

New 988 Suicide and Crisis LIFELINE

The new universal three-digit dialing code for suicide prevention and mental health crisis is 988; this special code went into effect nationwide on July 16, 2022. SAMSHA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the US Dept of Health and Human Services) will administer the new “988” Suicide and Crisis Lifeline,” which will replace the current toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK which will remain active and connect callers to the new 988 Lifeline.

The 988 Lifeline is a national network of over 200 local, independent crisis centers equipped to help people in mental health-related distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis via call, chat, or text. The 988 Lifeline provides free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the U.S.

This new tool is critical for older adults and those living with a disability because such individuals are at greater risk for mental health crisis and suicide. Suicide rates are higher among older adults as SAMSHA pointed out in its Appropriations Report for 988. Among men, the suicide rate is highest for adults aged 75 and older; in women, the suicide rate is highest among those ages 45 to 64.

Helpful tips about using Lifeline:

- After dialing 988, a caller in need of the Veterans Crisis Line can press “1” to be routed to that resource, while a caller in need of assistance in Spanish can press “2.” Interpretation through Language Line Solutions is also available in over 250 other languages.
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing can dial 711 then 1-800-273-8255 or use their preferred relay service.
- People can call or text [988](#) or chat at [org](#) for themselves or if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

For more information, please see the following resources:

- SAMSHA, “988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline”
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Health Affairs, “Implementing The 988 Hotline: A Critical Window to Decriminalize Mental Health”

Source: 988 Key Messages/ SAMHSA