Illinois Health and Hospital Association

If you hear a student's phone buzz at Lincoln Community High School, it might not be a text from a friend. Instead, it could be a message with encouragement and mental health resources. The Lincoln Memorial Hospital (LMH) Youth Mental Health Coalition developed this text campaign, "Railer Reach Out," to improve the mental health of local high school students. The program takes its name from the high school's sports teams—the "Railsplitters," or "Railers," for short.

Each month, LMH sends two messages on areas of concern for teenagers: healthy relationships, sleep, study habits, peer pressure, mental health, substance use and more. They also provide information on other mental health resources, including the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Launched in August 2024, the texting program initially targeted incoming freshmen and their parents. Over 60% of the freshman class subscribed to the free service when it was introduced. In 2025, the program expanded to the entire high school.

"Most high school students have their own phones and providing resources via text means that students struggling with mental health can take steps to get the help they need in a convenient, private way," said Molly McCain, an LMH community health consultant.

Making an Impact

The LMH coalition is monitoring the long-term impact of the program through data from the Illinois Youth Survey and other sources. In the short term, they are assessing the program's reach and generating ideas for new message topics based on participant surveys.

"One of the biggest benefits of this model is that it provides timely access to care," McCain said. "While students may not need the information or resources we provide at the moment it arrives, they'll be able to refer to the texts in a time of crisis and get the help they need. We also hope it will serve as a bridge to additional mental healthcare for students who could benefit from one-on-one counseling or other services."

A Legacy of Outreach

Community health has been a longtime focus at LMH, which is part of Springfield-based Memorial Health. Nearly 30 years ago, LMH leaders began prioritizing community health initiatives to address issues stemming from reduced economic opportunity and population decline—including substance use and mental health concerns. The texting program is the latest in a long history of initiatives aimed at improving quality of life, including other partnerships with local schools.

"We've always recognized that improving the health of the community requires us to see past 'what's always been done' to consider what a healthier future for Lincoln might look like," said Tamar Kutz, LMH president and CEO. "This has meant working closely with our community partners to identify ways we can help, even when this goes beyond the traditional role of a hospital. The texting program is a great example of that."

Inspired by the success of the program in Lincoln, community health staff at Jacksonville Memorial Hospital—another hospital within Memorial Health—worked with their local school district and county health department to launch a similar texting program, "Mindline," for the 2025-26 school year.