

## **Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Receives 9-8-8 State Planning Grant**

*Funds Will Be Used to Prepare State for National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's 988 Dialing Code*

**Hartford, CT** – The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) today announced it has received the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's (Lifeline) 9-8-8 State Planning Grant to develop a strategic plan for Connecticut in preparation for the nationwide rollout of the Lifeline's new 9-8-8 number. In July 2022, 9-8-8 will become the new national three-digit number for the Lifeline, providing mental health crisis and suicide response.

Annually, over 20,000 calls are made to the Lifeline by those experiencing a mental health crisis here in Connecticut, making it a valuable suicide prevention asset in our state. "The local Lifeline call center at the United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 is a critical component of our behavioral health care system, and provides a vital entry point for coordinated suicide prevention and mental health crisis care for residents of all ages," said DMHAS Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon. "In the last 5 years alone, Connecticut Lifeline call volume has increased 99%. The transition towards the nation's first three-digit number for mental health crisis and suicide response will enable Connecticut to increase access to help, reduce stigma around mental health, and ultimately save lives."

"Death by suicide is a leading cause of death among young people. We also know youth reach out for help, these horrible tragedies can be avoided," Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes said. "This grant will make it more likely that youth in distress will have access to resources to assist them. This information helps through the crisis and beyond as a bridge to healthy adulthood. Attention to mental health IS also an equal part of overall wellness."

The grant from Vibrant Emotional Health, the nonprofit administrator of the Lifeline, will fund the development of a plan to address key coordination, capacity, funding, and communication strategies to best support the launch of 9-8-8. DCF will co-lead this new initiative with DMHAS, and together they will collaborate with key stakeholders and agencies to develop the plan, as well as lead the 9-8-8 implementation coalition. Members of the coalition include, but are not limited to, the Departments of Public Health (DPH), Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1, two local police departments (East Haven and Danbury), local mobile crisis providers (Rushford and Wheeler Clinic), a crisis respite provider (Continuum of Care), persons with

lived experience, and representatives of Advocacy Unlimited, National Alliance on Mental Illness-CT, FAVOR, Brian Dagle Foundation, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-CT, and the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board's Attempt Survivor-Lived Experience Committee. This coalition of stakeholders will collaborate to develop a 9-8-8 implementation plan that will address inter-agency communication and coordination, capacity-building strategies, and explore funding sources to ensure the successful implementation of 9-8-8 services.

Vibrant has awarded grants to 49 states and territories to support a comprehensive plan addressing coordination, capacity, funding, and communications surrounding the launch of 9-8-8.

**If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 1(800) 273-TALK (8255) or 211 in Connecticut, or text CT to 741741. In an emergency, call or text 911. Please visit [www.preventsuicidect.org](http://www.preventsuicidect.org) for more information on suicide prevention in Connecticut.**

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