

**For Immediate Release:**

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**Contact: Anna Lemmerman, Community Resources Manager  
(845) 342-2400 x236.**

# Text 4 Teens

*"Youth are leading the transition to a fully wired and mobile nation"*

The Text 4 Teens (T4T) program is a new initiative for Orange County youth developed by Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. (MHA). MHA has been supporting the residents of Orange County for over 50 years. As with any progressive agency, programs change as the needs of our community change. After conducting an agency needs assesment, the findings indicated that youth between the ages of 12-18 were not accessing services at the expected rate . This information, coupled with the technological changes our society has experienced over the last decade, created the launching board for the Text 4 Teens initiative.

Research indicates that 1 out of every 3 teenagers has a cell phone. Text messaging has become the primary means of communication for youth today. Take a walk through the mall, go to a restaurant or stop into your local school and you will be amazed at how many teenagers are utilizing their phones. As with every generation, it is a common belief that the problems individuals are facing can be cataclysmic. However, issues such as bullying, drugs/alcohol, gangs, sexting, cyber bullying, sexual assault and eating disorders have become more prevalent than years ago. Children and teenagers today are dealing with adult issues and are often privy to their parents' problems such as the recent economic downturn. Often we hear of the financial struggles adults endure and many of the children of these adults have been adversely affected.

The above information, coupled with the fact that teenagers love to text, gave MHA reason to believe that if presented with a texting support line, such as Text 4 Teens, teenagers would consider reaching out to a trained professional. MHA is prepared to provide resources and referrals for a variety of issues such as bullying, sexting, drugs/alcohol, sexual assault, problems at home, issues on the bus, eating disorders as well

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as any other mental health related issue facing teens today. The texting line parallels the existing 24 Hour Crisis Helpline. The difference is that Text 4 Teens will enable youth to text sensitive questions that they may otherwise be embarrassed to verbally discuss over the phone. As with all of MHA's programs, a highly skilled, trained professional will be on the receiving end of the texts. All staff involved in the Text 4 Teens initiative are thoroughly trained in various mental health areas and regularly attend trainings geared toward crisis intervention and suicide.

By providing options to teens, the program empowers them to make informed decisions. MHA has a vast array of mental health resources and support groups as well as an extensive list of therapists to offer callers. When a teenager is able to ask sensitive questions, the objective and relevant information provided by responsible adults will assist a teen to make informed decisions about their lives.

Mental Health Association needs your help in spreading the word! Together we can make a difference. Take a moment to log onto our website at [www.mhaorangeny.com](http://www.mhaorangeny.com) to view the vast array of services we offer our residents. Text 4 Teens (T4T) is a wonderful new initiative; however, there are many other valuable services available at MHA. Walk-ins are welcome and our Crisis Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The toll free number is: 1-800-832-1200. Mental Health Association office is located at 73 County Highway 108, Middletown, N.Y. 10940. Office hours are from 8-5, Monday-Friday.

The Text 4 Teens program wouldn't be possible without the generous contributions from Orange County Youth Bureau and Orange County United Way.

*And remember: A community with caring is a community with hope!*

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