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The center held tour to introduce the center for 18 volunteers.

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Crisis Center of Tampa Bay in crisis

'The needs are going through the roof'

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by Andrea Lypka / MyFoxTampaBay.com

TAMPA - More people in crisis ask for help and more consider suicide daily in Tampa Bay, according to the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay .

"The needs in this community are going through the roof," said Sue Levitt, vice president for development. "The most dramatic statistic -- suicide calls to our center are up 125 percent. Sexual assault numbers have increased; domestic violence, increased."

About 9,000 people in crisis call 211, the center's hotline, to ask for help, information, or referral.

As the rape center for Hillsborough County, the organization also offers support and treatment for sexually assaulted people, whether victims report the crimes or not.

President David Braughton said 340 victims were treated

at this center last year.

"This year the number of the reported sexual assaults has increased by about 10 percent. The problem is growing," he said, blaming the poor economy.

The organization also receives 90 new cases of sexually abused children a month, Levitt said. Daily, the center registers one sexual assault.

In addition, 2,000 people used the center's ambulance transport services last month.

"Can you imagine, in this economic climate, what has happened to our family support services numbers, where clients come for short time help for mortgage payments? Everything is going through the roof," Levitt offered.

Even though the center employs a staff of 170 employees, they have 160 volunteers; the center needs more volunteers to help the growing need in the community.

"The Crisis Center is bare bone organization; we don't have admins here because we believe we should give every penny to the client services. We live in a time when 160 volunteers is not enough," Levitt added.

To volunteer, contact Marilyn Bray at 813-969-4976 or mbray@crisiscenter.com. To get help, just dial 211 or visit the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay website at www.crisiscenter.com.

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