

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: A Bold Vision for Crisis Care



**PRESENTED TO THE
QUARTERLY PROVIDERS MEETING
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NJ 988 PROJECT LEAD**



What is 988?

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- **Beginning July 16, 988 will become the new three-digit dialing code connecting people to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.**
- **988 will be an easy to remember dialing, texting, and chat code for anyone experiencing a suicidal, mental health or substance use crisis.**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

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- After July 16th, 988 can be used instead of the current number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL):

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

(NOTE: This 1-800 number will continue to reach the NSPL even after 988 is active)



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- **Preparing for full 988 implementation requires a bold vision for a crisis care system that provides direct, life-saving services to all in need.**

Quote from the SAMHSA 988/FAQ website
[988 Frequently Asked Questions | SAMHSA](#)



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- The primary goal of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is to provide support for people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress
 - In the moments they most need it
 - In a person-centered manner
- 988 will be available for anyone experiencing distress including:
 - Thoughts of suicide
 - Mental health or substance use crisis
 - Concerns about a loved one who may be in crisis and needs crisis-related support

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- 988 will be available nationwide in every U.S. state and territory, 24/7 daily.
- The 988 system will:
 - Allow individuals to receive care in the community whenever it is safe and appropriate
 - Reduce the frequency of emergency room visits, intervention by law enforcement and involvement with the justice system
 - Link individuals and family members to services appropriate to their circumstances, including programs for youth, people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, LGBTQ+ and historically underserved communities

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- 988 is a comprehensive system of crisis response and acute care services for people in mental health or substance use crisis
- 988 is designed to have 3 components:
 - Someone to call (or chat or text)
 - Someone to come (to where you are)
 - Somewhere to go (for mental health or substance use care in the community)



Someone to Call

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- New Jersey has 5 Lifeline centers responding to calls, chats and/or texts.
 - Caring Contacts
 - Contact of Burlington County
 - Contact of Mercer County
 - Mental Health Association in New Jersey (MHANJ)
 - Rutgers - University Behavioral Health Care (R-UBHC)*

*Note: R-UBHC is the only Vibrant-accredited Lifeline Center funded by DMHAS to respond to National Suicide Prevention Lifeline calls. R-UBHC receives calls 24/7.



Vibrant Planning Grant

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- In January 2021, DHS/DMHAS received \$200,000 for a 988 Planning Grant from Vibrant Emotional Health
- Since then, DMHAS staff and leadership have been collaborating with NJ's 5 Lifeline centers and other stakeholders to transition the NSPL to the statewide 988 system

DMHAS Planning Grant Activities

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- DMHAS 988 Team worked with Lifeline Centers to:
 - Develop plans to address major components of 988 system
 - Expand capacity for incoming calls and plan for statewide response to incoming texts and chats
 - Consider needs for comprehensive 988 resource and referral database
 - Plan for long-term increase of the 988 in-state answer rate with a goal of at least 90%. <NOTE: Calls not answered in NJ are handled by national backup centers>



DMHAS Planning Grant Activities

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- Conducted an initial “Landscape Analysis” of current acute care/crisis response services in NJ
- Strengthened communication with stakeholders and the 988 network of partnerships including:
 - National Alliance on Mental Illness
 - Mental Health Emergency Service Association (Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services)
 - Persons with lived experience and their family members

DMHAS Planning Grant Activities

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- Policies and procedures in development for “warm transfers” to other state agencies/services
- Warm Transfer: 988 Call/Chat/Text Specialist contacts another agency (with the caller on the line), then shares important and relevant information with agency call taker. Benefits for caller are:
 - Caller gives permission for warm transfer
 - Caller doesn't have to repeat information
 - Caller has opportunity to “meet” the next helping person while still in touch with 988 Call/Chat/Text Specialist

DMHAS Planning Grant Activities

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- DMHAS 988 Team meeting regularly with state agencies to plan warm transfers and linkage to services based on initial assessment by 988 Call Specialist
- DMHAS Network of Partners includes:
 - Department of Children and Families/Children's System of Care/PerformCare
 - Division of Developmental Disabilities/CARES Program
 - 911 Dispatchers and NJ State Police

DMHAS Planning Grant Activities

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- Consulted with other states and worked with DMHAS leadership regarding creation of new or expansion of existing initiatives including:
 - Mental Health Mobile Crisis Response
 - Early Intervention Support Services
 - Crisis Receiving & Stabilization Centers
- Convened a monthly 988 Stakeholder Coalition group (initial meeting in April 2021)

988 Key Stakeholder Coalition

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- Individuals with lived experience
- Hotlines/Helplines: 9-1-1 (NJSP), NJ 2-1-1, MHCares
- State Departments: DCF, DOH, DMAVA, OAG
- PerformCare
- Advocacy Groups
- County Mental Health Administrators
- Law Enforcement (Chiefs of Police)
- Lifeline Member Centers
- Crisis Intervention Training Coordinator
- Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services
- State Suicide Prevention Experts
- Representatives from the Black and Latinx Communities

SAMHSA Capacity Building Grant

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- In April DMHAS received \$2.5 million from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to expand the capacity of NJ's current Lifeline Centers.
- These funds, combined with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grants, will allow Lifeline centers to expand capacity in preparation for the anticipated increase in volume of calls, chats and texts resulting from the transition to 988.

SAMHSA Capacity Building Grant

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- To date, approximately \$3.2 million has been awarded to 3 Centers.
- New staff is being hired and trained in advance of the July 16th transition date.
- New technology and other equipment is being purchased to enable secure response to calls, chats and texts from offices or remote locations.

Ensuring Diversity & Equity

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- Vibrant has stressed the importance of creating a 988 system that reaches and is valuable to everyone.
- SAMHSA requires DMHAS to address strategies for populations at higher risk of suicide. Many are communities of color and historically marginalized groups that have traditionally not used state or local community mental health/substance use resources.
- Key Stakeholder Coalition identified 20 traditionally underserved communities.

Ensuring Diversity & Equity

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- Coalition members are reaching out to their leaders:
 - To listen and learn about what their communities need from 988 to ensure it can deliver culturally sensitive services
 - To inform them about plans for the 988 system in NJ and how their communities can access it
 - To share resources for their communities that should be included in the 988 Resource Database
- Community leaders will help DMHAS inform their communities about 988 after July 16th

Public Messaging

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- It is necessary to balance promotion of the transition to 988 with the expected impact of increased volume on Lifeline centers.
- Before July 16:
 - Inform and educate Stakeholders, Contracted Agencies and Community Partners about 988
 - Share DMHAS Assistant Commissioner Valerie Mielke's PowerPoint Presentation
 - Distribute a press release about plans for 988 in New Jersey
- After July 16:
 - DMHAS will increase public messaging about 988

Additional Crisis Response Services

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- Increased call, chat, text capability (someone to call)
 - Additional staff to respond to calls, chats and texts
 - Data management platform to handle calls, chats, texts and information for follow up contacts
- Mobile Outreach (someone to come)
 - Mobile outreach teams in the community when there is not a need for law enforcement involvement (in development).
- Crisis Receiving and Stabilization (somewhere to go)
 - Walk-in, community based services
 - A team of professionals and individuals with lived experience
 - Facility designed to meet immediate needs and give referrals for longer term behavioral health services (in development).

More Information

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For more information about 988, go to:

[988 Frequently Asked Questions | SAMHSA](#)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/faqs>

Assistant Commissioner Mielke's Presentation:

[Department of Human Services | 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline \(state.nj.us\)](#)

<https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/initiatives/988/index.html>



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- Questions about 988?
- 988Questions@dhs.nj.gov

