



News Release

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988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Launches

Marks Washington's first phase of building understanding, hope and a path forward for those in need

OLYMPIA – 988 is the new, nationwide, three-digit dialing code for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The 988 dialing code connects people via call, text, or chat, to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) where compassionate, accessible care and support are available for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress. 988 is the newest addition to the state's network of crisis center providers and will not replace any crisis call centers in Washington. The current NSPL number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), will remain active along with the new 988 dialing code.

“Thanks to the many partner organizations and agencies who have made this resource possible,” said Governor Jay Inslee. “In the same way 911 transformed our ability to respond to emergency safety or health situations, 988 will transform our ability to connect people to help in behavioral and mental health crisis situations.”

“Providing an easy-to-remember, three-digit number is an important step to accessing potentially life-saving support,” said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health. “We are dedicated to enhancing and expanding behavioral health crisis response and suicide prevention services for all Washingtonians.”

In addition to activating a new dialing code for anyone experiencing suicidal or mental health-related crisis to call, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline also allows text messaging as part of increasing access to services for youth and individuals with different abilities. People can also dial or text 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. 988 will be available 24/7 and is free and confidential.

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Call services will be available in Spanish, along with interpretation services in over 250 languages. Spanish speakers may reach the Spanish Language Line by pressing 2 after dialing 9-8-8 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Text and chat services are available in English only.

Veterans and service members may reach the Veterans Crisis Line by pressing 1 after dialing 9-8-8 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Soon, Washington will also be able to launch a Native and Strong Lifeline, dedicated to serving Washington's American Indian and Alaska Native individuals.

People who are deaf, hard of hearing, and TTY users should use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 1-800-273-8255.

Made possible through the [National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020](#), the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is the first of a series of expansions to NSPL services, and includes [House Bill 1477 \(E2SHB 1477\)](#). Signed by Governor Inslee last year, the bill expands Washington's Behavioral Health Crisis Response System and suicide prevention services and designates the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Health Care Authority (HCA) as lead agencies, alongside a new 988 Coordinator position under the Governor's Office. The multi-year phased rollout of changes includes increasing options for youth and adults to receive help while in crisis and strengthening the state's ability to provide culturally, geographically, and linguistically appropriate services.

DOH and HCA expect an increase in call volume as estimated by [Vibrant Emotional Health](#), the National Administrator of the NSPL and 988. To meet the expected increase in call volume, NSPL crisis centers increased hiring and recruitment efforts, trained over 132 individuals to provide NSPL counseling and support for 988 programs, and anticipate hiring another 20 or so positions. Those interested in a career helping people in crisis can [apply for a job with an NSPL crisis center](#).

On the national level, alongside Vibrant Emotional Health, the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) is the lead federal agency, in partnership with the [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC) and the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#).

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“Washington is joining states and territories across the nation in transition to the easy-to-remember, 3-digit number for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. This is a top priority for me and our entire leadership here at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS),” said Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., the HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and the leader of SAMHSA. “I am committed to continued work with our national partners to achieve a smooth transition, and I greatly appreciate the partnership with our state and tribal leaders in Washington. Thank you to the crisis centers and behavioral health professionals who are working hard at the local level to support people, prevent suicides and save lives.”

For more information, visit the [988 webpage](#).

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