



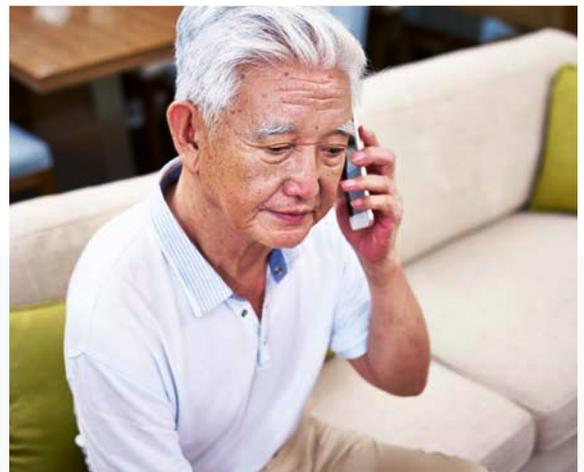
988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE

In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 dialing code to operate 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 anyone experiencing mental health related distress – whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. Preparing for full 988 implementation 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 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 200 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 to access a strengthened and expanded network of crisis call centers. Beginning July 16, 2022, people can access the Lifeline via 988 or by the 10-digit number (which will not go away).

When will 988 go live nationally?

The 988 dialing code will be available nationwide for call (multiple languages), text or chat (English only) 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, **1-800-273-8255**.

How is 988 different from 911?

988 was established to improve access to crisis services in a way that meets our country's growing suicide and mental health related crisis care needs. 988 will provide easier access to the Lifeline network and related crisis resources, which are distinct from 911 (where the focus is on dispatching Emergency Medical Services, fire and police as needed).

How is 988 being funded?

Congress has provided the Department of Health and Human Services workforce funding through the American Rescue Plan, some of which will support the 988 workforce. 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?

The Lifeline accepts calls from anyone who needs support for a suicidal, mental health and/or substance use crisis.

Urgent realities.



Too many Americans are experiencing suicide and mental health crises without the support and care they need. In 2020 alone, the US had one death by suicide about every 11 minutes — and for people aged 10-34 years, suicide is a 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:

**988Team@
samhsa.hhs.gov**

FACT SHEET: 988 AND SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

In August 2019, FCC staff—in consultation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Department of Veteran Affairs, and the North American Numbering Council—released a report recommending the use of 988 as the 3-digit code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In July 2020, the FCC adopted rules designating this new phone number for individuals in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. In November 2021, the FCC adopted rules to expand access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by establishing the ability to text 988 to directly reach the Lifeline to better support at-risk communities in crisis, including youth and individuals with disabilities. The transition will result in phone service providers and covered text providers directing all 988 calls and texts to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.

Topline Takeaways on 988:

- **Suicide prevention is a critical need.** Since 2008, suicide has ranked as the tenth leading cause of death in the United States. Suicide claimed the lives of more than 44,000 Americans in 2020, and evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated suicidal thoughts and actions.
- **Individuals who need help today can find it by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.** The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached by calling 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) and through online chats. Veterans and Service members may reach the Veterans Crisis Line by pressing 1 after dialing, as well as by chatting online at www.veteranscrisisline.net or texting 838255.
- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of more than 200 local- and state-funded crisis centers.** The Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration administers the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, which manages the Veterans Crisis Line.
- **Under the rules, calls to 988 will be directed to 1-800-273-8255 (TALK), which will remain operational during and after the 988 transition.**
- **Covered text providers must support texting to 988 by directing text messages sent to 988 to the Lifeline.** Covered text providers include CMRS providers and providers of interconnected text messaging services that enable consumers to send text messages to and receive text messages from all or substantially all text-capable U.S. telephone numbers, including through the use of applications downloaded or otherwise installed on mobile phones.
- **Service Members, Veterans, and their families may reach the Veterans Crisis Line now and continuing after July 16, 2022 by text by either texting 838255, or through an online chat portal on the Veterans Crisis Line’s website, www.veteranscrisisline.net.**
- **The requirement to direct calls and texts sent to 988 to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline will take effect on July 16, 2022.** The transition time gives phone companies and covered text providers time to make necessary network changes. It additionally provides time for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to prepare for a likely increase in the volume of calls and texts following the launch.

- **The adoption of these rules reflects a commitment to delivering individuals necessary intervention services.** Switching to an easy-to-remember 988 will make it easier for individuals in crisis to access the help they need and decrease the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health issues.

To learn more, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/suicide-prevention-hotline>.