



988 Launches This Weekend. Here's What 9-1-1 Needs to Know

On July 16, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) will transition from its previous ten-digit phone number to the 988 dialing code.

What is 988?

988 is a 3-digit dialing code for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (Lifeline), where compassionate, accessible care and support is available for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress – whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. People in crisis can call or text 988, or use the webchat available at 988lifeline.org.

The goals for the Lifeline are to:

- Provide immediate, confidential counseling to someone in distress;
- De-escalate suicidal or distressed thoughts; and
- Connect people with local resources, when appropriate.

Who answers 988 calls?

The Lifeline is a network of 200+ independent crisis centers across the US and territories. These centers are staffed by trained crisis counselors who are supervised during every shift by a licensed mental-health professional. They adhere to evidence-based protocols to de-escalate feelings of crisis.

There are also national back-up centers, Spanish language centers, and centers answering chats and texts.

How will 988 and 9-1-1 work together?

In rare but critical circumstances – less than 2% of the time – counselors will determine via their protocols that someone is at imminent risk of harming themselves or someone else. In these situations, the Lifeline will contact 9-1-1 to dispatch emergency services.

988 is not able to directly transfer a call to 9-1-1. Because of that, the Lifeline counselor must relay the information to the 9-1-1 dispatcher.

If I get a call from a 988 Lifeline counselor requiring dispatch, what should I do?

If the Lifeline counselor has location information, follow your existing protocols for emergency dispatch.

If the Lifeline counselor is not able to provide location information, they may ask you to initiate a geolocation lookup with the wireless carrier or Internet service provider (ISP). Note: The Lifeline does everything it can to get a location; however, 988 does not have access to geolocation data for incoming contacts.

For more information, please review the PSAP 988 playbook¹ and visit 988lifeline.org.

This memo is issued by NENA: The 9-1-1 Association and the National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA) in collaboration with the NHTSA National 911 Program (911.gov) and the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

¹ Available at nasmhpd.org/sites/default/files/988_Convening_Playbook_Public_Safety_Answering_Points_PSAPs.pdf