
988 Key Messages and Points of Contact

Key Messages about 988

- The [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) is a network of more than 200 state and local call centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and administered by Vibrant Emotional Health
- 988 offers 24/7 access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use and other mental health crises.
- To reach the Lifeline, people can call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](#).
- 988 serves as a universal entry point so that no matter where you live in the United States, you can reach a trained crisis counselor who can help.
- Over time, the vision for 988 is to have additional crisis services available in communities across the country, much the way emergency medical services work.
- Too many people are experiencing suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress without the support and care they need.
- There is hope. The Lifeline works — it helps thousands of people overcome crisis situations every day.
- Studies have shown that after speaking with a trained crisis counselor, most people served by the Lifeline are significantly more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed and more hopeful.
- For those interested in being a part of this live-saving work, there are volunteer and job opportunities available at crisis centers across the country. Visit SAMHSA's [988 jobs site](#) to learn more.

Key Messages about transition to 988

- July 16 marks our country's transition to 988 as the easy-to-remember number to reach the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- Transition to 988 on July 16 is an important step forward and offers an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen and transform crisis care in our country.
- July 16 is the beginning of a transformation, not the end, and there is still much work to be done, at the federal, state and local levels.
- We anticipate that 988 will continue to grow and evolve over the years, much the way 911 and emergency medical services have grown over the past five decades. We do expect a more rapid 988 transition to occur to meet the expected demand for 24/7 access to trained counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use and other mental health crises.
- In 2021, the Lifeline received 3.6 million calls, chats and texts, which includes over 540,000 calls routed to the Veterans Crisis Line. That number is expected to at least double within the first full year after the 988 transition.
- Since its inception in 2005, the Lifeline has increased the size of its network, expanded training, and improved response rates — yet demand continues to exceed capacity as awareness of this resource continues to grow. Historically, the Lifeline has been massively underfunded and under resourced.
- The Lifeline has expanded and strengthened its ability to support those in emotional distress or suicidal crisis.
- The federal government has increased investments 18-fold this year (from \$24M to [\\$432M](#)) for this national priority, with [\\$105M](#) of that directed to states and territories.
- **State and territory** engagement is critical in building crisis center capacity, as well as developing local, sustainable funding commitments to support 988 crisis response over time; the federal government cannot do this alone.

Key messages around Lifeline capacity

- Of the \$432 million in funding through SAMHSA, \$177 million of this was made available to Vibrant to strengthen all aspects of the Lifeline. Distributed in March 2022, these funds are supporting the national backup network, chat and text network and Spanish subnetwork, as well as continued development of the infrastructure and services needed to support the 988 network.
 - Since February 2022, the number of Lifeline network back-up centers (a critical part of the overall network) has increased by over 40%, and by August the number of back-up centers will have increased by over 80%
 - Since February 2022, the number of Lifeline text and chat centers have increased by over 35%; chat and text answer rates and wait times have improved greatly already due to this expansion.

What happens when you call/text/chat the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- **Call:** When you call 988, you will first hear a greeting message with the chance to press 1 for the VCL, 2 for Spanish, or stay on the line while your call is routed to your local Lifeline network crisis center. Then a trained crisis counselor will answer the phone, provide support, and share resources if needed.
- **Text:** When you text 988 you will complete a short survey letting the crisis counselor know a little about your situation. You will be connected with a trained crisis counselor in one of our crisis centers who will answer the text, provide support, and share resources if needed.
- **Chat:** Visit 988lifeline.org and find the chat button in the top right-hand corner of the screen. You will complete a short survey letting the crisis counselor know a little bit about your current situation. Then you'll see a wait-time message while you are connected with a trained crisis counselor who will answer the chat, provide support, and share resources if needed.

Differences between federal, state, and administrator roles

- **SAMHSA** is the lead federal agency overseeing the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline transition, working in partnership with the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Federal actions supporting this transition including funding, convening, coordination and technical assistance activities.
- SAMHSA provides funding to **Vibrant Emotional Health**, the network administrator since the Lifeline inception in 2005, which supports the telephone infrastructure network, data, quality, training, and routing of the lifeline calls, as well as the national networks (including the back-up network, chat and text, and Spanish language).
- In April 2022, SAMHSA awarded nearly \$105 million in grant funding, provided by the American Rescue Plan, to 54 **states and territories** for them to improve crisis center response rates, increase capacity and ensure calls are first routed to local, regional or state crisis centers.

988 Communication Resources and SAMHSA Points of Contact:

- [988 Partner Toolkit](#)
- [988 Messaging Framework](#)
- **988 information:** 988Team@samhsa.hhs.gov

988 Media Inquiry Referrals:

- SAMHSA: media@samhsa.hhs.gov
- Vibrant Emotional Health: hcollins@vibrant.org
- Action Alliance: miselin@edc.org