

## FACT SHEET: 988 AND SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

In August 2019, FCC staff—in consultation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Department of Veteran Affairs, and the North American Numbering Council—released a report recommending the use of 988 as the 3-digit code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In July 2020, the FCC adopted rules designating this new phone number for individuals in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. In November 2021, the FCC adopted rules to expand access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by establishing the ability to text 988 to directly reach the Lifeline to better support at-risk communities in crisis, including youth and individuals with disabilities. The transition will result in phone service providers and covered text providers directing all 988 calls and texts to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.

### Topline Takeaways on 988:

- **Suicide prevention is a critical need.** Since 2008, suicide has ranked as the tenth leading cause of death in the United States. Suicide claimed the lives of more than 44,000 Americans in 2020, and evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated suicidal thoughts and actions.
- **Individuals who need help today can find it by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.** The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached by calling 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) and through online chats. Veterans and Service members may reach the Veterans Crisis Line by pressing 1 after dialing, as well as by chatting online at [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net) or texting 838255.
- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of more than 200 local- and state-funded crisis centers.** The Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration administers the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, which manages the Veterans Crisis Line.
- **Under the rules, calls to 988 will be directed to 1-800-273-8255 (TALK), which will remain operational during and after the 988 transition.**
- **Covered text providers must support texting to 988 by directing text messages sent to 988 to the Lifeline.** Covered text providers include CMRS providers and providers of interconnected text messaging services that enable consumers to send text messages to and receive text messages from all or substantially all text-capable U.S. telephone numbers, including through the use of applications downloaded or otherwise installed on mobile phones.
- **Service Members, Veterans, and their families may reach the Veterans Crisis Line now and continuing after July 16, 2022 by text by either texting 838255, or through an online chat portal on the Veterans Crisis Line’s website, [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net).**
- **The requirement to direct calls and texts sent to 988 to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline will take effect on July 16, 2022.** The transition time gives phone companies and covered text providers time to make necessary network changes. It additionally provides time for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to prepare for a likely increase in the volume of calls and texts following the launch.

- **The adoption of these rules reflects a commitment to delivering individuals necessary intervention services.** Switching to an easy-to-remember 988 will make it easier for individuals in crisis to access the help they need and decrease the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health issues.

To learn more, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/suicide-prevention-hotline>.