

## Policy statement on the roles of 988 and the regional crisis lines

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### Background

In accordance with RCW 71.24.045, Regional Crisis Lines (RCLs) have operated under the administration of Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organizations (BH-ASOs) as a core service and primary access point to Washington state's behavioral health crisis system. The passage of E2SHB 1477 (2021) and the national implementation of 988 established a three-digit number to replace the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) ten-digit number.

This legislation envisions coordination of enhanced crisis services by building out a comprehensive crisis system with 988 as an entry point. The comprehensive system will be supported by the creation of a new technology infrastructure, as well as the expansion of existing and creation of new crisis services and supports.

E2SHB 1477 (2021) did not address the role of RCLs in the 988 system and calls are not automatically routed between the two. It is important to address the current and future role of RCLs in community behavioral health continuum and the crisis system, especially as E2SHB 1477 (2021) is implemented.

### Policy statement

The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), and the Department of Health (DOH) support the continued work of the RCLs. HCA and DOH will conduct a comprehensive review of 988 implementation over the next year, with the goal of making recommendations in coordination with tribal partners and stakeholders on the duties and responsibilities of the designated 988 contact hubs, the duties and responsibilities that the BH-ASO RCLs may still need to provide to their region, and any prospective changes to system. HCA will also monitor the interoperability of 988, RCLs, 911, and technologically advanced platforms, to inform future recommendations and program decisions.

### Future

All residents of Washington state will have "someone to talk to, someone to respond, and somewhere to go" in a crisis situation. With that goal, it is recommended that RCLs continue to operate as currently outlined in their existing contracts under the administration of the BH-ASOs and continue to provide core services and an access point to Washington behavioral health crisis system.

By **July 1, 2023**, HCA and DOH will hold the first meeting of a workgroup to do a comprehensive review of the following topics:

1. Current and trend data on RCL call volume for calls with the same purpose as the 988 number.
2. How Medicaid funds, GF-S, and other Federal funding may be utilized and leveraged for either RCLs or 988 to
  - a) understand how each source may leverage braided funds for services.
  - b) Understand tax revenue support related to overall system funding.
3. Regional needs and preferences for the use of RCLs and 988.

4. Prioritization of opportunities for increased coordination and standardization between 988 call centers and RCLs to ensure seamless access to services.

DOH and HCA shall prepare a report by **July 1, 2024** to include the following:

1. Recommendations for how the state will ensure that there is "no wrong number" to access services, including roles, responsibilities, and processes among partners including resource deployment, and call triage/transfers.
2. Recommended use of funding sources to support our work.

## Learn more

For more information about how 988 is being implemented in Washington. Please visit the following webpages:

- [HCA 988 Implementation page](#)
- [HCA Crisis Response Improvement Strategy \(CRIS\) page](#)
- [DOH Suicide and crisis lifeline page](#)