



Georgia
Department of
Behavioral Health
& Developmental
Disabilities

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

my GCAL Text/Chat Information for Parents

What is GCAL?

The Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL) is a free crisis and access line funded by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities that has been operating since 2006. Until now, GCAL has exclusively responded to the needs of Georgians via phone. This is the first time the GCAL service has been available via text and chat.

What is the my GCAL app?

The app is simply a connection to the Georgia Crisis & Access Line. It allows young people in Georgia to choose how they want to reach out to us either through text, chat or phone call.

How does my student use Text/Chat?

Your student may download the **My GCAL** app through Google Play for android systems or the App Store for iOS systems.

Can GCAL be accessed without the app?

GCAL is always available by phone without using the app.



Who will be texting or chatting with my child, adolescent or young adult when they use the app?

A trained GCAL staff member will text, chat or speak with your young person when they use **My GCAL** to help them with many things that youth and adolescents have to deal with in their lives. **My GCAL** was created to provide a warm and supportive outlet for youth and adolescents to talk or to reach out in the event of a behavioral health crisis. No topic is too big or too small. Our team consists of trained care consultants and licensed clinicians 24/7.

What information is needed from my child, adolescent or young adult when they use the app?

Your student will be asked to tell the GCAL staff member what they want to talk about. They will also be asked to provide their name, phone number, school name, and home zip code. But, if the young person does not want to provide that information, it is okay. We ask for that information because it helps us better identify how to support them, but we don't require it because it could be a barrier that prevents some individuals from reaching out.

Will anyone automatically contact me about my young person's text and chat?

No. Any information related to the young person must be requested and released to the parent/guardian. In many cases children and adolescents just want to talk about their concerns without others knowing. However, we do encourage children and adolescents to allow us to speak with parents/guardians when we have determined that parental support is needed to continue the conversation. Keep in mind that many of our contacts are anonymous, so it is sometimes difficult to tie documentation to the conversation.

However, if we become aware that your child or adolescent is in crisis and we are able to get enough information to identify you, we will make an effort to contact you, so that you can provide immediate support and consent for any ongoing services that may be needed.

What about parental consent?

Crisis lines are designed to provide immediate assistance in the event of a behavioral health emergency and sometimes information for individuals who may just have a question about a behavioral health challenge. Crisis lines do not provide active treatment, so consent is not necessary. Though the professional intervening will attempt to gain identifying information if at all possible, text, chats and phone calls are often handled anonymously. This is sometimes the only way individuals who are too

fearful about reaching out for help feel comfortable starting the conversation. This is a confidential service except in situations where we believe safety is compromised.

What if the student needs help but doesn't want help?

Our team is highly trained to work with individuals on active engagement and collaborative problem solving which often results in connection to care even for individuals who may begin the conversation unwilling to give any information at all.

If the GCAL professional answering texts, chats, or calls believes that a connection to treatment is necessary, we will work in conjunction with the young person and parents/guardians to facilitate the connection to care.

Will you intervene if there is concern about safety?

Absolutely! If our clinical staff believes there is imminent risk to anyone using our services or those around them, we work diligently to get rescue care to them 24/7/365. Our goal is to work collaboratively with the individual and those who care for them to resolve crises or intervene before there is a crisis. If there is a need for immediate crisis intervention, our team is trained to do everything possible to intervene.

What if my child is thinking about harming him/herself or acting on suicidal thoughts?

The GCAL staff member that is texting or chatting or speaking to your child on the phone will talk with them about getting others to help. Others that can help may be parents or guardians, school counselors, officers, emergency medical services, or clinicians that can come to their home or school when appropriate.

Can I use Text/Chat for concerns about my child?

My GCAL was created for young Georgians to have access to a professional to speak with freely at any time. As a parent/guardian, if you have concerns about your young person, please contact the **Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) at 1-800-715-4225**, available 24/7/365. We are always a resource for you. We need to keep the text and chat lines open for those in crisis.

How do I get more information?

If you are not needing immediate crisis assistance but have questions specifically about how the app functions or would like promotional materials, please call our business line at **404-420-3202**, and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.