

Provide Sustainable Funding for the Full 988 Crisis Response System

988 is the three-digit nationwide number (formerly the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) to call, text, or chat with a trained counselor for 24/7 support during a suicide, mental health, or substance use crisis.ⁱ To ensure quality and reliable services, AFSP urges federal and state governments to establish sustained funding for 988 crisis response services through telecom fees, appropriations, and/or grants.

The Facts



Most suicidal Lifeline callers thought their crisis call helped them (nearly 98%) and stopped them from killing themselves (88.1%).ⁱⁱ



Since launching in 2022, 988 has received over 23 million contacts from calls, texts, and online chats.ⁱⁱⁱ



Over 74% of Americans would be willing to pay a fee on their cell phone bill to fund 988.^{iv}

AFSP Recommendations

- **Implement a statewide telecom fee on all call lines, similar to existing 911 fees**
- **Allocate recurring federal and state appropriations to 988 crisis services**
- **Fund grants to increase capacity, improve response time, and ensure consistent follow-up care**

Background

- As of June 2025, 12 states have a 988 telecom fee – typically less than \$1/month – and 5 have recurring appropriations to fund 988; visit the #ReimagineCrisis campaign at reimaginecrisis.org/map for the latest state-by-state breakdown^v
- Of the nearly \$1.5 billion in federal 988 investments in recent years – from the American Rescue Plan Act, Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, and annual federal appropriations – only a small portion (\$200 million in FY24) is distributed to states, territories, and tribes^{vi vii}
- Dedicated federal funding for specialized lines (press 1 for Veterans Crisis Line, 2 for Spanish, and 3 for LGBTQ+ youth) provide lifesaving, culturally appropriate services for those that experience disproportionately higher rates of suicide^{viii}
- 98% of crisis calls to 988 are successfully de-escalated, and relying on 911 for behavioral health crises is ineffective and places unnecessary strain on law enforcement; on average, 10% of law enforcement agencies' total budgets and 21% of total staff time are spent on responding to and transporting people with mental health conditions^{ix x xi}
- Full implementation and promotion of 988 will reduce public spending with cost-effective early intervention, lessen the burden on emergency rooms and law enforcement, and improve outcomes for people in crisis^{xii}

Sustained and reliable funding for the full 988 crisis response system ensures that every individual who reaches out receives safe, effective, and lifesaving help.



ⁱ 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. (n.d.). *What to expect*. <https://988lifeline.org/get-help/what-to-expect/>.

ⁱⁱ Gould, M. S., Lake, A. M., Port, M. S., Kleinman, M., Hoyte-Badu, A. M., Rodriguez, C. L., Chowdhury, S. J., Galfalvy, H., & Goldstein, A. (2025). National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline): Evaluation of crisis call outcomes for suicidal callers. *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior*, 55(3), e70020. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.70020>

ⁱⁱⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2026). *Performance metrics*. Retrieved 6/11/26 at <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988/performance-metrics>.

^{iv} National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). (July 2025). *NAMI 2024 state legislation issue brief series: Trends in 988 and reimagining crisis response state policy*. <https://www.nami.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/NAMI-2024StateLegBrief-03-ReimaginingCrisisResponse.pdf>.

^v National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). (n.d.) *988 crisis response state legislation map*. <https://reimaginecrisis.org/map/>.

^{vi} American Association of Suicidology (AAS). (May 17, 2023). *HHS announces additional \$200 million in funding for 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline*. <https://suicidology.org/hhs-announces-additional-200-million-in-funding-for-988-suicide-crisis-lifeline/>.

^{vii} Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, H.R. 7148, 119th Cong. (2026). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/7148>.

^{viii} 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. (n.d.). *Calling the 988 Lifeline*. <https://988lifeline.org/faq/calling-the-988-lifeline/>.

^{ix} Drapeau, C. W. (2024). *What happens when people are actively suicidal? An in-depth analysis of 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline imminent risk data*. Vibrant Emotional Health. <https://www.vibrant.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Imminent-Risk-Data-White-Paper-Final-Version.pdf>.

^x Gould, M. S., Lake, A. M., Port, M. S., Kleinman, M., Hoyte-Badu, A. M., Rodriguez, C. L., Chowdhury, S. J., Galfalvy, H., & Goldstein, A. (2025). National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline): Evaluation of crisis call outcomes for suicidal callers. *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior*, 55(3), e70020. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.70020>.

^{xi} Treatment Advocacy Center (TAC). (2019). *Road runners: The role and impact of law enforcement in transporting individuals with severe mental illness*. https://www.tac.org/reports_publications/road-runners-the-role-and-impact-of-law-enforcement-in-transporting-individuals-with-severe-mental-illness/.

^{xii} Tsarovsky, E., Kennon, E., Panford, R., & Donkoh, D. (2025). *A cost-benefit analysis of state funding for the 988 Crisis Lifeline*. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. <https://lafollette.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1713/2025/09/UW-Pop-Health-988-Crisis-Line.pdf>