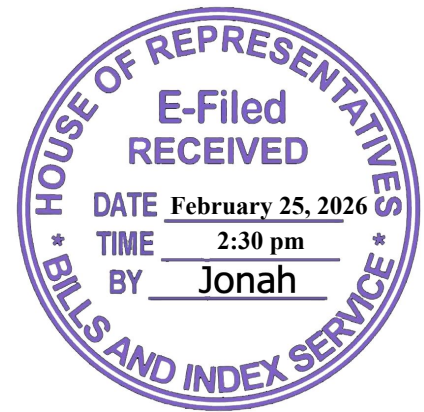


TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE BILL NO. 8084

Introduced by Rep. CARMELO G. LAZATIN, JR.

AN ACT
MANDATING LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS TO ESTABLISH AND OPERATE A
TWENTY-FOUR (24)-HOUR, SEVEN (7)-DAY (24/7) LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH AND
SUICIDE CRISIS HOTLINE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Mental health issues are a growing public health concern that affect individuals regardless of age, environment, social status, race, and gender. While mental health issues such as anxiety and depression are most commonly and significantly experienced by those who are financially disadvantaged, there is no denying that such mental conditions are similarly experienced by the affluent, the working sector, and the young and old.

More often than not, these conditions lead to suicide risks especially when counselling and suicide prevention measures are not available or accessible.

Suicide is a serious public health concern that needs attention with the increasing cases especially among the youth. In the Philippines, “an estimated seven (7) to twelve (12) million Filipinos are affected by various conditions, particularly extreme anxiety and depression.”¹

Reported cases are increasing by about two (2) percent, with a significant portion coming from youth, especially those aged 15 to 19.²

¹ Mental health and ‘Project Stigma’. Available at <https://www.pna.gov.ph/opinion/pieces/1072-mental-health-and-project-stigma>

² Ibid

Key trends have also been observed in recent years in terms of youth impact, surging crisis calls, holiday distress and suicide risks.

An article “Suicide among the youth and school-based suicide prevention: Exemplar and reflections from the Philippines” written by Rowalt Alibudbud and published online, cited that an estimated 700,000 individuals annually commit suicide worldwide. In 2019, it was noted that it was the fourth leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 29-year-olds across the globe.

In the Philippines, the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) Crisis hotline was launched in May 2019, to provide a 24-hour counselling for individuals who are at risk of suicide and those with mental health conditions. This, along with the Hopeline PH (*Natasha Goulbourn Foundation*), In Touch Community Services, Philippine Mental Health Association (PMHA), and Tawag Paglaum offer free and available mental health services and counselling services.

This proposed measure is consistent with Republic Act No. 11036, or the “Mental Health Act,” which provides that mental health services shall include suicide intervention, prevention, and response strategies, with particular attention to the concerns of the youth, and that twenty-four seven (24/7) hotlines to provide assistance, especially to individuals at risk of committing suicide, shall be set up and existing hotlines strengthened.

Clearly, mental health resources in the Philippines are not enough to cater to individuals who may be suffering from mental health issues. In fact, it was observed that more mental health calls are received during the holiday season. The DOH Mental Health Hotline at the National Center for Mental Health recorded 961 calls from December 21, 2025 to January 2, 2026.³

While it may be challenging for adults to seek help and intervention for their mental illnesses, it may even be more difficult for the younger generations to understand their mental conditions, much less ask for help.

A total of 404 young students in various parts of the country took their own lives and 2,147 others attempted suicide during Academic Year 2021-2022 when most schools were still shuttered because of pandemic.⁴

As such, this proposed legislation mandates the establishment of local mental health hotlines by LGUs in coordination with local hospitals, universities, colleges including state universities and colleges (SUCs), so that free and immediate assistance may be provided and accessed by individuals, students and their respective relatives, within their localities.

³ DOH logs nearly 1,000 holiday calls over mental health issues. By Luisa Cabato. Available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2162572/doh-logs-nearly-1000-holiday-calls-over-mental-health-issues>

⁴ Mental health crisis: 404 student suicides in 2021-22 available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1723742/mental-health-crisis-404-student-suicides-in-2021-22>

Moreover, the Mental Health Act recognizes that every LGU and academic institution shall create their own mental health program in accordance with national guidelines and shall coordinate with concerned government agencies and the private sector – supporting the establishment of local hotlines integrated with hospitals and campus-based access and referral mechanisms.

The reported cases of suicide and people suffering from mental health problems are far too many to be overlooked. Now is the time for the government to make significant strides in mental health investments. Hence, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


CARMELO G. LAZATIN, JR.



Republic of the Philippines

House of Representatives

Quezon City, Metro Manila

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AN ACT

**MANDATING LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS TO ESTABLISH AND OPERATE
A TWENTY-FOUR (24)-HOUR, SEVEN (7)-DAY (24/7) LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH
AND SUICIDE CRISIS HOTLINE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress
assembled:*

1 Section 1. *Short Title.*- This Act shall be known as the “Local Mental Health and Suicide
2 Prevention Hotline Act.”

3 Section 2. *Declaration of Policy*- Article II, Section 11 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution
4 provides that the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for
5 human rights. Consistent with Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the “Mental Health
6 Act,” it is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote and protect the right of every Filipino
7 to mental health and to ensure access to timely crisis intervention, counseling, and referral services,
8 including during suicide crises.

9 Hence, in furtherance of this policy, and pursuant to the mandate that twenty-four -seven
10 (24) hours, seven (7) days a week (24/7) hotlines to provide assistance especially to individuals at
11 risk of committing suicide shall be set up and existing hotlines strengthened, this Act requires
12 every LGU to establish a local mental health and suicide crisis prevention hotline integrated with

community based mental health services in accordance with the standards of the Department of Health.

Section 3. *Establishment of Local Mental Health and Suicide Crisis Prevention Hotline.* – All Local Government Units (LGUs) shall establish and operate a Local Mental Health and Suicide Crisis Prevention Hotline within their respective jurisdictions.

The hotline shall be accessible twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week (24/7) and shall be managed by trained hotline responders designated by the LGU, including social workers assigned by LGUs in local hospitals and registered guidance counselors and/or other qualified mental health personnel in higher educational institutions, including state universities, colleges (SUCs).

Each call and messages received through the hotline shall be treated as an emergency service and shall be accessible free of charge, subject to coordination with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and telecommunications entities, consistent with applicable laws, rules and regulations.

Section 4. *Lead Agency; Coordination.* - The LGU shall initiate the establishment and operation of hotline through the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO) and the City/Municipal Health Office or such other appropriate local health office, as applicable.

The LGU shall coordinate with local hospitals, health facilities, and educational institutions within its jurisdiction to establish and implement referral pathways for crisis intervention, emergency response, follow-through, and continuity of care, including appropriate handoff procedures.

All local hotline operations, personnel training and referral protocols shall be in accordance with standards and guidelines to be determined by the Department of Health (DOH), in consultation with stakeholders, consistent with the national mental health policy. The DOH shall provide technical assistance for effective implementation.

Consistent with devolution of health services under the Local Government Code, LGUs shall implement and deliver the hotline services within their respective jurisdictions in accordance with the standards and criteria of the DOH.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), including state universities and colleges, operating within the LGU shall coordinate with the Local Hotline Center for referral pathways, crisis response protocols, and after-hours call-routing to ensure 24/7 coverage, consistent with applicable national mental health standards and guidelines.

1 For full integration and access to services, the LGU shall coordinate with the DOH,
2 Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), NTC, DICT, the Philippine National Police
3 (PNP), the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
4 Office (LDRRMO), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and other relevant agencies.

5
6 Section 5. *Functions of the Hotline.* - The Hotline shall:

- 7
8 a) Provide immediate crisis counselling, intervention and suicide prevention services;
9 b) Refer and connect callers to licensed mental health professionals, hospitals and
10 crisis centers;
11 c) Coordinate, when necessary, with appropriate emergency responders, including the
12 PNP, BFP, emergency medical services, and the LDRRMO, for urgent emergencies
13 involving imminent harm;
14 d) Maintain referral pathways to community-based mental health programs and
15 treatment facilities;
16 e) Collect and safekeep anonymized data as basis for policy development and service
17 improvement; and
18 f) Refer individuals or family to the LSWDO for possible coverage under the
19 Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) Program, if the calls or cases
20 received is financial in nature;

21
22 Section 6. *Staffing and Capacity Building.* The LGU, in coordination with the DOH, shall
23 designate trained hotline responders and establish a referral network of licensed psychologists,
24 psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, other licensed mental health professionals, registered guidance
25 counselors and trained and qualified personnel to manage and support hotline operations.

26
27 Capacity building, reorientation, and training shall be undertaken in close coordination
28 with mental health facilities, academic institutions, and other stakeholders, with emphasis on
29 evidence-based, human rights-oriented, and community and public health aspects of mental health
30 services.

31
32 Section 7. *Confidentiality and Data Protection.* – All calls, messages, and records handled
33 by the hotline shall be treated as confidential. Information may be disclosed only with the consent
34 of the service user, or when necessary to address an imminent risk of harm to the caller or other
35 persons, or as otherwise authorized by law or the implementing rules and regulations. Any
36 disclosure under the imminent-risk exception shall be limited to the minimum necessary
37 information for emergency coordination.

38
39 Section 8. *Funding.* The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall
40 be charged against the funds of the respective LGUs. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary

1 for the full and continuous operation of the Hotline shall be included in the annual budget of each
2 LGU.

3
4 The DSWD shall allocate sufficient funds under AICS program to accommodate referrals
5 from the Hotline, ensuring that individuals struggling with financial crisis as assessed by the social
6 case worker may be provided with appropriate assistance.

7
8 Section 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the
9 effectivity of this Act, the DOH, DICT, DILG, NTC, DSWD, CHED, and other relevant
10 stakeholders shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this
11 Act.

12
13 Section 10. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or
14 invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

15
16 Section 11. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, or parts
17 therefor, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified
18 accordingly.

19
20 Section 12. *Effectivity Clause.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
21 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

22
23 Approved,