

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: Speaker Coughlin Highlights Mental Health Care Crisis Response Investments Ahead of 9-8-8 Launch

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FY23 State Budget Appropriated \$28.8 Million for Crisis Response

PERTH AMBOY – A majority of New Jersey adults and a growing number of young people experience mental health problems, a nationwide behavioral health crisis that has only been exacerbated in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Joined by Acting Governor Sheila Y. Oliver at Raritan Bay Medical Center, Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin today held a press conference to highlight comprehensive mental health care crisis response funding in the historic Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) State Budget, signed by Governor Phil Murphy on June 30, 2022. The FY23 budget appropriated \$28.8 million – \$12.8 million for 988 implementation and \$16 million for mobile crisis response to support individuals in crisis who need in-person care.

"We are at a critical point in our response to mental health crisis and our investments into a robust continuum of care begins with the launch of 988, which is going to ensure every person in every community can access the individualized care they need," said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin (D-Middlesex). "Alongside crisis response, we also invested broadly in community services as well as critical food assistance and housing initiatives, which are all tied to mental wellbeing and vital to our commitment to prioritize the needs of people and families all across our state."

At the outset of his third term, Speaker Coughlin identified mental health among his top priorities for the 220th legislative session. Working together, the Murphy Administration and the New Jersey Legislature were able to allocate funds in this year's State Budget that will not only help to transform crisis care for New Jerseyans, but will also advance the priority to ensure compassionate and comprehensive mental health care is accessible.

Beginning on Saturday July 16, the 988 hotline will be available 24/7 for call, text, or chat for those experiencing a mental health-related or suicidal crisis, or those looking to help a loved one through a crisis. The existing Lifeline number, 1-800-273-8255, will also continue to be available.

"Saturday's launch of the 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is an incredible advancement in access to coordinated care for our state. This easy-to-remember number will give New Jerseyans experiencing a mental health or suicidal crisis access to free and confidential support via call, text or chat, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week," said Acting Governor Sheila Y. Oliver. "The Murphy Administration, along with the New Jersey Legislature, have prioritized the mental health needs of residents and worked tirelessly to support New Jerseyans who are struggling. Over \$28 million has been allocated in the FY2023 budget to support the infrastructure of the new lifeline and launch new mobile crisis response teams for those in need of in-person support."

"Hackensack Meridian Health is deeply committed to addressing the crisis in behavioral healthcare by dramatically expanding access to care, better coordinating treatment and developing new therapies to help the 1 in 4 people who are struggling with mental illness or addiction," said Robert C. Garrett, CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health. "We are grateful to the Legislature and Governor Murphy for addressing this crisis through an unprecedented investment in services that will no doubt save lives."

Enabling legislation (A-2036/S-311

(https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/3zadoh/nrdit/jwy5cy_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaIPnV6pciHaD2v2zp_Igr9plwMpaVsst4GNP5YvJTFJBGKu2imAB20mmG8zILD0yEG3pDtJQR signed into law by Governor Murphy on June 30, 2022 will ensure New Jerseyans with behavioral health needs will be able to access the appropriate specialized care they require. In addition to the hotline, 988 will develop capacity to dispatch mobile mental health crisis response teams. As a whole, the service will help to fill the gaps in the community crisis care system.

"The increasing number of people experiencing mental health problems is a quiet crisis that has grown worse during the coronavirus pandemic. It harms the lives and livelihoods of people in all walks of life, including young people," said Senator Joseph F. Vitale, chair of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee. "With this year's budget and the passage of S-311, we are acting to bring more attention to the issue, deliver more resources, increase the number of behavioral health professionals and create a robust crisis response system to help those in need. Too often, our neighbors, families and friends who may be in crisis are forced to bear their anguish silently, and alone. By joining the nationwide effort to prevent suicide and other negative behavioral health outcomes, our state will be able to offer those suffering most a literal lifeline, and immediate help by dialing 988."

"We're very excited for the launch 988 in New Jersey and nationwide, and I want to thank Governor Murphy, Lieutenant Governor Oliver, Senator Vitale and Speaker Coughlin for their support," said NJ Department of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman. "988 represents an important step forward in timely access to mental health services and will help save lives. 988 is also more than just an easy-to-remember number. It will be a direct connection to accessible and compassionate support and resources, available 24/7 to anyone experiencing distress, whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional concern. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis will only need to remember these three numbers."

"New Jersey is joining states across the nation in the transition to the easy-to-remember, 3-digit number for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. This is top priority for me and our entire leadership here at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)," said Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., the HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and the leader of SAMHSA. "I am committed to continued work with our national stakeholders to achieve a smooth transition and I greatly appreciate the partnership with our state leaders in New Jersey. Thank you to the call centers and the behavioral health professionals who are working hard at the local level to support people in crisis, prevent suicides and save lives."

"As a mother who lost her precious 16-year-old son T.J. to suicide 11 years ago, I am grateful to our NJ Legislators for understanding the importance of 988 and the community services and infrastructure that need to be reinforced to create a system that will help instead of hurt and that they have put critical funding behind this initiative," said Wendy Sefcik, chair of the NJ Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council. "In the event of a mental health crisis, everyone should know who to call, who will respond and have somewhere to go."

New Jersey has taken several steps to improve access to behavioral health care over the years: expanding mental health early intervention programs, issuing licenses for additional treatment beds, promoting measures to improve access to substance use disorder treatment and support services, and working to expand readily available access to behavioral health treatment providers.

More information about the 988 hotline from the Department of Human Services can be accessed here. (https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/3zadoh/nrdit/zoz5cy_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaIPnV6pciHaD2v2zp_Igr9plwMpaVsst4GNP5YvJTFJBGKu2imAB20mmG8zILD0yEG3pDtJQR

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