



9-8-8 Planning & Implementation

1

NJ DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

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ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER**

MARCH 25, 2022



What is 9-8-8 ?

2

- In July 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules to establish a nationwide, easy-to-remember 3-digit phone number for Americans who want to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- When **9-8-8** becomes the national dialing code for people experiencing a mental health crisis, it will connect callers to suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors.
- At that point, **9-8-8** will replace the current **Lifeline** phone number: **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.



What is 9-8-8 ?

3

- Now, when you have a police, fire, or rescue emergency you call **9-1-1**.
- Until then, people should call the current number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- Starting in **July 2022**, when someone has an urgent behavioral health need, they will call **9-8-8**.

What is 9-8-8 ?

4

- It will be the 3-digit calling code individuals will use when experiencing a behavioral health crisis, including having thoughts of suicide.
- The 9-8-8 system will operate nationally 24/7
- Guiding principle: 9-8-8 will ensure individuals always have “*someone to call, someone to come and somewhere to go*”

Grant Award

5

- In January 2021, DHS/DMHAS received a **9-8-8 Planning Grant** from **Vibrant Emotional Health**, administrator for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- Grant supported DMHAS' efforts to collaborate with New Jersey's Lifeline member centers to:
 - Support the Lifeline's operational, clinical, and performance standards that allow access to care.



NJ Lifeline Centers

6

New Jersey currently has 5 Lifeline member centers:

- **Caring Contacts**
- **Contact of Burlington County**
- **Contact of Mercer County**
- **Mental Health Association in New Jersey (MHANJ)**
- **Rutgers – University Behavioral Health Center (UBHC) ***



*** Note:** Only Vibrant accredited Lifeline Center funded by DMHAS to respond to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline calls. It is the only line that receives statewide calls 24/7.

NJ Lifeline Centers

7

- Through this grant opportunity, DMHAS is working with the Lifeline member centers to:
 - Develop clear roadmaps to address key strategies including:
Statewide coordination of the **9-8-8** network
 - ✦ Expanding capacity for incoming calls (55,000 calls in 2020 → 72K/83K calls in the first year; 119K – 188K calls by year 5)
 - ✦ Adding statewide capacity for incoming texts and chats
 - ✦ **9-8-8** network funding
 - ✦ Communication with Stakeholders and the **9-8-8** network
 - Plan for long-term improvement of the **9-8-8** statewide in-state answer rate with a goal of 90%.
(Note: Calls not answered in NJ are answered by a national call center in another state.)

DMHAS Planning Grant Activities

8

- Conducted an initial “**Landscape Analysis**” of the Lifeline Member Centers.
- Convene a monthly **9-8-8 Stakeholder Coalition** group (commenced: April 2021)
- Consult with other States and work with DMHAS Leadership regarding the creation of new or expansion of existing initiatives, e.g. Mental Health Mobile Crisis Response, Early Intervention Support Services.



Elements of Plan for 9-8-8 Call Line System

Someone to Call

9

- Develop statewide access to chat/text features 24/7
- Call centers will develop a process to screen and triage callers to direct them to the most appropriate service
- Call Centers will provide follow-up calls (w/in 24 hrs of initial contact) to individuals who express suicidal ideation
- Bi-directional system to transfer calls between 9-8-8 and 9-1-1
- Unified call center platform
- Statewide monitoring of call center performance (incl >90% in-state call answer rate)

NJ Strengths in Acute Care Response

10

- **5 Existing Lifeline Call Centers** – one with statewide 24/7 coverage
- **Existing Lifeline Call Centers** enthusiastic about **9-8-8** system and interested in achieving success in its roll out
- **Strong collaborations** between existing help lines *(including 211, Hopeline, NJ Connect for Recovery, NJ Mental Health Cares)*



NJ Strengths in Acute Care Response

11

- **Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services** are available in all 21 counties. In 2021 approx. 61K adults received services, 20% were through mobile outreach
- Strong engagement and support of LE in mobile screening service
- Strong cross systems collaboration including work with OAG, DCF, DOH, DMAVA, NJ State Police

Mobile Outreach

Someone to Come

12

- **Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services**
- Plan to develop statewide mobile outreach for callers in instances when there is not a need for LE involvement.



NJ Strengths in Acute Care Response

Somewhere to Go

13

- **Early Intervention Support Services** in 11 counties, to be all 21 before SFY 2023
- **Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics** (7 demonstration projects)



Note: the above initiatives leverage Medicaid

Services to come online

14

- **Evidence-based Crisis Receiving and Stabilization Centers**

A walk-in, community-based service that first responders such as law enforcement can use with individuals experiencing an acute behavioral health crisis (MH or addiction) service. A team of professionals, including prescribers, nurses, licensed clinicians and individuals with lived experience will work in the CRSCs. The CRSCs will offer recliner chairs plus areas where individuals can receive services to meet their immediate needs and referrals to meet their longer term behavioral health needs. Services to be provided include medication management; crisis stabilization; mental health and substance use disorder screening, referral, treatment and follow-up services.

Services to come online

15

- **Community-based residential crisis diversion beds**
- **Increased 9-8-8 call, text, chat capacity**
- **Statewide mobile response services engaged by 9-8-8 and available 24/7**

To provide face-to-face, in-vivo services including assessment of consumer need, crisis intervention/de-escalation, coordination of services with medical and behavioral health service providers, supportive services, crisis planning, resolution of the immediate crisis and follow-up. To the extent possible, they are to integrate the family and/or significant others as a key partner.

9-8-8 Key Stakeholder Coalition Membership

16

- 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 Administrator
- Law Enforcement (police chief)
- Lifeline Member Centers
- Crisis Intervention Training Coordinator
- Psychiatric Emergency Screening Service
- State Suicide Prevention Experts
- Representative from Latinx Community
- Representative from Black Community



9-8-8 Staff Contact Info

17

- **Mary Jean Weston, Project Lead**
- **Ally Kusznirow, Project Coordinator**
- **Melissa Horn, Team Member**

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Thank you!

18

Questions?

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This presentation is also available visual and audio via

[9-8-8 NJ DHS Presentation](#)

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

