

About 988

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States and its territories. The 988 Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining local care and resources with national standards and best practices.



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Where We Were and Where We Are

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988 Lifeline) is a leader in suicide prevention and mental health crisis care. The history of and transition from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline follows.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

On January 1, 2005, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline launched with a federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to [Vibrant Emotional Health](#) (Vibrant), a nonprofit, affiliate of Mental Health America based in New York City and one of the largest call centers in America. This service was established with 109 crisis centers throughout the United States using 1-800-273-8255 (TALK). In its first year, approximately 20,000 calls were answered.

For more than 15 years, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) continued to become known throughout the country as a reliable resource for those in suicidal crisis needing immediate support. Concurrently, a mental health crisis was unfolding particularly among youth and young adults, rural populations, people with problematic substance use, and those disproportionately impacted by suicide. By 2018, 2.2M calls were being answered annually by 170 crisis centers as part of the NSPL.

The Hotline Designation Act

In 2019, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sent a report to Congress recommending the designation of 988 as the 3-digit dialing code to be used for a nationwide suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The report, mandated by the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018, found that creating a 3-digit number “would likely make it easier for Americans in crisis to access potentially life-saving resources.” On July 16, 2020, the FCC adopted rules to establish 988 as the nationwide, easy-to-remember 3-digit dialing code for people in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. On October 17, 2020, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 was signed into law, incorporating 988 into statute as the new 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and Veterans Crisis Line phone number. The FCC adopted additional rules in November 2021 to expand 988 Lifeline services to text.

Transitioning from NSPL to 988

The transition from NSPL to 988 was no small endeavor. More than 80 area codes, including entire states, had to shift to 10-digit dialing to ensure that calls placed to 988 would reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. All covered phone service providers were required to implement 10-digit dialing in areas that both used seven-digit dialing and used 988 as the first three numbers in seven-digit phone numbers. In addition, Vibrant moved all routing

Though chat functionality did exist, there was only 30% capacity. This expanded between summer 2020 and the launch of 988 to 90% by implementing a single platform and queue to handle all incoming online chats.

The Role of the Administrator

Vibrant was awarded a five-year grant in FY22 to be the administrator of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988 Lifeline) and received supplemental funding through competitive NOFO (Notice of Funding Opportunities) to support the large transition effort. The transition, and subsequent requirements* of the administrator of the 988 Lifeline, include:

- Building, maintaining and expanding the 988 Lifeline’s technology infrastructure and platforms
 - Voice, text, and chat routing
 - Expansion of chat service
 - Launch of Spanish text and chat (July 2023)
 - Launch of Videophone for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (2023)
 - Continuous quality improvement
 - Real-time, ongoing systems performance, and data collection and monitoring of the 988 Lifeline
- Clinical training for all network crisis center counselors
- Subawards to all subnetwork and national backup centers
- Educational outreach and awareness
- Evaluation of effectiveness of the 988 Lifeline
- Administrative costs

* This is not an exhaustive list

988 Lifeline Today

In 2024, the 988 Lifeline celebrated its second anniversary in July and the inaugural 988 Day on September 8th. Georouting of voice calls was launched on September 17th, which allows cellular phone calls to 988 to be routed to a local crisis center based on the caller’s approximate location rather than area code. This provides help seekers with faster, more localized support, ensuring they receive care when, where, and how they need it most. On October 18, 2024, the FCC adopted rules requiring georouting for all wireless calls to 988 (applies to all wireless carriers). Similar to voice, in November 2024, the FCC began the rulemaking process for georouting for text messaging.

Since its launch in July 2022, the 988 Lifeline has answered over 13M calls, texts, and chats from people in need of support across the US and its territories.

The 988 Lifeline has been independently evaluated since its inception by an investigation team from Columbia University’s Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene. Studies have shown that callers feel less suicidal, depressed, overwhelmed, and more hopeful after connecting with a 988 Lifeline counselor. The 988 Lifeline receives ongoing consultation and guidance from national and international researchers and experts focused on suicide prevention and crisis response. Over 90% of people who attempt suicide go on to live out their lives. With the help of the evidence-based crisis intervention that the 988 Lifeline provides, we can offer emotional support to help save lives.

Additional Information

988 Lifeline Committees

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline utilizes the guidance of experts, as well as the voices of lived experience, to continually improve 988 Lifeline services. These individuals bring invaluable knowledge and support to our mission of reducing the national incidence of suicide.

The 988 Lifeline offers multiple committees and advisory groups with different focuses. Learn more about the [988 Lifeline Committees](#).

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