



July 13, 2020

A dark blue rectangular box containing the number "988" in large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

As the current administrator of the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#), Vibrant Emotional Health is pleased that 988 has been designated as the three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and increase accessibility of the Lifeline for individuals beginning July 16, 2022.

**988 is not yet active across all communications access points in the United States. If you or someone you know is in crisis now, please call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to be connected to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.**

### **What Will 988 Be?**

A direct three-digit line to trained counselors can open the door for millions of Americans to seek the help they need, while sending the message to the country that healing, hope, and help are happening every day. As the universal dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 988 will increase the accessibility of these life-saving interventions and resources.

Similar to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a 988 crisis line that is effectively resourced and promoted will be able to:

- Connect a person in a mental health crisis to a trained counselor who can address their immediate needs and help connect them to ongoing care
- Reduce health care spending with more cost-effective early intervention
- Reduce use of law enforcement, public health, and other safety resources
- Meet the growing need for crisis intervention at scale
- Help end stigma toward those seeking or accessing mental healthcare

### **Policy History of the 988 Effort**

The [National Suicide Hotline Designation Act](#), federal legislation designating 988 as the three-digit dialing code for the Lifeline, was signed into law in October 2020. This triumph was the outcome of many years of activism by the mental health community for the creation of an easy-to-remember telephone number that would increase accessibility of the Lifeline. The Federal Communications

Commission has required telephone providers to make calling to the Lifeline via 988 accessible by [July 16, 2022](#).

## What's Next?

988 represents not just a telephone number change for the Lifeline, but a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change how crisis services are delivered. The transition to 988 requires additional policy changes and substantial funding support from federal and state governments. Vibrant Emotional Health has identified three key themes to guide 988 implementation:

1. **Universal and Convenient Access**, including omnipresent public awareness and varying modalities for individuals to access 988 through their preferred method of communication.
2. **High Quality and Personalized Experience** that is tailored to the unique needs of the individual while also in line with identified best practices.
3. **Connection to Resources and Follow Up** to ensure all persons contacting 988 receive additional local community resources as needed.

In keeping with these themes, Vibrant has several key recommendations:

It is critical that **appropriate funding** for the network, individual crisis centers, and the crisis continuum be allocated to serve more people in crisis. States should exercise their authority to implement a 988 fee, similar to the current 911 fee, that would be restricted to crisis center and service provider expenses, to ensure a robust infrastructure. In 2018, fees for 911 generated \$2.6 billion to support that service; similar investment is needed for mental and behavioral health crises. The fee revenue should supplement, not supplant, funding from diverse sources, including federal, state and local governments.

**Increased collaboration** between 911 and 988 can provide more options for those in crisis, such as dispatching mobile crisis teams to individuals in mental health or suicidal crisis rather than police or EMS, and greater coordination of care options like crisis stabilization units. Such collaborations can reduce the burden on the costly use of hospital emergency departments.

We must also seek to optimize and support services that ensure **access and inclusion** within 988 to meet the unique needs of at-risk groups, including youth, rural populations, BIPOC communities, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

We encourage stakeholders, crisis centers, telecommunications agencies, mental health providers, and people with lived experience to work together to help build this public health safety net for all.

## Documents for Stakeholders

[Download 988 FAQ factsheet](#)

[Read Vibrant Emotional Health's 988 Projections Report](#)

[Vibrant Center Level Cost Estimates](#)

[Crisis Centers and Suicide Prevention](#)

[FAQs: 988 & Crisis Response Services](#)

## **What Vibrant has said**

[Joint Letter to FCC: Texting for 988](#)

[Vibrant FCC Geolocation Comments](#)

[Download 988 Behavioral Health Crisis Care Continuum](#)

## **Press Releases and Statements**

[Read Vibrant Emotional Health's announcement on providing state grants in preparation for 988](#)

[PRESS RELEASE: SAMHSA Awards Vibrant Emotional Health the Grant to Administer 988 Dialing Code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

[Read Vibrant Emotional Health's statement on 988](#)