

**YOUTH LINE
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**VILNIUS
AUGUST, 2011**

ABOUT US

Youth Line is a public initiative. Our mission is to provide emotional support for youth. We encourage young people to share their burdens and choose life.

Our volunteers provide round-the-clock help by phone and e-mail, and we also organize public meetings in towns around Lithuania.

Our help is free. The service, started 20 years ago, is kept running by the enthusiasm of its volunteers and leaders as well as donor support.

Youth Line Foundation was established in 2011 to coordinate the activities of the service and consolidate financial resources. The service itself is operated by three non-governmental organizations: Youth Psychological Aid Center, Kaunas Youth Line Association and Spiritual Help for Youth Center.

TODAY

Psychological help in large Lithuanian cities is most frequently provided by state medical centers and private practitioners. Young people tend to keep away from state establishments, while they are also unlikely to afford the help of private practice specialists. In smaller towns and villages psychological help is not available at all. Consequently, **Youth Line is the only source of free emotional support for most of the country's young people.**

A public opinion poll, carried out in 2008, has shown that four out of five people in the age group of 18 to 35 recognize Youth Line name.

Youth Line registered **2 million call attempts in 2010**. We could only answer 93 thousand of them. In all other cases the callers listened to busy signal, as all lines were in use. Therefore, more than 1.9 million calls went unanswered in 2010. We see this as the best opportunity to advance our mission.

The responsibility and costs of running Youth Line are shared by four organizations in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. The service today has no independent governing

structure. Paid staff of Youth Line is also employed in other organizations to provide themselves with adequate income. This leads to slow decision-making, difficulties in setting and achieving our goals and complicates fundraising efforts.

There are about **150 volunteers** involved in Youth Line, who passed selection and training, and who answer all calls, letters and train new volunteers. They also promote Youth Line to general public. The existence of Youth Line depends mainly on volunteers. This is why their training, motivation and comfort is vital for our success.

The suicide rate in Lithuania is almost 3 times EU average, which means that about 1000 people take their lives annually. It is a common belief that it's impossible to prevent the person from taking his life once he has made up his mind. This attitude is wrong. If more people know how to tell if someone around them is in trouble and are able to offer support, the number of suicides in Lithuania will decline.

LONG-TERM GOALS

1 Answering every call

We plan to:

- **Expand capacity of our help lines**
- **Focus Youth Line's communications towards target audiences**
- **Carry out a study on additional possibilities which could let us take more calls.**

One option to increase the number of answered calls is to make sure that more lines are open at the same time. We do not know yet how many lines should be operational for how many hours per day in order to take all calls. Finding an answer to this is at the top of our task list.

We will also look for other ways to increase the number of calls we answer and what would be the cost and effect of every one of them. That is the objective of the planned study of possibilities.

We are confident, however, that our operating hours have to be extended irrespective of other options. At the moment for entire 11 hours every day only one line is operational. That means that during those hours only one call can be taken at a time.

We plan to increase working time and number of volunteers in Kaunas and Klaipėda first.

We also aim to reduce the amount of prank calls, opening up more time for the conversations with those, who need help. To achieve this goal we will adjust our public communications strategy to reach the right audience with the right message.

2 Setting up a strong and independent organization

We plan to:

- **Ensure effective operations and competent management**
- **Ensure our financial stability**
- **Involve staff and volunteers in development of our organization**
- **Become the best known youth-supporting NGO in Lithuania**
- **Set up and develop ties with similar services in Lithuania and abroad**

We aim to create a single self-governing organization with common goals and mission. The new organization would be headquartered in Vilnius, with branches in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda.

Six employees are needed to ensure smooth operations of the organization: A head of organization, a development director, three branch coordinators and an online and phone support coordinator.

To support our operations, we intend to create cash reserve to support our operations for at least a year.

We will work to involve our staff and volunteers in the development of Youth Line organization.

We will aim to become the best known organization in our area of expertise. We will work to make the Youth Line the most reliable and transparent organization of its kind.

We will cooperate with non-governmental organizations working in Lithuania and abroad and we will apply their best practices in our activities.

3 Ensuring Youth Line volunteers' training, motivation and well-being

We plan to:

- **Provide opportunities for growth and offer support in case of need for every volunteer**
- **Update the Youth Line volunteer training program every two years.**

As we take care of the well-being of our volunteers, we will ensure that every one of them is able to share his feelings, concerns or joy with his colleagues. We will develop a single way to provide emotional support for the volunteers in all our branches.

Training and support group meetings will take place regularly, and will be accessible to all volunteers. We will hold organization-wide volunteer seminars at least several times per year.

Youth Line will make sure that every volunteer, irrespective of the city where they work, will gain the same skills and will be able to provide genuine support for callers. As the service evolves and the number of calls or e-mails increases, we will update the volunteer training program at least every two years.

4 Ensuring that in every youth community in Lithuania, there is a person able to spot and help people at risk of suicide

We plan to:

- **Organize Nebijok Kalbeti (“Don’t be afraid to talk”) meetings in every district in Lithuania.**
- **Educate young people about signs of suicide risk and how to provide emotional support.**

As we spread knowledge about the ways to help those, who are at risk of suicide, we will organize Nebijok Kalbeti meetings in every district of Lithuania.

Youth Line has accumulated considerable experience in suicide prevention and will continue its work in this area.

jaunimo linija

www.jaunimolinija.lt

CONTACT US

Paulius Skruibis, PhD

Director

Youth Line Foundation

paulius@jaunimolinija.lt

Phone: +370 686 36 979

Valentas Neviera

Development director

Youth Line Foundation

valentas@jaunimolinija.lt

Phone: +370 607 86 698