



# UPDATE

July 2022

## The National 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Number Is Launched

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) on Saturday, July 16th launched its long anticipated 988 three digit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, transitioning from their 10 digit number. This new 988 lifeline follows a three year effort made jointly with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), to help reach more people in need, and to help further address our country's mental health crisis.

988 is more than a number, it is a message: we're there for you. 988 is an easy-to-remember number given individuals are more likely to struggle with information recall during times of emotional distress. It is a direct connection to caring support for anyone in mental health distress. This may include:

- Thoughts of suicide
- Substance use crisis
- Emotional distress

988 is a free service available to everyone. You can contact 988 by chat, text, or phone. Access to support is also available in Spanish and by interpretation services that are available in over 150 languages. "Through this and other actions, we are treating mental health as a priority and putting crisis care in reach for more Americans," said Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, who has been meeting with states across the country about the transition to 988 as part of HHS' National Tour to Strengthen Mental Health.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a network of more than 200 state and local call centers supported by HHS through SAMSHA. FCC staff first proposed 988 in a report to Congress in August 2019 as a nationwide, easy-to-remember, 3-digit dialing code for individuals in crisis to connect to suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. On July 16, 2020, the FCC adopted rules designating 988 for

this purpose. Recognizing the need to better support at-risk communities in crisis, including youth and individuals with disabilities, the FCC adopted additional rules in November 2021 to expand access to this important service by establishing the ability to also text 988. The 988 number is designed for people in crisis or their loved ones to easily access the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Those in crisis will be more likely to receive help from those most qualified to provide support. More effective triage means less burden on emergency medical services, emergency departments, law enforcement, etc., so that their agencies can appropriately focus their limited resources on those areas for which they are best trained. The U.S. had one death by suicide every 11 minutes in 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Suicide was the second leading cause of death for young people aged 10-14 and 25-34. From April 2020 to 2021, more than 100,000 people died from drug overdoses. Studies have shown that after speaking with a trained crisis counselor, most Lifeline callers are significantly more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful.

The 10-digit Lifeline number 1-800-273-TALK (8255) will continue to be operational after July 16 and will route calls to 988 indefinitely. Veterans, service members, and their families can also still reach the Veterans Crisis Line with the current phone number 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, or by chat or text to 838255.

SAMHSA (July, 2022) U.S. Transition to 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Begins Saturday <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/20220715/us-transition-988-suicide-crisis-lifeline-begins-saturday>

SAMHSA (May, 2021) Groundbreaking Developments in Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Service Provision. <https://www.samhsa.gov/blog/groundbreaking-developments-suicide-prevention-mental-health-crisis-service-provision>

**About Four Winds...** *Four Winds Hospitals are located on two serene campuses in New York State. Four Winds Westchester is 50 minutes north of midtown Manhattan. Four Winds Saratoga is located in Saratoga Springs, 30 minutes north of Albany. Four Winds provides inpatient and outpatient mental health treatment services. We are the leading providers of specialized inpatient psychiatric treatment for children, adolescents and adults in the northeast.*

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