



988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Lifeline and will 988 replace it?

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of over 200 local, independent, and state-funded crisis centers equipped to help people in emotional distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis. Moving to 988 will not replace the Lifeline, rather it will be an easier way to access a strengthened and expanded network of crisis call centers. Beginning July 16, 2022, people in a mental health or addiction crisis can access the Lifeline via 988 or by the 10-digit number 1-800-273-8255 (which will not go away). Ohio has 19 Lifeline providers who are actively answering calls in Ohio. Our goal is that all Ohio callers receive answers to their calls from trained Lifeline counselors operating in-state.

Q. When will 988 go live nationally?

The 988 dialing code will be available nationwide for call (multiple languages), text or chat (English only) on July 16, 2022. Until then, those experiencing a mental health or suicide-related crisis, or those helping a loved one through crisis, should continue to reach the Lifeline at its current number, 1-800-273-8255.

Q. How is 988 different from 911?

988 was established to improve access to crisis services in a way that meets our country's growing suicide and mental health related crisis care needs. 988 will provide easier access to the Lifeline network and related crisis resources, which are distinct from 911 (where the focus is on dispatching emergency medical services, fire, and police as needed).

Q: How is 988 being funded?

The implementation, launch, and year one of operations of 988 is being fully funded in Ohio using federal dollars that the state has dedicated for this purpose. The DeWine Administration and the Ohio Legislature are collaborating to determine the appropriate, sustainable plan for 988 to ensure its long-term success.



Q. What kinds of crises will Ohio's 988 address?

The 988 Lifeline accepts calls from anyone who needs support for a suicidal, mental health and/or addiction crisis.

Q: If I or my loved one needs more help than can be provided over the phone, what kind of response will we receive and who will help us?

Callers, chatters, or texters will speak with a trained Lifeline counselor who will assess their immediate needs to determine what level of support and/or response is needed. In most cases, about 80% of the time, the person reaching out can be supported by the call counselor and provided community-based resources for follow-up -- like a behavioral health agency to call, if needed, or a warm transfer to an agency for an appointment. For about 20% of people who call, a mobile response unit is sent to help the person who called. The mobile response may look different from community to community. Some communities have either youth or adult mobile response that is dispatched from a behavioral health agency. Other communities may have a shared response model that includes a first responder along with a clinical counselor to ensure the person in crisis receives the appropriate care.

