

From: Tim Reiersen

Sent: Tuesday, August 24, 2021 6:04 AM

To: danah boyd <REDACT@danah.org>; Shawn Rodriguez <REDACT>; [CTL LEGAL ASSISTANT-REDACT] <REDACT@crisistextline.org>

Cc: [MY COACH-REDACT]@crisistextline.org

Subject: RE: Personal Opinion Paper Concerning Crisis Text Line

Dear Dr. Boyd and Mr. Rodriguez:

After reading your response, I am feeling very confused, disoriented. Your reply email appears personal, even extending the personal gesture of using your first name, which felt welcoming. But when I read the body of the message, it seemed like it was actually from corporate counsel Mr. Rodriguez. (And I do understand that Mr. Rodriguez is carrying out the wishes of the board and executive).

For reference from the 8/18/2021 email to me from Mr. Rodriguez:

3. *Whatever your intent when expressing your views, the organization has a duty to assess the impact of the tactic you are using to express them. To that end, if you disseminate this essay which contains factual errors, with reckless disregard for the truth and for the harm that your conduct may cause the organization, its staff, its volunteers, and its texters, then the organization will not be able to keep you on as a volunteer..*

Your message does not say you are speaking for the organization or on behalf of the board. I feel very unsure about your intention and purpose in sending it, and also unsure about who the message is really from.

More importantly, I can attest, you have been given incorrect information about me, and my actions as a volunteer. And yet I know the organization has a digital record of every single communication I have made and received. The only other person who has ever described me in the same light as your message, is Mr. Rodriguez.

I won't take everyone's time to defend myself personally, my character and who I am. The board can talk with my coaches, any of my supervisors, any staff member who fielded my questions or worked with me, and any other volunteer to see what they would say. But that takes time and few board members are going to have that kind of time.

The fact is, I used the organization's own system, that it encourages volunteers and staff to use, for asking questions and giving feedback. That is, until more recently when Mr. Rodriguez requested that I speak with him personally, and that I submit questions to him.

The only thing I've done, that was in disagreement, was to distribute my opinion paper--after being told that if I did so, I would be terminated as a volunteer. I was very clear all along that I intended to continue on with it. I was honest and open about that. And the only reason I took my inquiry that far was because I learned from my questioning, that the organization would only tolerate questioning up to the point where they provided the final answer. And that answer still is, that the organization has already fully considered and answered those questions, and it's time for you to stop asking, if you want to keep being a volunteer.

Now, I am also feeling this situation becoming surreal. I am feeling a need, for my well-being, to establish boundaries with Crisis Text Line. If I spoke as a volunteer to anyone else in the manner that you and Mr. Rodriguez have spoken to me, about me, I would be taken aside and reminded: focus on the issue, not the person. Be empathetic. Be honest.

Here is the boundary: Do not communicate with me, or about me, in any way that contradicts my documented record of kind, thoughtful and considerate engagement with this organization. I have always followed the code of conduct for volunteers. I deserve to be afforded the same courtesy.

If you have evidence otherwise, show it.

I want to apologize to my wonderful coach, [REDACTED], for including her in this email. I have been trying to shield her from this situation. Here's why I've included her. As far as I know, I'm still a volunteer with this organization. I have not been given any official notice that my volunteer status has actually been terminated. So I'm asking [COACH] to witness how I'm being treated as a person who is still under the umbrella of this organization, measured by the code of conduct.

If the organization is going to go through with my termination, I imagine there are protocols. (I asked for them and Mr. Rodriguez declined to provide them to me, for "various reasons"). Whatever they are, I want them to be followed. It appears that the grievance and code of conduct protocols for volunteers will be short-circuited, which I actually don't mind, to save everyone's time.

What I do expect is a written notice (email is fine) that is honest and accurate, and includes the following:

- (a) the cause for my termination,
- (b) includes a time frame for its effectiveness (is this a life-time ban?), and
- (c) tells me whether any procedure is available to me for review of the action.

On Saturday, I was sent an email notifying me that I had feedback from a person in crisis that I had a conversation with, and providing a link for me to log into the Platform to see it. When I tried to log in, my password didn't work. It wasn't unexpected, but it was a disappointing moment. I don't deserve the treatment I'm receiving.

Consider my point of view:

I'm new to the organization. Nancy Lublin is fired. I was shocked. The organization commits to reform. I begin to research. I seek out a safe place to ask questions, which the organization promises and provides...until it doesn't. Then things change. I feel the resistance to my questions about data, data ethics, data monetization. In the absence of a safe space for organization-wide discussion, I decide to do my own research, document it, and write an opinion paper to share. The organization singles me out. The organization has thousands of volunteers. It's not just anyone that gets direct responses and invitations for zoom meetings from the organization VP and general counsel.

The organization asks me to stop, that I'm entitled to my opinion, and I'm free to go. The organization draws a line in the sand, that if I cross, I'm told I'll be terminated. Again in the absence of a safe space, I continue to ask the organization to provide one. Then I felt the pressure from Mr. Rodriguez increase, directly on my person, during the July 15, 2021 zoom meeting.

Please, read my open letter below—I'm asking for a safe space for an open discussion of data ethics. Then, Saturday, I stepped over the line that the organization drew. Here on the other side of the line, I feel that I still have my integrity.

The organization, on the other hand, characterized this as a problem, and that the problem was my actions, my opinions, my "tactics". Is this the tactic of being open and honest about my plans, and then doing what I said I would do?

My use of the organization's own system for questions and feedback is now characterized as me monopolizing valuable staff time for a year.

Consider the actual facts: As a courtesy, I provided a review copy of the paper to Mr. Rodriguez on August 8, 2021 and invited correction of facts. Mr. Rodriguez responded that there were factual errors--even a reckless disregard for the truth, but declined to share what they were. Then, Dr. Boyd, your response cites factual inaccuracies in my opinion paper as being a potential cause of harm to the community, staff, and volunteers. You, likewise, do not identify a single fact that is inaccurate. I'm still waiting to be provided with verification of factual errors. Once received, I'll try to make any corrections I can.

Let's get this over with. Respect the boundary I am now setting: Stop trying to discredit me personally. Keep the focus on the issue, which is ethical use of conversation data. If THE ORGANIZATION chooses to, make good on your promise to terminate me, which doesn't even make sense. The organization needs trained, experienced volunteers. People in crisis need timely responses and care.

To be clear, I remain willing to serve, out of my own personal concern for people in crisis. I will not leave my commitment here, willingly. I am not quitting. And I will not stop thinking about, wondering about, and pursuing questions about ethics surrounding this service.

One final request. Mr. Rodriguez, I request that you forward this email to [REDACTED-SENIOR STAFF WHOM I TRUST], because I don't want [MY COACH] to be the only staff witness. [COACH] and [SENIOR STAFF], I am not asking you to do anything except read this and be aware. I don't want this to take away any time, other than the reading, from your other important duties. Please do not contact me. This is not a safe place to be. I apologize if my including you causes any friction with the organization, but I am feeling completely alone, in relation to the organization. I have wonderful support in my personal life, so no need for concern.

Sincerely,
Tim Reiersen