

Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line

2005 ANNUAL REPORT



Manitoba
Farm & Rural
Stress Line



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1-866-367-3276

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a message from the program manager

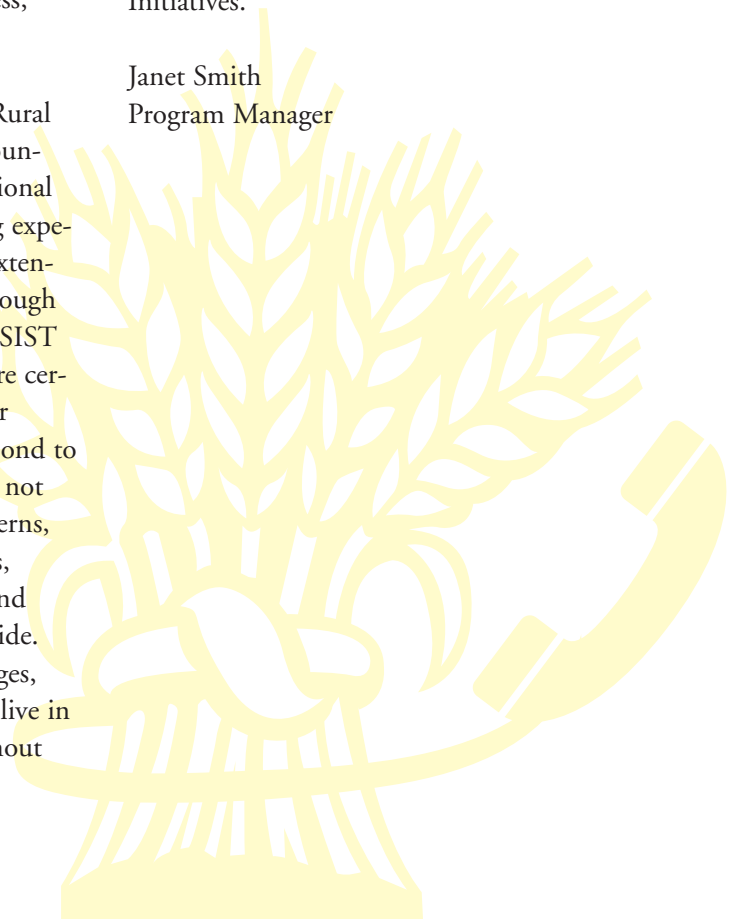
2005 marked the 5th anniversary for Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line. The MFRSL provides quality *information, support, counselling, and referrals to farm families and rural Manitobans*. Our primary service is our toll free telephone support line, which is open Monday to Friday from 10 AM to 9 PM and Saturdays 12 noon to 5 PM. We also operate an Email Helpline, interactive Website (including a new Youth site), and extensive Rural Database (also located on our web site). We offer workshops and informational displays throughout the province on a wide range of topics including Stress management, Communication, and Responding to Farmers In Distress, among others.

The heart of the Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line is its dedicated team of counselors, all of whom have both professional counselling backgrounds and farming experience. All counselors have received extensive training in crisis intervention through Klinik Community Health Centre, ASIST (suicide intervention) training, and are certified by the American Association for Suicidology. MFRSL counselors respond to a wide variety of issues including but not limited to: farm stress, financial concerns, personal problems, relationship issues, addictions, domestic violence, grief and loss, mental health concerns and suicide. Our service is open to people of all ages, both farming and non-farming, who live in rural or remote communities throughout the province.

As rural Manitoba adapts to rapidly changing social and economic times the Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line continues to offer an important and specialized mental health service run by and for farm and rural people. We look forward to continuing to provide quality programming and service delivery for farmers and other rural Manitobans in the years to come.

Thanks to our dedicated staff, our Advisory Committee for their solid direction, and to the Department of Health for their generous funding of our program. We also wish to recognize the support and cooperation of Manitoba Agriculture, Food & Rural Initiatives.

Janet Smith
Program Manager



a message from the advisory committee chairperson

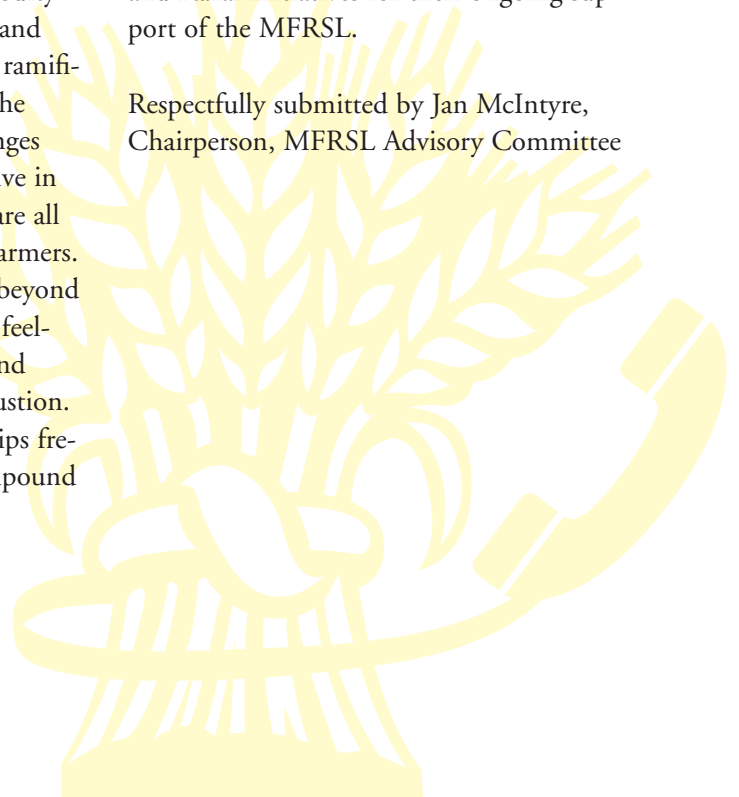
The Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line Advisory Committee represents a broad range of constituencies from agricultural, health and rural community groups. Membership currently includes those representing Manitoba Health, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI), Klinik Community Centre, the Ecumenical Working Group, the Women's Institute, Assiniboine RHA, Keystone Agricultural Producers, The Manitoba Association of Agricultural Societies and the Southwest Farm Women's Network. We meet 3 times per year to advise on matters relevant to rural and agricultural communities, with our goal being to help enhance MFRSL service delivery to these areas.

Rural and agricultural communities are enduring difficult times. Low commodity prices, weather challenges last spring and summer, and the continued financial ramifications on livestock producers from the BSE crisis are but some of the challenges that are being faced. Whether they live in town or on the farm, rural residents are all affected by the poor cash returns of farmers. As people strive to cope with factors beyond their control, they often are left with feelings of vulnerability, loss, isolation, and physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. Through all of this, family relationships frequently suffer, serving to further compound the pain people feel.

The Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line offers help to those caught up in these stresses. Our toll free confidential phone line counseling service and our email helpline offer understanding and direct help to those seeking assistance, and our outreach services educate individuals and families on stress management, assisting people to deal with the often life changing issues they face.

Our thanks go out to the strong, professional team who form our MFRSL staff. Their commitment to helping rural Manitobans deal with these difficult issues is exemplary. We also acknowledge and thank Manitoba Health for their generous funding of the MFRSL, and gratefully acknowledge Manitoba Food, Agriculture and Rural Initiatives for their ongoing support of the MFRSL.

Respectfully submitted by Jan McIntyre,
Chairperson, MFRSL Advisory Committee

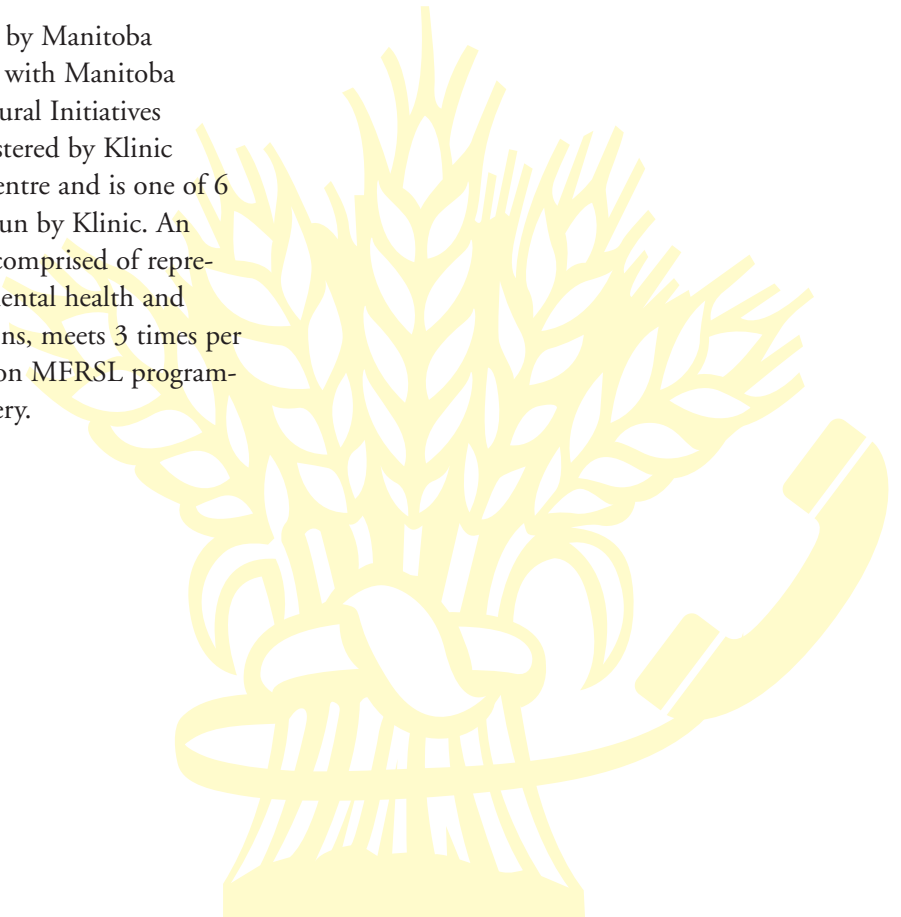


MFRSL history and mandate

The Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line MFRSL was established in December, 2000 to provide free & confidential information, support, counselling and referrals to farm families and other rural Manitobans. It was recognized that farm and rural people have many unique needs and concerns, as well as limited access to mental health services in some areas. It was felt that this population would benefit from a specialized tele-mental health service run by trained professionals with farming background. Based on the successful models of the Saskatchewan Farm Line and The Ontario Farm Line, the Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line was born.

The MFRSL is funded by Manitoba Health, in cooperation with Manitoba Agriculture, Food & Rural Initiatives (MAFRI). It is administered by Klinik Community Health Centre and is one of 6 counselling programs run by Klinik. An Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from both mental health and agricultural organizations, meets 3 times per year to offer guidance on MFRSL programming and service delivery.

The Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line is located in Brandon and is staffed by paid, professional counselors, all of whom have farming backgrounds. This combination of education, skills and lived experience makes them uniquely qualified to understand and respond to our rural callers. Many farmers are reluctant to speak to a counsellor or other health care professional about personal issues, and having someone who knows the business of agriculture is extremely important to them.



The National Farm Stress & Mental Health Survey

In 2005 The Canadian Agriculture Safety Association (CASA) set out to identify the main stressors experienced by farmers, who they would turn to in times of stress, and what types of services they use when stressed. This study, entitled The National Stress and Mental Health Survey of Canadian Farmers was released in February, 2005 and was submitted to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs chaired by Senator Michael Kirby.

(For a complete summary of the National Stress & Mental Health Survey of Canadian Farmers go to: www.casa-acsa.ca under 'Media Releases'.)

Methodology:

CASA commissioned Western Opinion Research Inc. to complete 1,100 surveys with agricultural producers across Canada regarding stress on the farm. National results of this survey are accurate +/- 3%, 19 times out of 20. Key findings of the Survey were as follows:

- Almost two-thirds of Canadian farmers are feeling stressed. One in five describes themselves as being “very stressed” while almost half describe themselves as being “somewhat stressed”.
- Financial concerns related to commodity prices, the BSE crisis, and general farm finances are mentioned by farmers as being the single biggest top-of-mind factors causing stress.
- Only 2 in 10 farmers across Canada have spoken with a health care professional about stress and mental health;
- The notion of pride and farmers’ independence was found to be the most important reason farmers did not seek more help in dealing with stress and mental health;
- If feeling stressed, the majority of farmers indicated they would turn to: a family doctor, a stress/mental health professional, and a religious figure;
- Just less than one-half of farmers strongly agree that they are aware of resources they can turn to for help in managing stress and mental health;
- Remaining anonymous is very important to farmers when seeking help for stress and mental health issues;
- The majority of farmers prefer to meet one-on-one with someone to talk about stress and mental health;
- Farmers generally feel it does not matter to them if they deal with someone from their area with regard to stress and mental health. However, it is of utmost importance for Canadian farmers that the person they are dealing with is knowledgeable about agriculture;
- Awareness of farm stress lines was generally good. Roughly two-thirds of Canadian farmers were aware of a farm stress line (where it exists) in their province.

MFRSL services

Telephone Counselling Line

The Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line's core service is its toll free telephone counselling line. The Line operates Monday to Friday, 10 AM to 9 PM, and Saturdays 12 noon -5 PM. It is staffed by professional counsellors with farm/rural backgrounds.

E-Mail Helpline

An e-mail helpline has been added to our counselling services, providing an opportunity for people to contact us electronically for information, support and referrals.

Outreach & Public Education

The MFRSL also offers an outreach and public education program. Speakers from the MFRSL facilitate workshops on topics such as: Understanding Farm & Rural Stress, Basic Stress Management, Care for the Caregiver, Women and Stress, Working With Farmers Under Stress, and Building Effective Communication Skills. Our facilitators also develop workshops on specific topics requested by groups and organizations.

Informational Display

Our informational display continues to be a popular addition to trade shows, health fairs and agricultural events throughout the province. The display can be shipped to groups that wish to include it in their event and, whenever possible, will be staffed by a volunteer or MFRSL employee.



MFRSL Website

Our website (www.ruralstress.ca) is another important resource for farm and rural families and the professionals who work with them. The site contains information on Current Events, Weather, Markets, Rural News, Signs and Symptoms of Stress, Managing Stress, Programs for Farmers, and Links to related sites. Our newest addition is the Youth Corner, an interactive web site for farm and rural youth.

Rural Database

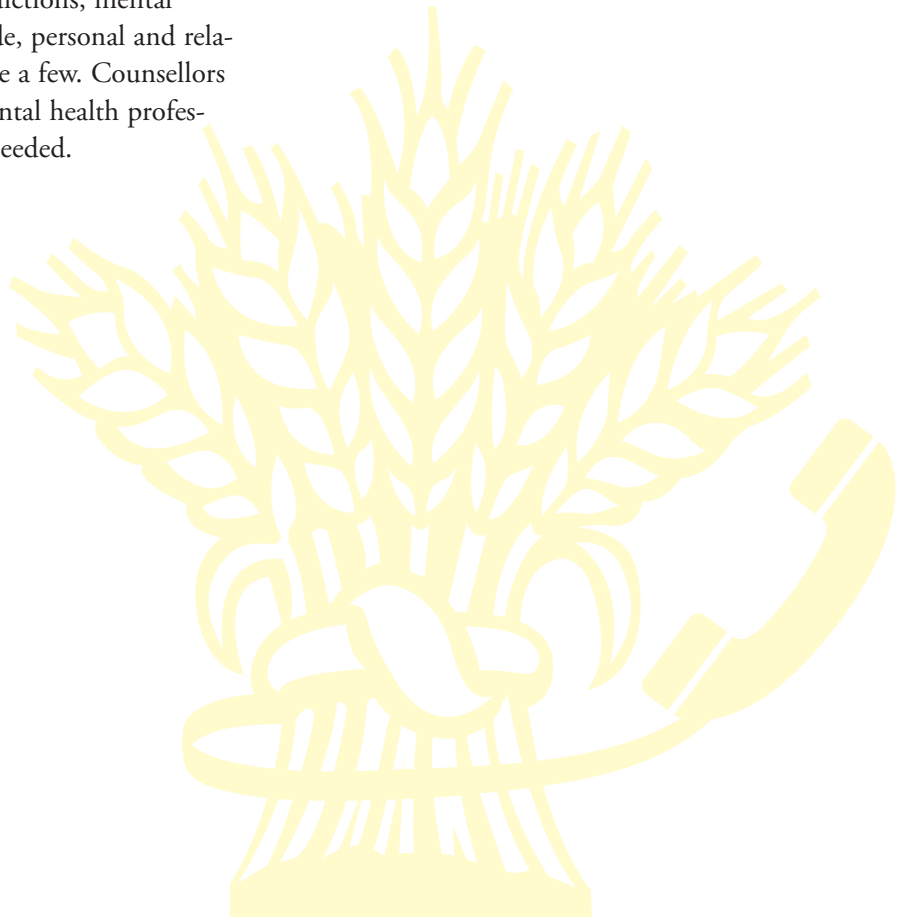
Our Rural Database is a partnership between MFRSL and CONTACT Community Information Guide. It includes information on programs and services available throughout Manitoba. Clients can access the database on-line on our website, or through our counsellors.

our staff

The Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line employs a Program Manager and five part-time Counsellors. All counsellors possess professional counselling training and experience as well as farm/rural backgrounds. In addition, they have undergone extensive training through Klinik's Crisis Counselling program, and have taken the ASIST suicide intervention program. MFRSL counsellors have obtained their Crisis Worker Certification through the American Association of Suicidology (AAS).



MFRSL counsellors are trained to respond to a diverse range of issues including but not limited to: farm and rural stress, domestic violence, addictions, mental health concerns, suicide, personal and relationship issues to name a few. Counsellors also refer callers to mental health professionals and others as needed.

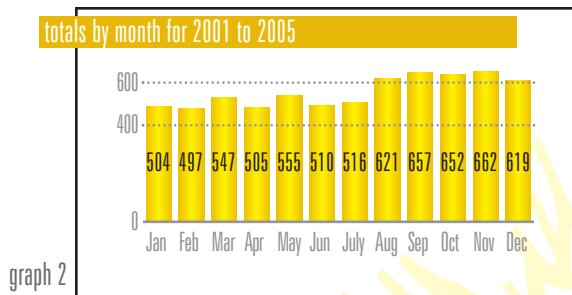
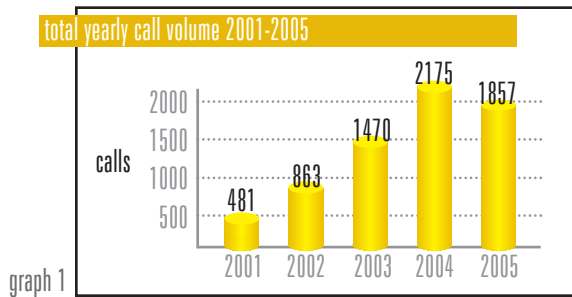


MFRSL stats

The following is a synopsis of calls to the Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line in the year 2005. Wherever possible, a 5-year statistical breakdown has also been included.

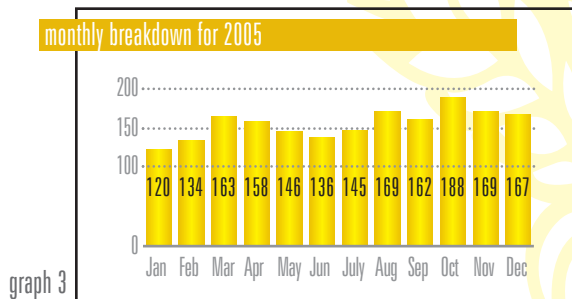
Call Volumes

(Graph 1) The Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line received 1,857 calls in 2005. This was a slight decrease (381 calls) from the previous year (2,175 calls in 2004), however it was significantly higher than the previous 3 years. MFRSL counselors noted that the concerns expressed by our farm callers have become increasingly more complex and intense in nature over the past year.



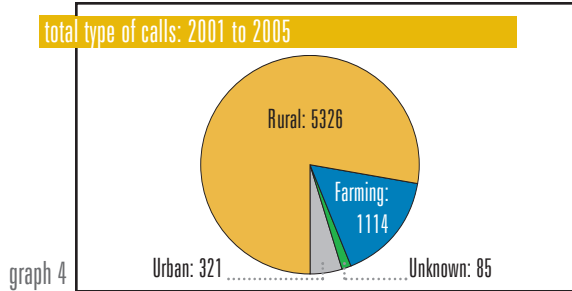
Monthly call volumes

(Graphs 2) Our busiest months during the 5-year period of 2001 to 2005 were August to November, with the highest call volume being November (662 total calls).



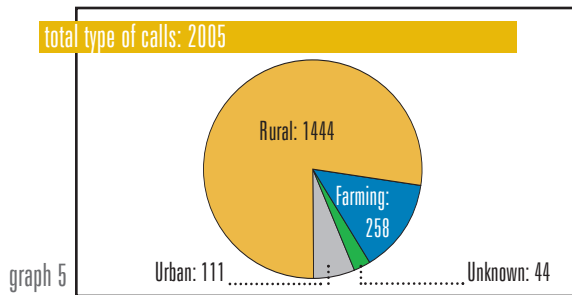
(Graph 3) In 2005 our highest call volume was in October (189 calls), followed closely by August and November (169 calls each) and December (167 calls). While no extreme differences can be detected, it is clear that the MFRSL receives the majority of our calls during the fall months.

MFRSL stats (continued)

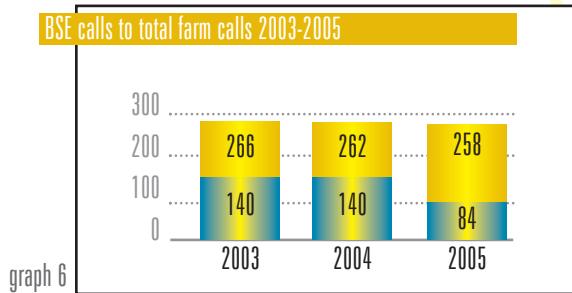


Farm vs. Rural callers

(Graph 4) Rural people continue to make up the vast majority of callers to the MFRSL. Between 2001 and 2005 we received 5,326 calls from rural areas, followed by 1,114 self-identified farm calls. The remaining calls were from urban areas (Brandon and Winnipeg) at 321 calls and 85 unknown.

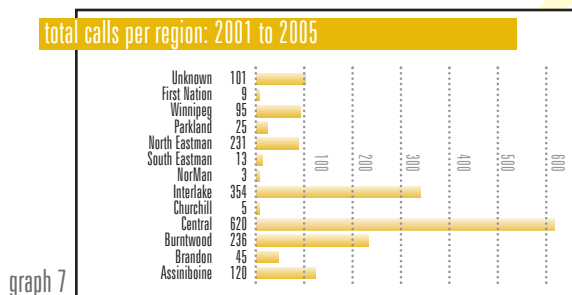


(Graph 5) In 2005 the breakdown of farm vs rural vs. urban callers was as follows: 1,444 rural callers, 258 farm callers, 111 urban callers (Brandon or Winnipeg), and 44 were from an unknown location. Urban callers often call the MFRSL because they come from a farm or rural background and live in the city, or they cannot get through to urban crisis lines and call us instead.



BSE calls to Total Farm Calls

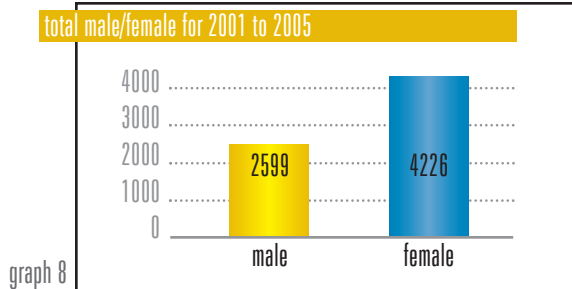
(Graph 6) The MFRSL has been collecting stats on the number of calls related to BSE since the detection of the first diseased animal in May of 2003. Over half of all farm calls in 2003 and 2004 (140 in each year) were BSE-related, however this number fell to 84 in 2005 when the border re-opened to Canadian beef.



Regional Breakdown

(Graph 7) Calls to the MFRSL come from all regions of the province. The majority of callers over the past 5 years were from the Central RHA region, followed by Burntwood and the Interlake regions. In 2005 the regional breakdown was as follows: Central (620 calls), followed by Interlake (354 calls), Burntwood (236 calls) and North Eastman (231 calls).

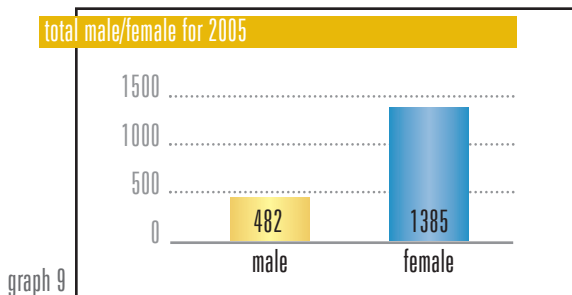
MFRSL stats (continued)



graph 8

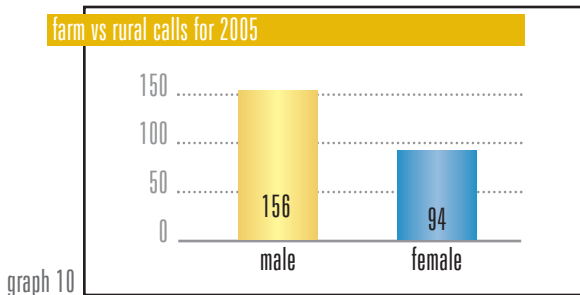
Gender Breakdown - Total Calls

(Graphs 8) Women make up the vast majority of callers to the MFRSL. From 2001 to 2005 4,226 women called the Line compared to 2,599 men.



graph 9

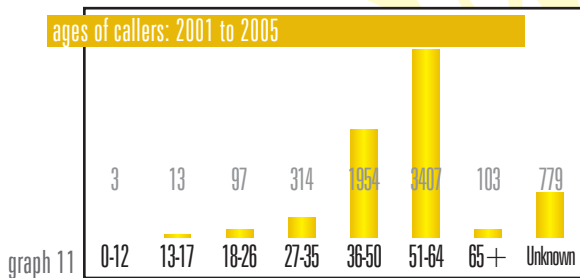
(Graph 9) In 2005 the male/female breakdown was as follows: 1,385 females to 482 male callers.



graph 10

Gender Breakdown - Farm vs Rural callers

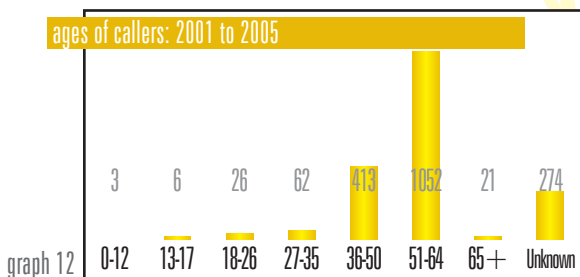
(Graph 10) However, when we separate out the farm calls from the total call volume, it is evident that more male farmers than female farmers are contacting the Line. In 2005, the male-female breakdown for farm calls was as follows: 156 males to 94 females



graph 11

Ages of Callers

(Graph 11) The majority of callers to the MFRSL are between 51 and 64 years of age, followed by callers 36-50 years.



graph 12

(Graph 12) In 2005, this breakdown remained the same.

outreach and promotion

Outreach and Promotion

We have only recently begun collecting stats on outreach and promotional activities.

In 2005 we facilitated 13 workshops with an estimated participation rate of 1,115 people in attendance. Our display went out to 24 community events throughout the province. An estimated 38,000 people attended these events.

Website and Database

Our web site received an estimated 181,585 hits in 2005. The actual figure is likely much higher however, as we experienced a technical difficulty that made it impossible to retrieve stats from April until September.

Our Rural Database (managed by CONTACT Community Information Guide and situated on our web site for easy reference) received 8,995 hits in 2005.



evaluation of MFRSL services

The Manitoba Farm & Rural Stress Line conducted three surveys in 2004 to determine both awareness and effectiveness of our services. A **Service Provider Survey** was mailed out to 938 service providers. 141 surveys were returned for a response rate of 15%. General findings showed that 9 out of 10 respondents were aware of the MFRSL, but fewer were aware of the other services provided by the organization. In addition, service providers indicated they were not familiar with the qualifications of MFRSL counsellors. Promotional materials and presentations by staff seemed to have been an effective method of raising public awareness of the MFRSL.

Most respondents who had referred clients to the MFRSL did so for informational and general counselling issues. Service providers seemed less likely to refer clients for issues such as domestic violence and addictions, largely due to the fact that they were unfamiliar with MFRSL counsellors' qualifications or their range of expertise.

A **Client Satisfaction Survey** was also conducted in 2004. The results showed a high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the MFRSL. Most ranked their experience with the MFRSL as very positive.

We implemented a small **Youth Survey** to determine why youth do not tend to access the MFRSL. Results demonstrated that most youth are unfamiliar with the MFRSL and/or prefer to talk to a friend or family member when they are feeling stressed. The MFRSL has developed an interactive web site and workshops to promote our program to this under-served population.



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A major highlight of the Youth Corner is the Youth on Board Bulletin Board that allows farm and rural youth to interact online.

program priorities for 2006-2007

The following Priorities were identified for the year 2006-2007. They were grouped into 4 themes: Knowledge, Quality Assurance, Accessibility, and Information Systems.

1. Knowledge

Research models of service delivery and clinical approaches used by organizations in Canada and/or internationally as well as new theories and best practices.

2. Quality Assurance

Develop new standards/tools for measuring success.

3. Accessibility

Identify strategies for enhancing service accessibility and client flow.

4. Information Systems

Develop and implement programs to track and analyze service usage, volume and changes in order to enhance client care and integration.

