

Wholly Implement the Full 988 Crisis Response System

Coordinated and comprehensive crisis response is crucial for preventing suicide.ⁱ 988 contact centers are the first step in the crisis care continuum to provide immediate, accessible support. AFSP urges expanded 988 implementation and the crisis services continuum through 988/911 interoperability, improved geolocation, and public awareness initiatives.

The Facts



Awareness and utilization of 988 varies by state, creating nationwide gaps in access to care.ⁱⁱ



De-escalation through crisis services prevents emergency hospitalizations and incarceration.ⁱⁱⁱ



911 is often contacted by default, even though 988 is specialized for suicide and behavioral health crises.^{iv}

AFSP Recommendations

- **Implement 988/911 interoperability protocols**
- **Utilize georouting to strengthen continuity and coordination in care**
- **Display 988 info in the workplace, in schools and on student IDs, and through public signage**

Background

988/911 Interoperability:

Adopting interoperability protocols that allow for smooth transfers of calls from 911 to 988, and vice-versa, connects individuals with the most appropriate services for their behavioral health needs.^v

Georouting:

Georouting connects 988 contacts to nearby crisis centers to speak with trained counselors in their community based on approximate location without sharing precise “pinpoint” data (i.e., geolocation); georouting allows individuals to reach local crisis support while protecting their privacy.^{vi}

Service Utilization and Public Awareness:

While 988 call volume increased by 95% between 2022 and 2024, utilization remains low compared to need – in response, many states are implementing bills that require 988 signage in public areas such as pharmacies, bridges, train stations, schools, and workplaces.^{vii}

Student IDs:

Many schools already list emergency and campus resources on student ID cards; since suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 10-34, immediate access to life-saving resources, like 988, on IDs can be critical in a crisis.^{viii}

A well-resourced and promoted 988 crisis response system will ensure more equitable access and fill service gaps, particularly for rural and under-served communities.



- ⁱ Purtle, J. & Lindsey, M. (2025). The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in the US: Status of evidence on implementation. *World Psychiatry*, 24(1): 135-136. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11733462/>
- ⁱⁱ Purtle, J., Mauri, A. I., Bandara, S., & Stuart, E. A. (2025). Use of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at national, regional, and state levels. *JAMA Network Open*, 8(6). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.14323>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Saunders, H., Guth, M., & Panchal, N. (May 25, 2023). *Behavioral health crisis response: findings from a survey of state Medicaid programs*. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/mental-health/behavioral-health-crisis-response-findings-from-a-survey-of-state-medicaid-programs/>
- ^{iv} Brooks Holliday, S., Matthews, S., Hawkins, W., Cantor, J. H., & McBain, R. K. (2024). The road to 988/911 interoperability: Three case studies on call transfer, colocation, and community response (Report No. RR-A3112-1). RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR-A3112-1.html
- ^v Russell, T. M., Brooks Holliday, S., Miller, D. M., Trimble, L. (April 18, 2024). *Connecting to serve: Promising practices for 988 & 911 collaboration. Webinar series session 4: The road to 988/911 interoperability report and understanding lessons learned* [Webinar]. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. <https://988crisissystemshelp.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/988-911-connecting-serve-promising-practices-04182024.pdf>
- ^{vi} Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. (n.d.) 988 frequently asked questions. <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988/faqs>
- ^{vii} Saunders, H. (July 29, 2024). 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Two years after launch. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/mental-health/988-suicide-crisis-lifeline-two-years-after-launch/>
- ^{viii} National Institute of Mental Health. (August 2025). *Suicide*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide>