

988

AMERICA'S
SUICIDE PREVENTION +
MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS
LIFELINE

In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 dialing code to be operated through the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the lead federal agency, in partnership with the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs, working to make the promise of 988 a reality for America. Moving to a 3-digit dialing code is a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity** to strengthen and expand the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (the Lifeline).

Of course, 988 is more than just an easy-to-remember number—it is a direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for all Americans who might be experiencing suicidal thoughts, who are at risk of suicide, or who are struggling with emotional distress. Preparing for full 988 implementation and operational readiness requires a bold vision for **a crisis care system that provides direct, life-saving services to all in need.**

SAMHSA sees 988 as a first step towards a transformed crisis care system in much the same way as emergency medical services have expanded in the US.



In pursuit of this bold yet achievable vision, SAMHSA is first focused on strengthening and expanding the existing Lifeline network, providing life-saving service to all who call, text or chat via 988. Longer term, SAMHSA recognizes that linking those in crisis to community-based providers—who can deliver a full range of crisis care services—is **essential to meeting behavioral health crisis needs across the nation.**





Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Lifeline and will 988 replace it?

The Lifeline is a national network of over 180 local, independent, and state-funded crisis centers equipped to help people in emotional distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis. Moving to 988 will not replace the Lifeline, rather it will be an easier way for all Americans to access a strengthened and expanded network of crisis call centers.

When will 988 go live nationally?

The 988 dialing code will be available nationally for call, text, or chat on July 16, 2022. Until then, those experiencing a mental health or suicide-related crisis, or those helping a loved one through crisis, should continue to reach the Lifeline at its current number, **800-273-8255**. SAMHSA recommends not promoting 988 widely until it is available nationwide.

How is this different than 911?

Like 911, there will need to be a system of entities working in lock step to support the establishment and growth of 988 in a way that meets our country's growing suicide prevention and mental health crisis care needs. SAMHSA is actively engaged with 911 counterparts at the federal, state and local levels to plan for smooth coordination.

How is 988 being funded?

Congress has provided SAMHSA with 988 workforce funding through the American Rescue Plan. Also, the President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request provides additional funding for the Lifeline itself and for other existing federal crisis funding sources. At the state level, in addition to existing public/private sector funding streams, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 allows states to enact new state telecommunication fees to help support 988 operations.

Is 988 available for substance use crisis?

SAMHSA views 988 as an opportunity to transform our country's behavioral health crisis system to respond to anyone in need. The Lifeline accepts calls from anyone who is suicidal or in emotional distress, including substance use crisis. This transformation will take time and requires resources from federal, state and local levels to prepare the crisis system to better meet these needs.

Urgent realities.



Too many Americans are experiencing suicide and mental health crises without the support and care they need. In 2019 alone, the US had one death by suicide about every 11 minutes — and for young people aged 10 – 24 years, suicide is the second leading cause of death.

Easier access.



Moving to an easy-to-remember, 3-digit dialing code will provide greater access to life-saving services.

There is hope.



Providing 24/7, free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress works! The Lifeline helps thousands of people overcome crisis situations every day.

Email 988 questions to:

**SAMHSA_988_Team@
samhsa.hhs.gov**