

How to Access Free Counselling in South Africa

DISCLAIMER:

This guide offers general information on accessing free counselling and support services in South Africa. It is not a substitute for medical or clinical diagnosis and does not replace professional mental health treatment. If you or someone else is in immediate danger or a mental health crisis, contact emergency services or a crisis hotline. Bilnor Staffing Solutions accepts no liability for actions taken based on this guide.

Mental health support shouldn't be out of reach. In South Africa, a number of **non-profit organisations, helplines, and community services** provide free counselling, emotional support, and referrals — often available 24/7 and in multiple languages. This guide helps you understand how to access these services, what to expect, and when to seek additional help.

National Free Counselling Services

1. SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group)

- Offers **free telephonic and text support**, counselling referrals, information, and resources.
- Accessible nationwide and supports a wide range of concerns including anxiety, depression, trauma, and stress. [Mental Health Info SA](#)

2. LifeLine South Africa

- Provides **free, confidential counselling** via telephone and other contact methods for emotional support and crisis intervention. [Lifeline JHB](#)

3. NPOwer Mental Health Helpline

- A **24-hour toll-free** service staffed by trained counsellors that offers emotional support, coping strategies, and referral options. [NPOwer](#)

4. Public Health Facilities

- Government clinics and hospitals often offer **free or subsidised counselling and mental health services** through community health centres. Availability varies by area and wait times may apply.

Other Free or Low-Cost Support Options

5. Mind Matters NPO Counselling Programme

- Offers **free online counselling sessions** for young adults and vulnerable populations, facilitated by trained lay counsellors. [Mind Matters NPO](#)

6. CANSA Tele & Virtual Counselling

- Provides free counselling specifically for people affected by cancer and related emotional challenges. Counselling is available in multiple languages and can be booked online or by phone. [CANSA](#)

7. Higher Health Student & Staff Helpline

- A **24-hour toll-free** helpline for students and staff at educational institutions, offering support in multiple languages and crisis counselling via phone/SMS. [Educ'ish](#)

Immediate and Crisis Support Lines

If someone is in crisis, anxious, or thinking about self-harm, immediate support can be accessed through toll-free emergency lines (note that some use call costs but offer critical support):

- **Suicide Crisis Line:** 0800 567 567 [Gauteng News](#)
- **SADAG Mental Health Helpline:** 0800 456 789 or SMS 31393 [Gauteng News](#)
- **LifeLine National Counselling Line:** 0861 322 322 [Lifeline JHB](#)
- **Other helplines and specialised support** (eg. substance abuse, gender-based violence) may be available through associated free services depending on your needs. [EC Curriculum](#)

How to Start the Counselling Process

1. **Decide your mode of contact:**
 - Phone counselling (immediate support)
 - SMS or text-based support (discreet help)
 - Online or telephonic booking for scheduled sessions
2. **Reach out early:**
 - Call or SMS the relevant helpline. A trained volunteer or counsellor will usually listen first and guide you on next steps.
3. **Be honest about your needs:**
 - Share your feelings clearly — counsellors are trained to listen without judgement and can help you explore coping methods.
4. **Ask about referrals:**
 - If more specialised support is needed, services often provide referrals to local clinics, support groups, or longer-term care options.

Tips for First-Time Users

- Keep a list of **emergency numbers** saved and easily accessible.
- If one service has a waiting time, try another — many operate **24/7 or multiple channels**.
- If you have access to public healthcare, ask at your local clinic about mental health sessions — **they are often free or low-cost**.

Accessing support takes courage. Free counselling services in South Africa are available and designed to help you **talk, cope, and find direction** — no matter where you are in your mental health journey.

Bilnor Staffing Solutions

Supporting wellbeing, resilience, and accessible mental health awareness in South African communities.