

Annual Report

2024-2025



Table of Contents

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP	3
<hr/>	
OUR IMPACT	4
<hr/>	
PREVENTING	6
<hr/>	
RESPONDING	8
<hr/>	
HEALING	9
<hr/>	
FINANCIALS	10
<hr/>	
IMPACT OF YOUR SUPPORT	11
<hr/>	
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS	12
<hr/>	
BOARD OF DIRECTORS	14
<hr/>	
WAYS TO SUPPORT	15
<hr/>	

Letter from Leadership

Dear Friends,

There's a sense of relief, and even optimism, as we draft this year's letter. The 2024–2025 year was one of significant transition for The Rowan Center. We said farewell to our extraordinary CEO, Mary Flynn, whose leadership transformed this organization into a bigger, bolder, and more impactful version of itself.

With change comes uncertainty, but this transition has been smooth. That matters, because the world around us has been anything but.

The funding environment shifted dramatically under a new administration, leaving many nonprofits, including ours, facing serious uncertainty. In response, The Rowan Center acted decisively. We reduced expenses, communicated transparently with staff, stayed focused on our mission, and doubled down on funding opportunities. While some of our funding streams did take a hit, we ended the year on solid financial footing. That's thanks to the incredible support of a community that understood the stakes and rallied around us.

We're especially grateful because our communities needed us.

We saw an increase in hotline calls and in requests for crisis counseling. More survivors asked for accompaniments to the police station or courtroom. More parents reached out for education, and they asked for it earlier, for younger children. Their fears are real and justified. As awareness grows around issues like sextortion, sex trafficking, and the harmful online content reaching children, the urgency of our work becomes impossible to ignore.

Did you know research shows that 100% of Connecticut 4th and 5th graders have been exposed to inappropriate sexual images, and 70% of 3rd graders have, too? These are children as young as eight encountering content that many adults struggle to process. This exposure is doing real harm to our young people, robbing them of innocence and childhood.

Tragically, local communities have already experienced heartbreaking losses as sextortion has risen. If you're a parent and you're not yet familiar with what sextortion is, please make it a priority to learn about it and talk with your kids. The threat is real, and silence can be dangerous.

In response to these growing concerns, we're thrilled to share that, with the support of a \$100,000 grant from IMPACT Fairfield County, we are launching a vital new resource for parents: KidSafeHQ. This website, set to launch in early 2026, will equip caregivers with the tools and knowledge they need to protect children in today's digital world. We can't wait to share it with you, so please stay tuned.

This year, we also celebrated the first anniversary of The Trauma Recovery Clinic. In just one year, our clinicians provided over 1,200 sessions to survivors, and that number only tells part of the story. Thanks to the generosity of several key donors, we've doubled the size of the clinic and launched an innovative new initiative: the Trauma Fellowship Program.

This program is designed with the future in mind, not just for The Rowan Center, but for the broader community. Each Trauma Fellow will commit to a three-year, intensive training program grounded in trauma-informed care and best practices. It's a long-term investment in healing, capacity-building, equity, and hope.

As we reflect on the past year, we continue to focus on all that is good: our team, who works around the clock to fulfill our mission; our board, who never fails to show up; our clients, who entrust us during the most difficult moments of their lives; our community partners, who believe in collaboration; and of course, our supporters and donors, whose generosity makes everything possible.

Thank you for another year of caring, of healing, and of dreaming for a better future, especially for our children. Together, we are building a future where every child is safer, every survivor is supported, and every community is stronger.

With gratitude,

Sharon Walker Epps
CEO

Jen Barnard
Board Chair



Our Impact



8,244
SERVICES
PROVIDED



4,093
HOTLINE
CALLS



74
CLIENT
ACCOMPANIMENTS



723
COUNSELING
CLIENTS



68%
INCREASE IN
OUTREACH
ACTIVITIES



224
CLIENT
REFERRALS





Preventing

PREVENTION EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Preventing sexual assault, abuse, and exploitation means stopping harm before it begins. At The Rowan Center, we prioritize prevention so that more children and community members can grow up and live in a society free from sexual violence.

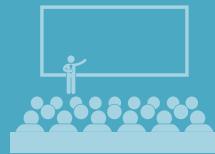
Our Education Department is dedicated to keeping kids and our communities safe. Through comprehensive community education and outreach programs, we delivered **795 presentations this year, partnering with 45 schools, community agencies, and local colleges including UConn and CT State Community College Norwalk. Together, we reached over 22,000 community members** which included students (from kindergarten through college), educators, healthcare professionals, mental health clinicians, parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders.

By equipping both children and adults with practical knowledge and tools—how to recognize the signs of sexual violence and grooming, respond to disclosures, and access support services—The Rowan Center is helping to build a culture rooted in empathy, safety, and accountability.



22,100

**EDUCATED
THROUGH...**



795

PRESENTATIONS IN...



45

SCHOOLS

Preventing

STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

This year, The Rowan Center's Student Advisory Board **grew to include 28 engaged and inspiring students from 12 local high schools**. These young leaders are more than just volunteers: they are true ambassadors for our mission, using their voices, talents, and creativity to raise awareness and support survivors in their communities.

Throughout the year, the Student Advisory Board led several impactful initiatives. They organized a successful "Learn Before You Leave" event in Greenwich, providing young people with tools and knowledge about consent and healthy relationships before heading off to college. They secured a grant to assemble and deliver hospital support bags for survivors undergoing forensic exams which is an act of compassion and solidarity that was felt deeply by those receiving care. During Sexual Assault Awareness Month, students created heartfelt "Cards of Hope" for survivors, bringing messages of encouragement, resilience, and healing.

In addition to these efforts, the students actively participated in school-based tabling events, coordinated fundraising campaigns, and even penned editorials in their school newspapers to educate peers and spark critical conversations. Their dedication, empathy, and initiative demonstrate that the next generation is ready to lead the way in building safer, more informed communities.

The Rowan Center is proud that these young advocates are part of our organization and grateful for the energy, perspective, and hope they bring to our work.



In May 2025, The Rowan Center was awarded \$100,000 to begin the development of KidSafeHQ, an innovative online portal designed to equip parents with the knowledge and tools to protect their children from sexual abuse, online exploitation, and other emerging threats.

KidSafeHQ will serve as a one-stop resource for parents and caregivers, offering educational materials, interactive tools, and age-appropriate strategies tailored to each stage of childhood development. The platform will initially focus on parents of elementary-aged children, with expansion planned for middle and high school audiences in later phases.

By empowering parents with the most current, most relevant information and practical guidance, KidSafeHQ will strengthen families' ability to protect their children and help foster safer, more informed communities across Connecticut. The site is scheduled to launch in early 2026.



Responding

24/7 HOTLINE AND ACCOMPANIMENTS

This year was one of remarkable growth and impact for The Rowan Center's Advocacy Department. In response to a sharp rise in demand, we trained three new cohorts of certified sexual violence advocates and answered a record 4,093 hotline calls. Our advocates provided 74 hospital accompaniments across our three partner hospitals and offered crucial support to survivors during law enforcement interviews and court proceedings.

As justice-related cases grew increasingly complex, we established a vital partnership with a pro bono attorney, ensuring survivors have access to high-quality legal counsel. In one powerful case, this collaboration led to a survivor's successful outcome in court and **more than 190 hours of dedicated legal support**. We also strengthened our relationships with local law enforcement, creating small, easy-to-carry palm cards to help officers make timely and compassionate referrals.

Compared to the previous year, our client numbers **rose by 7%**, and advocacy-related encounters **increased by 30%**. In total, **The Rowan Center provided 8,244 services to our communities** across lower Fairfield County. These numbers reflect more than operational growth—they represent real people receiving the support, care, and advocacy they need to move forward in their healing journey.



1,141

SESSIONS FOR...



69

CLIENTS IN
THE TRAUMA
RECOVERY CLINIC



Healing

CRISIS COUNSELING

This past year, The Rowan Center's Counseling Department expanded healing opportunities for younger children by lowering our age of eligibility from 14 to 10. It was a deliberate step toward earlier intervention, grounded in what we've seen children and families need after trauma, and a commitment to meet those needs with compassion and skill.

To support this shift, we clarified how we talk about our services and who they're for. We refined our language, updated outreach materials, and strengthened connections with referral partners, especially those supporting children and non-offending caregivers. Internally, we cross-trained staff to complete intakes, streamlined our response process to reduce wait times, and welcomed a part-time bilingual counselor. This expanded access for Spanish-speaking clients and allowed us to offer evening and weekend sessions that better fit families' schedules.

The results were significant: **counseling inquiries rose by more than 20%**, and **referrals involving youth and their caregivers, particularly those connected to DCF, increased by 140%**. More than **793 clients** were connected with counselors, strengthening timely access to care. Beyond the numbers, we remain focused on what matters most: ensuring every child, caregiver, and survivor who comes to us finds safety, understanding, and support.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to providing trauma-informed, culturally responsive care that meets people where they are. Healing isn't linear, but with thoughtful strategy and deep compassion, we will continue evolving alongside our community and walking this path with those who need us most.



THE TRAUMA RECOVERY CLINIC

This year marked an exciting milestone with the successful first year of The Rowan Center's Trauma Recovery Clinic. We enrolled our first client on July 1, 2024, and by June 30, 2025, our clinicians had provided **1,141 therapy sessions** to **69 clients** which is a remarkable accomplishment in the Clinic's first year of operation.

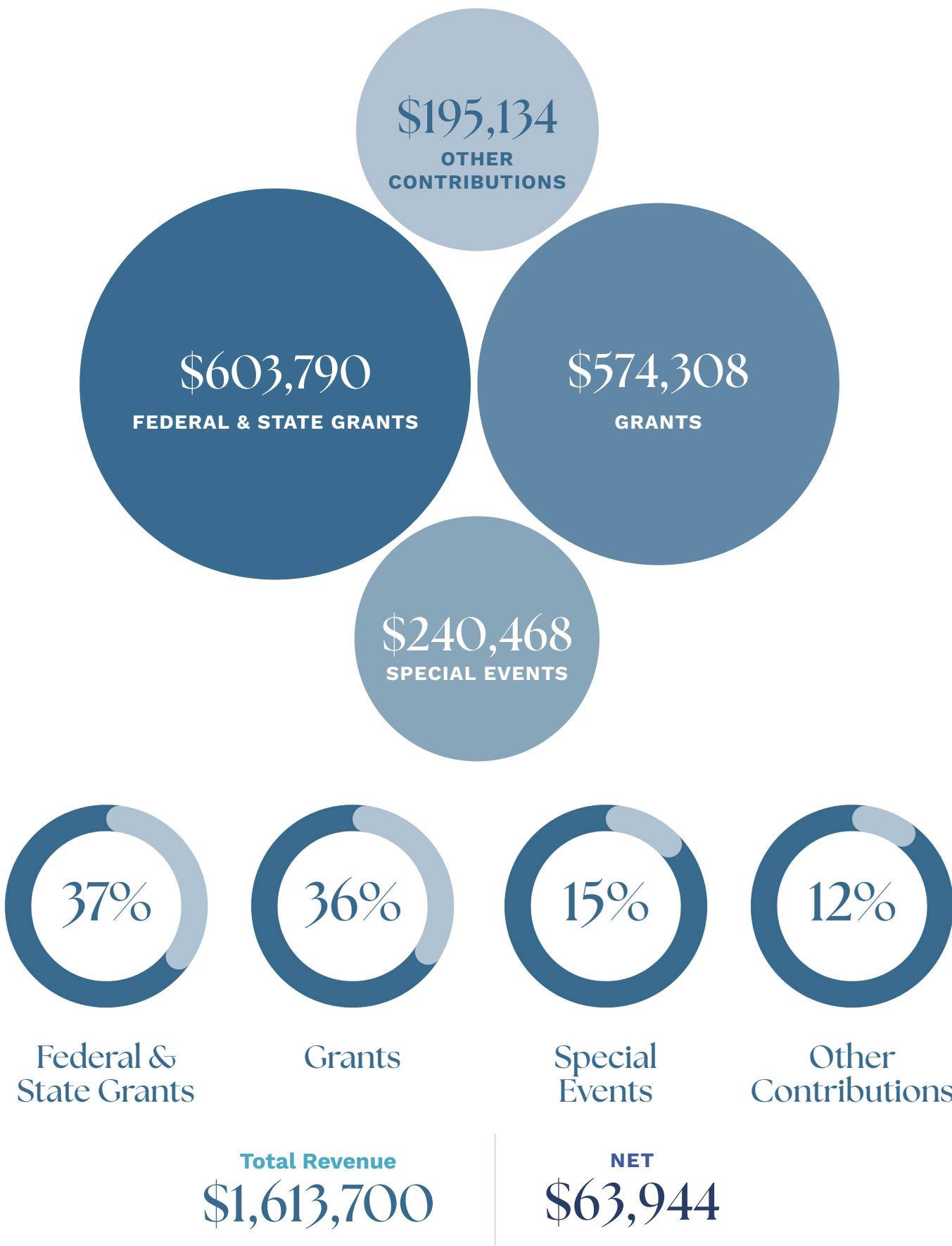
We also launched the Rowan Center Trauma Fellowship in the Spring. This three-year, post-Master's fellowship reflects our commitment to developing the next generation of trauma-informed therapists and clinical supervisors in Connecticut. We proudly welcomed our first two Trauma Fellows this summer and look forward to supporting their growth over the next three years.

All therapists in the Trauma Recovery Clinic are trained in EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), a highly effective, evidence-based therapy that has been transformative for many of our clients. Access to this level of specialized care has been life-changing for survivors who may not otherwise have the means to receive it.

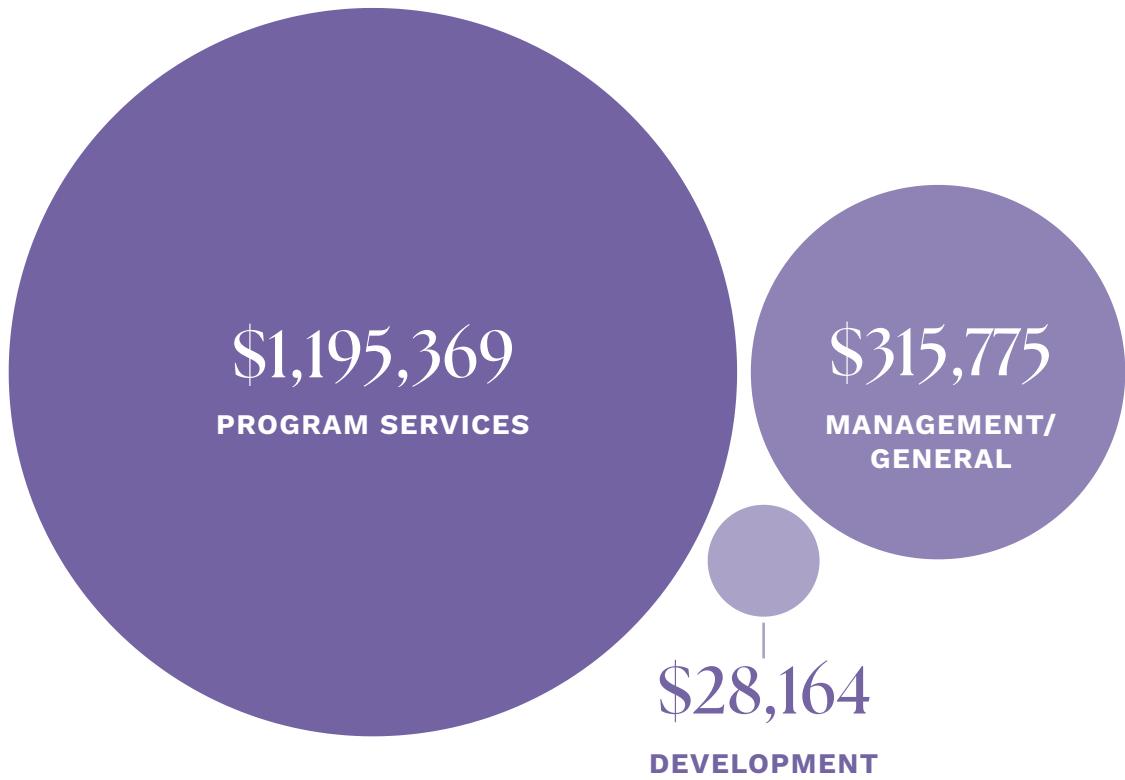
The Trauma Recovery Clinic represents the heart of our mission: offering compassionate, expert care to those healing from trauma, and ensuring that every person who walks through our doors has access to the highest standard of therapeutic support.



Income



Operating Expenses



Program
Services

Management/
General

Development

TOTAL EXPENSES	NET
\$1,539,308	\$63,944

The Impact of Your Support

“When I first came to The Rowan Center, I couldn’t even say out loud what had happened to me. I was angry, ashamed, and convinced I’d never feel normal again. My therapist helped me find language for my pain and gave me tools to rebuild my life, piece by piece. For the first time, I started to believe that healing wasn’t just for other people—it was possible for me too. The Rowan Center gave me back my hope.”

“Before The Rowan Center came to our school, I didn’t really understand what consent meant or how important boundaries were. Their educators made it easy to talk about really hard stuff without judgment. Now I see my friends checking in with each other, using the language we learned. It’s like they gave us a new vocabulary for respect. I wish every student could have that kind of class—it changes how you see the world.”



“I’ve been teaching health for over twenty years, and I’ve never seen a program connect with students the way The Rowan Center’s does. Their educators speak to young people with honesty, respect, and compassion. They create a space where students actually want to ask questions and learn. After every visit, I have students who tell me it’s the first time they’ve really understood what a healthy relationship looks like. That’s the impact you can see immediately.”

“It was two in the morning when I finally made the call. I didn’t know what I needed—I just knew I couldn’t keep everything inside anymore. The advocate on the other end of the line didn’t rush me or ask for details I wasn’t ready to share. She just listened, gently, until I could breathe again. That call changed everything. It reminded me that I wasn’t broken, and that there were people ready to help me take the next step.”

“In my work as a detective, I’ve partnered with The Rowan Center’s advocates many times. What stands out most is their ability to meet survivors in their darkest moments—with patience, empathy, and deep professionalism. They help survivors feel safe enough to speak, which helps us do our jobs better too. They’re not just providing a service—they’re transforming how our entire community responds to sexual violence.”

Thank You to Our Donors

\$100,000+

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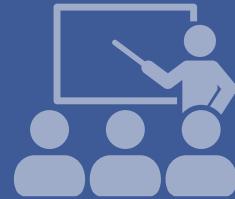
Gayle Weinstein, Former Chair of the Board

Rebecca Wilson, LMSW

Ways to Support Our Mission

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS ADVOCATE TRAINING

Our 40-hour certification program provides a unique opportunity to learn from The Rowan Center's team of experts and gain essential skills to support survivors. This comprehensive training includes interactive modules, readings, videos, guest speakers, and hands-on experiences, such as visits to a hospital emergency room and a local police station. Participants engage in roleplays, group work, and individual exercises to build confidence and advocacy skills.



Upon completion, you'll be fully prepared to volunteer as a Sexual Assault Crisis Advocate, providing critical support on our 24/7 crisis hotline. For more details on our next training session, contact Raquel Lopez, Crisis Advocate Programs Administrator, at rlopez@therowancenter.org.



ATTEND EVENTS

Joining events in support of The Rowan Center is a powerful way to help survivors of sexual violence and prevent future harm. Our events not only raise vital funds for counseling, advocacy, and education programs, but they also bring together individuals who share our mission. By participating, you actively contribute to expanding services, supporting survivors, and raising awareness to build a safer, more informed community.



EMPLOYEE MATCH

Make your gift go even further by exploring your company's corporate match program. Many companies match donations to eligible nonprofits dollar-for-dollar—or more—allowing you to significantly amplify your contribution. It's an easy way to double or even triple the difference you're making. Don't miss out on this powerful opportunity to maximize the impact of your support for The Rowan Center.



GIVE

You can create a community of healing, hope, and action for everyone. By investing in prevention education, advocating for victims and survivors, and ensuring access to counseling and vital resources, you can make a lasting impact on the lives of those affected by sexual violence.

Thank You to Our Community Partners



Mission

The Rowan Center works to prevent sexual violence, respond to crises, and support adult and youth survivors on their path to healing from trauma.

Vision

We envision a future where trauma and abuse are neither normalized nor hidden, where children are safe, communities are educated and prevent harm, and survivors everywhere have equitable access to healing and justice.

Statement of Inclusion

The Rowan Center serves all survivors of sexual violence in our eight-town region, regardless of age, sex, immigration status, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or religious or spiritual beliefs.

Contact Us



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24-HOUR CRISIS HOTLINES:
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