



What 911, Fire, EMS, and First Responders Need to Know

988 is the number for suicide prevention and crisis support.

911 and First Responders: What to know

You can keep using your current processes to connect with mental health crisis services, including:

- **Regional Crisis Lines (RCLs):** These 24/7 toll-free lines provide crisis intervention and triage services, including screening and referrals to health or mental health care workers and community resources.
- **Mobile Rapid Response Crisis teams:** Teams of mental health care workers with crisis training meet people in crisis at their location to provide timely support. Calling the region's RCL is often the quickest way to connect with a mobile rapid response crisis team.

As programs continue to expand, you can connect help-seekers experiencing a mental health crisis to the 988 Lifeline via warm transfer. A warm transfer involves sharing some of the help-seeker's details with the 988 Lifeline counselor and then speaking to the help-seeker again to let them know you're transferring them.

This type of transfer can make it easier for help-seekers to get timely support and resources without having to tell their story over and over. Warm transfers often have benefits when people who aren't at risk of immediate harm to themselves or others want to discuss their mental health needs or learn about available resources.

You can also let people know they can call or text 988 or **chat with the 988 Lifeline** to get free, confidential support for themselves or loved ones dealing with thoughts of suicide, substance use concerns, or any type of emotional distress.

Goal

The goal of the 988 Lifeline is to provide people in crisis with 24/7/365 access to someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go. The 988 Lifeline and other regional crisis services continue to grow to achieve this goal and meet the needs of people in crisis.

988 coverage by county

- Calls and texts to 988 are routed by area code.
- Washington has three 988 Lifeline crisis centers that answer calls, texts, and chats from around the state. **View coverage by county.**
- If the nearest crisis center can't answer a call, text, or chat, another crisis center in Washington will answer.
- **Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organizations (BH-ASOs)** support the 988 Lifeline by providing resources and coordinating crisis care and follow-up services. **View a list of county crisis lines.**

Washington's vision for expanded crisis services

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) continues working to strengthen existing services for people in crisis.

The long-term goal is a robust national crisis response system. This system will help 988 Lifeline crisis counselors connect people to community-based providers who can deliver a full range of crisis care services.

House Bill 1477

House Bill (HB) 1477 outlines key changes to Washington's Behavioral Health Crisis Response System, including:

- Next-day appointments available with more health plans
- Best practices for deploying mobile crisis response teams
- 988 contact hubs designation
- More crisis support options for people of all ages
- A technology platform that allows crisis services in Washington to coordinate care

The Crisis Response Improvement Strategy (CRIS) Committee is currently working to develop recommendations to the Governor and Legislature to support these important components of HB 1477.

House Bill 1134

This bill helps implement the 988 Lifeline and expand Washington crisis services by:

- Creating an endorsement for mobile rapid response crisis teams and community-based crisis teams
- Funding endorsements for current teams and expansions
- Creating regional crisis forums and funding a training needs assessment for regional crisis training collaboratives
- Improving the transfer of mental health crisis calls made to 911

The Mental Health Crisis Call Diversion Initiative

Many people in Washington contact 911 to get help during a mental health crisis. However, 988 Lifeline crisis counselors have special training to provide support in these situations.

To help people in crisis get the support they need, DOH is collaborating with 988 Lifeline crisis centers and three 911 centers/Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) on a small-scale pilot program called the Mental Health Crisis Call Diversion Initiative.

From January through December 2024, 988 Lifeline crisis counselors will work directly with 3 of the states 65 PSAPs (both on-site and remotely). They will assist with answering mental health crisis calls and substance use calls made to 911.

Diverting crisis calls in this way will:

- Help people in crisis get support with less delay
- Allow first responders to focus on safety emergencies that require 911 dispatch of fire/EMS and law enforcement resources

Questions? Contact:

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