



My name is Carrie Johnson. I am the program director for the peer support connection Minnesota's Statewide warmline. I have been with the warmline since 2016 and have seen it grow to nearly 26,000 calls this last year. Continuously we receive feedback from our callers about how valuable it is to have a peer on the other line. That "there is no replacement" for what the warmline does. There is something incredibly empowering about speaking with a person who has walked a similar road and learned how to become not only stronger, but now able to help others. Our warmline operators also talk about the best way for them to stay in recovery is by helping others. Taking their incredibly hard journey and turning it into something beautiful by walking alongside someone else.

We have been a source of support for many people who would have had nowhere else to turn to except for going to the ER or calling the police. Both of those options they knew that they didn't need, but before warmlines they didn't know where else to turn. What they needed was a listening ear, a voice of hope. Someone to say I have made it through and you will too.

I escaped an abusive relationship and there were times that I had to call the police. The importance of having law enforcement available to arrive on the scene is critical in saving lives. An incredible amount of time and money is used when individuals are reaching out to the ER and the police for someone to talk to, instead of giving a quick call to the warmline for someone to be there through the struggles that they are facing.

The warmline is for everyone no matter who they are. Of the nearly 26,000 callers last year, 5,389 self-identified as African/African American, Native American, Asian/Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQ+, and Rural. There were even more diverse communities, cultures, and groups that were represented on a smaller scale.

Because we allow our callers to remain anonymous and we don't require a diagnosis there are many professionals that call us as well. People who are on the frontlines encountering traumatic events can use our warmline to stay mentally well.

Investing into Wellness in the Woods not only helps keep peers in recovery, helps keep others in recovery, but also can help to keep everyone mentally well to build a stronger Minnesota.