285	278	243	258	266	270	205	218	301	3096	36%



2022 Statistical Report
Statewide HSC

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
Case Manager	14	13	12	8	17	25	26	18	15	12	10	7	177	2%
Concerned Party	36	32	37	30	41	59	48	48	45	61	44	43	524	6%
Hospital/ER	53	39	50	42	60	50	56	62	46	50	49	36	593	7%
Law Enforcement	14	15	22	16	16	25	22	22	18	15	16	33	234	3%
School	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	5	0%
Other	9	11	11	11	13	12	24	32	41	34	28	29	255	3%
TOTAL	428	335	378	393	425	414	435	448	435	377	367	449	4884	56%

LISTENING AND SUPPORT NEEDS

Abuse/Violence - Adult	7	6	6	2	3	0	3	2	3	1	1	0	34	0%
Abuse/Violence - Child	4	3	2	0	3	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	18	0%
Abuse/Violence - Elder	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	0%
Addictions - Gambling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Addictions - Substance Use	27	5	10	13	17	7	13	12	7	13	10	11	145	2%
Addictions - Other	3	0	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	11	0%
Basic Needs/Income Security	1	6	3	3	1	2	0	2	7	3	3	2	33	0%
Bullying	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0%
Disability/Physical Health Condition	13	9	12	7	5	11	6	11	6	4	4	2	90	1%
Disaster/Post-Disaster	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0%
Legal Concerns	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0%
Mental Health - Anger	3	9	7	3	8	3	4	3	9	2	4	5	60	1%
Mental Health - Anxiety/PTSD	36	29	31	33	21	22	24	25	30	14	14	17	296	3%
Mental Health - Chronic/Severe Mental Illness	40	35	48	58	35	42	44	79	44	14	25	37	501	6%
Mental Health - Depression	45	34	39	52	30	23	36	43	42	26	28	42	440	5%
Mental Health - Eating Disorder	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	2	3	0	0	1	11	0%
Mental Health - General/Other	2	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	9	0%
Mental Health - Grief/Loss	9	8	9	6	12	3	7	15	12	4	4	5	94	1%
Mental Health - Relationships	26	34	21	28	23	22	22	31	24	12	21	29	293	3%
Mental Health - Stress	10	15	16	15	11	4	13	15	24	8	14	21	166	2%
Mental Health - Self-Injury	8	7	8	5	4	5	4	7	5	0	2	4	59	1%
Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	5	0%
TOTAL	239	213	215	230	174	147	182	252	217	103	130	180	2282	26%

TOTAL # OF 988 ND CONTACTS

	270	307	267	284	311	255	286	255	266	307	304	506	3618	42%
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CONTACT TYPE

Information	49	77	67	60	66	39	46	37	55	48	54	154	752	9%
Referral	5	1	7	3	3	8	9	11	7	8	15	20	97	1%
Listening & Support	27	100	57	76	80	65	77	76	85	103	101	156	1003	12%
Crisis Intervention	135	129	136	145	162	143	154	131	119	148	134	176	1712	20%
TOTAL	216	307	267	284	311	255	286	255	266	307	304	506	3564	41%

NON-PRODUCTIVE CALLS

Hang Up/Static	37	31	46	32	33	18	23	15	16	11	16	87	365	4%
Inappropriate	3	33	9	17	20	5	4	4	9	4	2	11	121	1%
Sexually Inappropriate	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	6	0%
Telemarketer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	0%
Abandoned calls	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	2	1	23	32	0%



**2022 Statistical Report
ALL CONTACTS**

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
TOTAL # OF CONTACTS	6,949	6,650	6,929	7,434	7,958	7,243	7,207	7,616	6,943	6,747	6,872	7,133	85,681	100%
CONTACT TYPE														
Information	2,550	2,728	2,800	3,175	3,560	3,026	2,757	3,110	2,752	2,463	2,593	2,854	34,368	40%
Referral	1,268	1,066	1,107	1,213	1,357	1,405	1,564	1,719	1,675	1,691	1,728	1,664	17,457	20%
Listening & Support	1,948	1,826	1,967	1,913	1,870	1,755	1,810	1,696	1,470	1,555	1,572	1,525	20,907	24%
Crisis Intervention	1,183	1,030	1,055	1,133	1,171	1,057	1,076	1,078	1,046	1,038	979	1,090	12,936	15%
TOTAL	6,949	6,650	6,929	7,434	7,958	7,243	7,207	7,603	6,943	6,747	6,872	7,133	85,668	100%
DAY OF THE WEEK														
Sunday	686	602	642	658	829	604	709	504	579	704	533	494	7,544	9%
Monday	1,384	1,064	976	1,154	1,521	1,167	1,043	1,526	1,035	1,347	1,188	1,091	14,496	17%
Tuesday	1,105	1,175	1,288	1,086	1,509	1,102	1,240	1,444	1,163	1,069	1,240	1,098	14,519	17%
Wednesday	1,068	1,105	1,255	1,158	1,163	1,282	1,090	1,393	1,075	983	1,295	1,097	13,964	16%
Thursday	933	960	1,216	1,123	1,164	1,385	1,051	1,084	1,323	1,019	1,038	1,390	13,686	16%
Friday	933	1,069	886	1,371	1,038	1,031	1,287	1,064	1,215	893	953	1,205	12,945	15%
Saturday	840	675	666	884	734	672	787	601	553	732	625	758	8,527	10%
TOTAL	6,949	6,650	6,929	7,434	7,958	7,243	7,207	7,616	6,943	6,747	6,872	7,133	85,681	100%
CONTACT LOCATION														
North Dakota	4,917	4,851	5,039	5,732	5,790	5,280	5,205	5,341	4,662	4,525	4,715	4,918	60,975	71%
Minnesota	1,197	992	1,094	1,046	996	920	1,186	1,255	1,219	1,220	1,144	1,177	13,446	16%
Locations outside ND + MN/Unspecified	835	807	796	656	1,172	1,043	816	1,020	1,062	1,002	1,013	1,038	11,260	13%
TOTAL	6,949	6,650	6,929	7,434	7,958	7,243	7,207	7,616	6,943	6,747	6,872	7,133	85,681	100%
GENDER														
Female	3,890	3,673	3,745	3,930	3,936	3,489	3,693	3,961	3,566	3,564	3,627	3,806	44,880	52%
Male	2,463	2,358	2,501	2,556	2,909	2,879	2,776	2,774	2,520	2,328	2,397	2,382	30,843	36%
Non-Binary	84	76	91	73	85	102	85	112	78	48	41	40	915	1%
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	2	26	46	0%
TOTAL	6,437	6,107	6,337	6,559	6,930	6,470	6,554	6,847	6,164	5,940	6,067	6,254	76,666	89%
AGE RANGE														
0-5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	0%
6-17	398	330	323	231	227	212	166	107	134	170	239	234	2,771	3%
18-35	2,190	2,079	2,150	2,113	2,259	1,985	1,819	2,180	1,963	1,827	2,006	2,014	24,585	29%
36-65	3,459	3,313	3,384	3,871	4,093	3,574	3,897	4,019	3,576	3,561	3,504	3,664	43,915	51%
66+	389	385	479	344	351	699	672	541	490	399	318	342	5,409	6%



2022 Statistical Report
ALL CONTACTS

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Totals	%
NDUS - NDSCS	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0%
NDUS - NDSU	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	6	0%
NDUS - UND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
NDUS - Valley City State	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
NDUS - Williston State	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
TOTAL	788	686	674	787	771	661	412	719	691	720	687	749	8,345	10%
CONTACT METHOD														
2-1-1 Helpline	3,911	3,472	3,743	4,066	4,338	4,045	4,229	4,479	4,126	4,169	4,137	4,105	48,820	57%
2-1-1 Texting	47	40	49	54	60	54	62	72	75	66	75	96	750	1%
BCBS Medicaid Expansion	47	42	29	18	24	26	19	17	22	13	15	16	288	0%
988 Crisis Support Line	467	522	461	437	502	434	509	477	501	514	494	506	5,824	7%
Standing Rock Suicide Lifeline	7	3	3	2	10	2	3	6	3	1	0	2	42	0%
Military Service Center	4	7	13	20	15	22	25	26	5	11	19	7	174	0%
HSC - Southeast	311	369	488	564	570	462	367	323	243	221	241	395	4,554	5%
HSC - Badlands	3	0	0	2	3	10	5	14	8	12	12	7	76	0%
HSC - North Central	48	70	33	42	44	24	18	38	29	38	27	57	468	1%
HSC - Northeast	63	52	32	51	51	48	18	28	33	30	97	132	635	1%
HSC - Northwest	67	34	24	36	20	27	37	29	34	46	52	48	454	1%
HSC - South Central	62	54	49	62	87	77	54	45	49	41	56	83	719	1%
HSC - West Central	118	152	96	195	104	124	111	127	108	87	142	126	1,490	2%
HSC - Lake Region	3	0	3	0	4	9	33	37	38	22	53	48	250	0%
RACC	277	275	182	154	207	164	180	235	234	201	208	317	2,634	3%
Region IV South	79	90	123	89	102	72	88	70	95	110	78	89	1,085	1%
NDUS - Bismarck State	19	8	8	12	25	9	11	21	14	11	4	10	152	0%
NDUS - Dakota College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
NDUS - Dickinson State	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
NDUS - Lake Region State	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
NDUS - Mayville State	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	4	0	11	0%
NDUS - Minot State	19	7	8	7	6	6	7	8	8	8	5	3	92	0%
NDUS - NDSCS	5	17	1	7	4	5	3	5	9	6	1	9	72	0%
NDUS - NDSU	67	54	47	38	36	37	26	48	53	38	45	31	520	1%
NDUS - UND	1	1	7	3	1	4	2	1	2	1	1	0	24	0%
NDUS - Valley City State	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0%
NDUS - Williston State	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Care & Support Program	1,271	1,304	1,465	1,503	1,678	1,531	1,331	1,480	1,202	947	969	943	15,624	18%
Unknown/24-hour Administrative	53	76	65	72	67	45	69	29	52	154	134	98	914	1%
TOTAL	6,949	6,650	6,929	7,434	7,958	7,243	7,207	7,616	6,943	6,747	6,869	7,128	85,673	100%

