



Prevent Suicides and Provide Early Access to Care

988: HOPE HAS A NEW NUMBER

WHAT IS 988?

On October 17, 2020, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act was enacted. This act created a new number, **988**, as a universal telephone number for national suicide prevention, including the Veteran's Crisis Line. **What is transformative about 988 is that callers can now get help with all types of behavioral health crises, not only those related to suicide. For first-time callers, 988 is a lifesaver, providing early access to care.**

On July 16, 2022, **988** was activated across the U.S. All calls to 988 from Florida residents are now directed by telecommunications companies to Florida's 13 Suicide & Crisis Lifelines (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifelines).

HOW CAN LEGISLATORS SUPPORT 988?

The Coalition asks legislators to support the Department of Children and Families' plan to oversee and sustain an effective crisis response system starting with 988 to provide easy access to care. When Floridians call for help because of thoughts of suicide or a behavioral health crisis, it's vital that they get help immediately.



It is also important that the state and local communities assist the Lifeline centers to work with their regional Managing Entities to collaborate with community behavioral health providers, such as mobile response teams and centralized receiving facilities, to ensure that Florida residents in crisis receive a prompt and appropriate response.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVENE EARLY AND EFFECTIVELY

The introduction of 988 is an opportunity for Florida to strengthen its overall behavioral health crisis response system. Because people are linked to services and supported the first time they call 988, money is saved from repeated hospitalizations and other acute care services. Calls, texts and chats made to 988 and not 911 can relieve law enforcement agencies from responding to the vast majority of behavioral health crises. 911 is used to bring a law enforcement response in high-risk situations. Collaboration between 911 and Florida's Lifeline centers is essential.

3 KEY COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINES *Someone to Talk To*

Well-trained call-takers can effectively handle mental health, substance use, and suicidal crises, including by text and chat in English and Spanish. Support is free and confidential.

Call-takers can refer callers to behavioral health providers for follow-up services.

Call-takers can send a mobile response team to address needs on-site.

MOBILE RESPONSE TEAMS *Someone to Respond*

When an on-site response to a crisis is needed, Mobile Response Teams, staffed by trained clinicians (and often peers) can be deployed.

Mobile response teams can respond to crisis situations, arrange transportation to crisis stabilization, and connect people to services.

CRISIS STABILIZATION SERVICES *A Place to Go*

Individuals in crisis can receive short-term (23 hour) stabilization services and be assessed at Centralized Receiving Facilities or other crisis stabilization centers.

Once stabilized, individuals can be linked to services in the community through the local Care Coordination system, avoiding the cost of repeated trauma and crises.

988 Q & A

Is 988 a Florida number?

NO. 988 became active as a **nationwide** call number on July 16, 2022.

Will 988 replace 911?

NO. 911 is still the number to call for most emergencies, such as reporting a crime in progress, a fire, or a life-threatening crisis.

988 should be used for behavioral health and suicide calls, thus relieving 911 of about 20% of their current calls and filling a gap in behavioral health crisis services that has existed since de-institutionalization.

988 can provide a **confidential and behavioral health response** for behavioral health crises.

Will 988 replace 211?

NO. 211 offers vital community referrals to help people find food, shelters, healthcare, pay their bills, get help from disasters like hurricanes, apply for benefits, etc.

The majority of Florida's Suicide & Crisis Lifelines are also 211 call centers, so they will receive both 211 and 988 calls.

Should schools call 988?

NO. Public schools have their own school safety plans, which include protocols for helping students in crisis during school hours, including use of Mobile Response Teams. However, parents and students can call or text 988 for help outside of school hours. Chat is also available at 988lifeline.org/chat.

NAMI Florida partners with FLMHAC to provide advocacy in Florida.

Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition

www.flmhac.org

Contact: Gayle Giese, President - gayle@flmhac.org

How do we pay for 988?

Florida's Lifeline centers have received some funding to expand their services, but more and SUSTAINABLE funding will be required for staffing and infrastructure, as there will be a continued increase in the number of calls, texts and chats.

We support work that identifies the gaps in the crisis response system and promotes collaboration between the Department of Children and Families and Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to identify and leverage recurring funding sources.

Will 988 save money?

YES! The need for Emergency Room visits, hospitalizations, and police involvement will be lessened, because 988 links callers to behavioral health services in the community whenever possible.

Most crisis calls (about 85%) can be handled on the phone (or text or chat) thus saving the cost of sending crisis-care workers to the home.

Most importantly, death by suicide will be prevented and people needing behavioral health treatment will get help when and where they need it, avoiding repeated trauma, hospitalizations, incarcerations, and homelessness.



Family and Peer Voices for Better Behavioral Health

NAMI Florida

www.namiflorida.org

info@namiflorida.org