

What to expect When Calling the Hotline or Seeking Safe House Services

Reaching out with The Network CT May 2020

Annalisa: Hello listeners. How are you all doing out there? Hopefully staying healthy and safe. This is Annalisa, the community youth educator for The Network. Have you ever wondered what it's like to call a hotline? Have you been curious about what a safe house looks like; what a safe house looks like for those who live there. Today, we are doing an interview with our safe house manager, Jamie, to answer some of those questions for you.

One thing I'd like to point out, is that domestic violence advocacy is all about choices and options. If you are hesitant because you are not ready to leave a relationship; or you are not sure if what you are experiencing is abuse; or you have any concerns about any decisions that might be made. We want you to know that we will never force a decision on you. We believe that you know what's best for yourself but you might just need a little bit more information about what is possible and some encouragement. So we want to present you with different options that might give you the support that you need and help you the best we can. But please do not fear having choices made for you.

The only exception to that is mandated reporting laws. If someone calls and is telling us they're going to harm themselves or someone else, we need to put safety first. First because we want what's best for them. But we are confidential. We believe in making choices and you are not going to be forced into a decision.

For some people, the fear of calling the hotline or seeking out shelter might be that they don't know what to expect. So today, we hope that we can show you a little bit more of what these experiences are like, so that you might feel more ready and secure to make those phone calls yourself. If you know somebody experiencing domestic violence you might feel better about making a referral and letting them know what they can expect.

So let's learn a little bit more from Jamie, our safe house manager.

Hello Jamie. Thank you for joining us and answering some questions.

Jamie: Hi, you're welcome, glad to be here.

Annalisa: So, today the first thing we're going to talk about is what types of things can someone call a hotline for? Is there anything that hotline couldn't help with.

Jamie: Well, I'd like everyone to know that no matter what your sexual orientation, age, race, or gender is, anyone can call. You can call if you have questions about domestic violence. If you know someone experiencing domestic violence. No matter if your experience was recent or in the past. You may not think that you are even experiencing domestic violence. A lot of people don't realize it. Calling and talking to an advocate can sometimes bring to light other factors and you can realize that you can get help through our agency. All advocates are knowledgeable and either provide individuals with the appropriate resources that they're looking for. Or connect them with someone that can offer them the kind of help that they may need or be looking for. Everything is confidential when you call the hotline, unless you disclose that you are going to harm yourself or others.

Annalisa: Thank you. That sounds great. So what can someone making their first call expect.

Jamie: So when someone calls a hotline, no matter if it is your first or 21st time, what you can expect is a compassionate individual who responds to your unique situation. We don't have scripts. So you can actually speak with an actual person. A human being. You can expect to feel valued and heard and never judged.

Annalisa: That's great. So some people do call the hotline just to talk or to ask questions and not everyone needs the safe house. But if it was the best option for someone, what would happen next.

Jamie: So when we have someone seeking shelter, we do a complete intake, which is gathering some basic information. It helps us understand what the individual needs maybe. From there we'll work on a safety plan together. We'll review items which you will need in the shelter with you, what you can bring with you, and we will come up with a way to bring them into the shelter at a safe time that is also convenient for them.

Annalisa: Thanks. So what is life like in the safe house? What can I do there and what services are offered?

Jamie: So shelter life is communal living so it depends on what the situation is, but most likely you'll be sharing a room and other common areas like bathroom, dining room and living room. There are onsite washers and dryers and a small yard for young children. There is a staffer on site 24/7. They work with the clients individually every week on case management which is helping them to prepare for their next best safe place. We do provide weekly women and children's groups, assist with obtaining lost documentation, assist with registering children for school. Though that is a changing area and so we don't know what that will look like in the future and then we have Court Advocates that help with their court cases surrounding domestic violence. So really any needs they have. Just like the call to the hotline, we can assist with you and if we can't assist you, we can help you get someone right that can give you the help that

you need. The entire idea is to empower the individuals so they feel able and confident in continuing to progress forward.

Annalisa: So with those safe house options, are there services for men as well?

Jamie: Again, we welcome everyone to call the hotline and we do have shelter and counseling options for them.

Annalisa: If someone listening is unsure if the hotline is right for them, what would you recommend?

Jamie: I would recommend that you call and speak with an Advocate. You don't have to give your name right away. You can just talk and they find what you didn't even know you needed, is available to you.

Annalisa: So if someone listening would like to support the safe house, what are some things that they could do?

Jamie: I would say check out our social media pages, our website for updates on needs for clients in the community and shelter. And then if you have items that you'd like to donate, I would recommend that you call our main office to schedule a drop-off time.

Annalisa: Hey, thank you so much for talking to us and answering some questions.

Jamie: You're welcome. Thank you for your questions.

Annalisa: Those are great answers and hopefully helps you understand a little bit more about what you can expect when you call our hotline to seek our safe house services. If you have any questions that still remain or if anything seemed unclear, please feel free to leave a comment. I'd be happy to address that in an upcoming episode or to just answer you directly in the comments as well. We really want to make sure to give you the information that you need and want most, so that this can be the best educational opportunity for you. One thing that I think really stands out as important, is again remembering that anyone can call and anyone can use our services. All genders, all sexual orientations, any race, religion background, socioeconomic status. Anybody is welcome to call and we have experts that can help you through whatever situation you're going through and to help you make the best decisions for you. This is all about empowerment and choices. So hopefully this has been helpful for you and has given you a clear picture of what to expect. Thank so much for listening and I look forward to speaking with you again later in one of our next episodes. Have a great day and stay safe and healthy out there.