

What is the Lifeline & 988?

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7, across the United States. The Lifeline has been in operation since 2005, and is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and administered by Vibrant Emotional Health.



The Lifeline is made up of a network of over 180 independently owned and operated local centers. The Lifeline phone system routes calls to a local crisis center in the Lifeline network based on area code. If that center is unavailable, the call will route to one of the Lifeline's national back up centers.



988 is the new universal dialing code for the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline that will be launched in July 2022. The Lifeline will utilize its current network of centers to answer calls for the three-digit number.



Crisis Centers and Suicide Prevention

What is a crisis center?

Crisis centers are a key component of the mental health care continuum within each county and state across the United States. A crisis center is a facility, often with an embedded call center, where people going through personal crises can obtain compassionate, non-judgemental emotional support, crisis assessment and intervention if needed, and linkage with resources, either in person, telephonically, via text or chat.

These centers act as a **safety net for those who may be experiencing serious behavioral health concerns** and may be unfamiliar with where to turn or how to access assistance and support. Centers that are part of the Lifeline network support Lifeline contacts over the phone, via chat online, and over text.

Your local crisis center usually serves your entire community, often 24/7 and free of charge. Crisis centers answer calls for the Lifeline, as well as local helplines, and may offer other resources such as text, chat, or mobile services. Crisis centers also provide training and educational resources on suicide prevention and mental wellness. They are also a resource for mental health professionals seeking advice on best practices. All of the services a crisis center offers strengthens their local community and the state as a whole.

Crisis centers are embedded deeply in their communities, and understand and can advocate for the unique needs of their local region. This allows them to **directly support** State, U.S. Territory, and Tribal behavioral health and suicide prevention plans as well.

Crisis Centers: More Than a Connection

Lifeline crisis centers are more than just a connection to local resources. Lifeline crisis centers are a proven and effective crisis intervention - both independently and as part of the crisis continuum. In fact, **80% to 90% of crisis calls are resolved without escalation** to more intensive, intrusive and costly crisis services.¹

- Crisis centers reduce the incidence of costlier interventions such as the unnecessary deployment of law enforcement and emergency medical responses, and the utilization of emergency departments and in-patient psychiatric units when such responses may be unnecessary.
- In an early evaluation of crisis hotline calls, suicidality decreased significantly from the beginning to the end of the call on the caller's intent to die, hopelessness, and psychological pain; hopelessness and psychological pain continued to decrease at follow-up.²
- In an evaluation of Lifeline Crisis Chat services, chatters were found to be significantly less upset by the end of the chat. After the chat, almost half of chatters reported feeling less suicidal.³ This level of reduction is significant for a single-session intervention.
- In a study examining the variability across suicide prevention hotlines in California, Lifeline centers were more likely to have callers experience reduced distress as compared to centers that were not part of the Lifeline network.⁴ In addition, Lifeline centers were more likely to ask callers about current suicidal ideation, recent ideation, and past attempts.⁴



What Centers Need

Although the administration and the operations of Lifeline is funded by Congress, the crisis centers in the Lifeline network answering the calls, texts and chats only receive a small fee to be part of the Lifeline network.

The crisis centers in the Lifeline network need sustainable funding and more resources in order to build capacity to meet the increased volume of contacts anticipated by the launch of 988. Supporting centers allows them to continue providing these critical, life-saving services to those in need every day. To understand how you can support crisis centers, visit <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/by-the-numbers/>.

1. Covington and Galdys, 2020, <https://talk.crisisnow.com/learningcommunity/> accessed 8/30/2021
2. Gould, M. S., Kalafat, J., Munfakh, J. L., & Kleinman, M. (2007). An evaluation of crisis hotline outcomes. Part 2: Suicidal callers. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 37, 338-352.
3. Gould, M. S., Chowdhury, S., Lake, A. M., Gafalvy, H., Kleinman, M., Kuchuk, M., & McKeon, R. (2021). National Suicide Prevention Lifeline crisis chat interventions: Evaluation of chatters' perceptions of effectiveness. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 00, 1-12.
4. Ramchand R., Jaycox L., Ebener P., Gilbert M.L, Barnes-Proby D., Goutam P. (2017). Characteristics and proximal outcomes of calls made to suicide crisis hotlines in California. *Crisis*, 38(1), 26-35.