



988 Frequently Asked Questions

Full 988 implementation requires a bold vision for a crisis care system that provides direct, life-saving services to all in need. This leads to many questions about 988. We at SAMHSA welcome these questions.



Need Support Now?

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text [988](tel:988) or chat 988lifeline.org

What's on this page:

- [FAQs About 988 Basics](#)
- [FAQs About Federal/State Roles and Funding](#)
- [FAQs About Call Routing, Privacy, Network Functioning](#)

FAQs About 988 Basics

What is 988?

The [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) offers 24/7 call, text and chat access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use, and/or mental health crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

Is 988 available for substance use crisis?

Does the 1-800-273-8255 number still work?

Is 988 only for suicide-related crises?

What happens when I call 988?

What happens when I chat via 988?

What happens when I text 988?

Does calling/texting/chatting the 988 Lifeline really help?

How is 988 different than 911?

How do 988 and 911 coordinate?

Will 988 calls be referred to 911?

If I call 988, will first responders (like the police or EMS) be automatically dispatched?

If I contact the Lifeline for help, will I be hospitalized?

How is 988 different than 211 in my state?

If I call 988, will the crisis counselor be trained on cultural competency?

How should I refer to 988?

Are 988 and the Lifeline the same?

Does everyone have the same access to services provided via 988?

Is 988 available in all states and all 5 territories?

Is 988/Lifeline really a free service?

What languages will 988 services be available in?

Will 988 accommodate those who are hard of hearing or blind?

When will texting in Spanish be available for 988?

Does 988 trace the location of people who call, text or chat?

Are there specialized services for LGBTQI+ youth who reach out to 988?

FAQs About Federal/State Roles and Funding

How is 988 being funded?

The Biden-Harris administration has increased federal investments 18-fold (from \$24M to \$432M) for this national priority. Congress has provided the Department of Health and Human Services workforce funding through the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Also, the President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request provides additional funding for the Lifeline itself and for other existing federal crisis funding sources. At the state and territory level, in addition to existing public/private sector funding streams, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 allows states to enact new telecommunication fees to help support 988 operations.

What other funding – either from SAMHSA or elsewhere in the federal budget – can states use to support 988 planning and operations in their state?

Are the states ready for 988?

How can states further prepare for 988?

Why didn't all states and territories receive funding from SAMHSA to support 988?

Do you anticipate similar funding needs for full 988 implementation in future years?

Is 988 pulling funds away from 911?

Is any of the SAMHSA funding to states going to address equity/diversity?

Why did so much of the 988 funding go directly to Vibrant Emotional Health?

Will there be a national campaign to advertise 988 to the public?

How is SAMHSA working with tribal communities to ensure 988 access is available for those living on reservations and tribal land?

How does 988 impact an already overburdened and underfunded mental health system?

What more should 988 be delivering – beyond just a call, text, or chat?

FAQs About Call Routing, Privacy, Network Functioning

What will be in place to protect data privacy of users of 988?

Will chat/text Lifeline services be able to data mine my information/user for their company profit?

Does 988 use geolocation?

How do calls to 988 get routed?

Why are 988 investments being built on the foundation of the Lifeline?

Why are some of the response rates so low across different crisis call centers in the Lifeline network?

What type of training do Lifeline crisis counselors receive?

Will my call to the Lifeline be recorded?

Are all mental health/suicide prevention crisis centers part of the Lifeline network?

How do Veterans reach the Veterans Crisis Line?

Is there a concern that with the transition to 988 and the expected increase in call volume, there will be additional strains put on state and local call centers that are already stretched thin?

Why didn't we extend out the start date of 988 to hash out problematic areas?

Last Updated: 03/23/2023

Source: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/faqs>