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By Kris Hansen

Suicidal? Instead of jumping,

call Personal Crisis Center

This may be an extreme case, but the Personal Crisis Service handles all types of calls in an attempt to "help the individual sort out his problems using his own available resources," according to the director of the program.

George Edgar said the service receives about 300 calls a month, which are patched through an answering service to the volunteer on duty. The 70 workers have their own time slot each week, and answer calls in their home or office. Personal problems

"The majority of the problems are personal. Marital and family problems are the most common, but some people are just plain lonely-they want someone to talk to," Edgar said.

Charles Lindgren, a volunteer for the service, said, "We talk to callers and find out what the problem is. We help them to understand that they can solve the crisis with their own resources, and point out the people and places that can help them"

Volunteers may also refer callers to special groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Lindgren said.

"You need to find empathy with others. If you can't relate to the call, you pass it to someone else," Lindgren said.

Edgar said, "We do have "regulars" who

call and just want to rap. It's part of the service we provide."

A caller is looking for help, Lindgren said, explaining that suicides are the scariest type.

"We try to find out why, what it is that happened today that precipitates the threat. Usually it takes two or three incidents. Three is usually the trigger. Then we find some reason for them to live-a spouse, someone who loves them.'

Lindgren said the volunteer usually goes on to help the caller solve the current problem.

Edgar added that the service can contact the police department to help with a suicide if the person's name or location is

"The problem is that this (calling the police) becomes a value judgment. Even if the caller is angry, we'd still try to save them, but we only call the police as a last resort," Edgar said.

Volunteer training

Volunteers go through a training program before they begin work, Edgar said. The program, begins Sept. 18 and meets for 10, two-hour sessions. The group discusses procedures for handling calls, active listening, feedback, and concentrated information on loneliness, drugs, family problems and other areas.

"To be a volunteer, you must go through the program, but those who are just interested in the skills don't have to go on the line," Edgar commented. "We don't have as many people as we'd likewe're always in need of more."

The volunteers also are organized into teams which meet every month to share calls they have handled and listen to speakers from referral agencies.



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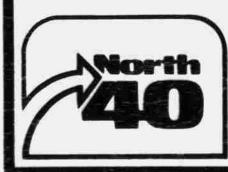
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