

# Rural Response

**The Nebraska Rural Response *HOTLINE***  
**1-800-464-0258**

A Statewide Hotline To Respond To Farm, Ranch, and Rural Callers

Sponsored by the:  
FARM CRISIS RESPONSE COUNCIL  
of  
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska

215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 300, Lincoln Nebraska 68508  
Telephone: (402) 476-3391  
Email: [im50427@windstream.net](mailto:im50427@windstream.net)  
[www.interchurchministries.org/ruralresponse.html](http://www.interchurchministries.org/ruralresponse.html)

## **The Nebraska Rural Response *HOTLINE***

In the early 1980s, financial pressure and related legal and emotional stress reached a crisis stage for many Nebraska farm families. As land values plummeted, debt piled, and foreclosures reached a record high, Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska (IMN) took action. In March 1984, IMN began forming a coalition not only of its member church denominations, but also of agencies and organizations with a direct interest in confronting rural hardship.

Representatives of the coalition realized from the beginning that the underlying problems leading to the crisis would not be solved overnight, nor would the groups be able to provide funds to troubled farmers. But they know they could garner the human and financial resources to help provide sound financial and legal counsel when requested, and to respond to families with needs for emotional and spiritual support.

The plan grew quickly because of the crisis nature of the problems and the coalition's commitment to service. Church representatives, and representatives from the Farmers Union, National Farmers' Organization, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Legal Services, Women in Farm Economics, the UN-L Ag Extension Division; and lenders worked closely to build the response network and make it available to anyone in Nebraska agriculture.

### HOW IT WORKS:

The Nebraska Rural Response **HOTLINE (1-800-464-0258)** is one of the primary services provided by the Farm Crisis Response Council through Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.

When a farmer, rancher, or rural resident calls the **HOTLINE**, an experienced staff person will answer to respond directly to callers, discuss issues and needs, provide helpful information, and refer callers to attorneys, financial counselors, clergy, other farmers, mediation.

In addition, staff assists callers in dealing with stress, depression, and other mental health issues that often cloud the decision-making abilities of a caller through the COMHT (Counseling, Outreach, and Mental Health Therapy) Program ----

**(1-800-464-0258)** . No-cost vouchers and information on confidential mental health issues for persons affected by the rural crisis are available. Funding for the COMHT Program is provided in part, through the Nebraska Departments of Health & Human Services, Office of Rural Health, and Community Service Block Grant

The project's aim is to make cost free, confidential mental health crisis counseling available to distressed farm and rural families. The project seeks to achieve this goal through the Rural Response Hotline of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska with collaborative agreements from mental health providers in rural areas.

Here is how COMHT works: An individual who calls the Rural Response Hotline – 1-800-464-0258, will be given the names and telephone numbers of participating mental health providers from the geographic area the caller requests. A voucher will be sent to the address indicated by the caller. The individual and/or family will have 30 days to use the voucher at the participating provider of their choice. When the caller selects a provider, he/she needs only to identify himself/herself as a COMHT referral and present the voucher at the

time of their appointment. The provider can redeem the voucher by sending it to Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.

COMHT encourages agencies and offices that have contact with distressed farm and rural families to offer the availability of this service through the Rural Response Hotline.

Practitioners/Agencies will be reimbursed at a rate of \$75 per hour of counseling. Each voucher presented by the client can be converted to one hour of counseling services. Licensed Mental Health Practitioners and other licensed professionals wishing to participate as a provider of mental health services in the COMHT project can obtain a Provider Agreement from:

Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, 215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 300, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508-1813 - Telephone: (402) 476-3391; Fax: (402) 476-9310;

Email: [im50427@windstream.net](mailto:im50427@windstream.net)

Rural Response Hotline and mental health counseling services shall be confidential.

Forms:

To sign on as a COMHT mental health provider, please download and return the following forms:

[COMHT Provider Agreement Materials](#)

[COMHT Demographic Form](#)