



# FLORIDA MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY COALITION

Family and Peer Voices for Better Behavioral Health

**988 FLORIDA**  
SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

*988 stands as the single most transformative tool in behavioral health, yet its full potential hinges on the Legislature's support.*

*Florida's 988 Lifeline Centers need recurring state funding to achieve a 90% answer rate.*

As of May 2024, Florida's average answer rate was 78%. The Department of Children & Families (DCF) anticipates rising call volumes due to increased public awareness of 988, improved call routing to local call centers, and expanded advertising. Florida's 13 Lifeline Centers are gearing up to handle texts and chats, necessitating additional staff training and recruitment. In April 2024, when Florida's average answer rate was 80%, DCF projected a need for an additional 154 crisis counselors to achieve a 90% answer rate.

## Why is 988 so important?

- 988 is the quickest, easiest way to get help for a behavioral health or suicidal crisis.
- 988 saves lives. From October 2022 to April 2024, 1,937 calls to Florida's 988 Lifelines included a suicide attempt in progress. None resulted in suicide while in contact with 988.
- 988 is the easiest way to access Florida's behavioral health system of care.
- 988 is available 24/7, confidential, and free to everyone.
- 988 can link callers to vital early-treatment options for improved prognoses.
- 988 handles most crises on the phone, avoiding Baker Acts, added trauma, and the use of law enforcement, saving money.
- 911 will be relieved of most behavioral health calls.
- 988 can become the "care traffic controller," linking callers to the right services at the right time and maximizing system efficiency; dispatching mobile response teams and peer specialists; identifying available beds in centralized receiving centers, hospitals, respite, detox, and residential treatment centers; following patients through treatment stages on a real-time data dashboard, ensuring they are linked to care; collecting data that includes patient outcomes. We encourage our Florida Lifelines to work with DCF to achieve this potential.



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