
988: Top 20 Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is 988 and why is it being introduced?

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline was created to provide a national, easy-to-remember 3-digit number for individuals in crisis. In October 2020, President Biden signed the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-172), which required states and territories to prepare for 988 release July 16, 2022. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline will provide greater access to 24/7 confidential and life-saving services.



2. Will 988 replace other national and state suicide and mental health hotlines?

It is important to note that none of the existing suicide prevention lines will go away. *No matter what number someone in crisis calls, all calls will be answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, year-round.*

988 will be available in addition to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline [1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)], the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Service's "Action Line" (1-800-HOPE-135), the Youth Mobile Crisis Line through Connecticut 211, or the general crisis line that Connecticut 211 offers. Connecticut 211 will continue to provide telephonic mental health crisis line services through one statewide contact center.

3. Who answers 988 when I call?

In Connecticut, the United Way of Connecticut/211 (UWC) Health and Human Services Contact Center's highly trained Crisis Contact Specialists answer these free and confidential calls.

The 211 Crisis Contact Specialist team is made up of individuals with both bachelor's and master's degrees in the mental health field, as well as Peer Support Specialists who speak with callers drawing from the perspective of their own lived experiences. The Crisis Contact Specialists participate in rigorous training prior to taking calls independently on the crisis lines.

4. Are 988 call services available in Spanish?

YES, all calls will be available in Spanish, along with interpretation services in more than 240 languages.

5. I feel more comfortable texting or chatting than I do placing a phone call. Can I do that??

YES, but not right away in Connecticut. 988 will be built with accessibility and inclusion in mind to ensure the service is available to all individuals, regardless of communications needs and preferences during their crisis. As such, 988 will become available via text and chat in Connecticut by July 2023 for anyone interested in using those services. Before then, all text/chat in English will be answered by a national text or chat center; plus, the Crisis Text Line is still available by texting HOME to 741741.



6. I am a veteran. Will 988 change the availability of my crisis services?

All individuals are invited to call 988 regardless of military or civilian status. The same dedicated service Veterans know and trust in the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL): 1-800-273-TALK will remain fully in place and ready.

7. Is 988 available for substance use crisis?

YES. 988 accepts calls from anyone who needs support for a suicidal, mental health and/or substance use crisis and connects those in need with trained Crisis Contact Specialists.

8. What happens when I call 988?

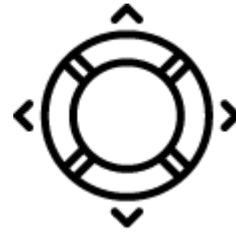
Starting July 16, 2022, when calling 988, callers first hear a greeting message while their call is routed to the local Lifeline network crisis center (based on the caller's area code – in this case to United Way of Connecticut 211).

A trained Crisis Contact Specialist will answer the phone, listen to the caller, gather information on presenting needs, provide support and share resources if needed. The 988 Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Spanish and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in more than 240 additional languages for people who call 988.

The crisis lines work to provide support and services in the least invasive way possible. If there is an emergency where the Individual in distress requires an immediate in-person response to preserve safety, the Crisis Contact Specialists are able to work directly with emergency responders to get that need met.

9. How is 988 different than 911?

988 was established to improve access to crisis services in a way that meets our country's growing suicide and mental health-related crisis care needs. 988 will provide easier access to the Lifeline network and related crisis resources. 911 focuses on dispatching Emergency Medical Services, fire and police as needed for public safety purposes.



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

NO. The primary goal of the Lifeline is to provide support for people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress in the moments they most need it and in a manner which is person-centered. The vast majority of those seeking help from the Lifeline do not require any additional interventions at that moment.

In Connecticut, less than 1% of all crisis calls to 211CT require first responders to be dispatched. While some safety and health issues may warrant a response from law enforcement and/or Emergency Medical Services, the 988 coordinated response is intended to promote stabilization and care in the most person-centric and least invasive manner.

11. Will 988 calls be referred to 911?

Calling 988 does not automatically result in an emergency responder response. Currently, only a small percentage of Lifeline calls require activation of the 911 system when there is imminent risk to someone's life that cannot be reduced during the Lifeline call.

Crisis Contact Specialists are trained to only consider a 911 response when all other options for crisis response cannot be utilized due to a concern for immediate risk to safety of an individual or to those around them. Crisis needs can most often be met going no further than utilizing the telephonic support and safety planning offered on the line. If more support is needed, Crisis Contact Specialists can provide mental health resources, or a direct hand off to a mobile crisis clinician who can help and go directly to where the Individual in distress is located.

If 911 response is necessary, the crisis counselor shares information with 911 that is crucial to saving the caller's life. 211 Crisis Contact Specialists are trained to inform the caller of this, so that callers do not feel surprised if emergency responders arrive at their location.

12. How is 988 different than 211 in my state?

In the state of Connecticut, you will not notice any difference. All 988 calls are automatically routed to 211 Connecticut's crisis team. The only exception is that text/chat calls will not be available in Connecticut until July 2023. Until then, all text/chat calls to 988 will go through a national text or chat center. By July 2023 text/chat calls will also be answered by the 211 Crisis Team.

13. What will be in place to protect the privacy of 988 users?

People contacting 988 are not required to provide any personal data to receive services. The network system has several safeguards to address concerns about privacy.

Callers may be asked for demographic information in order to: 1) to save lives; 2) to connect people to ongoing supports; and 3) to evaluate system needs and performance, particularly ensuring that gaps and inequities are being addressed.

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

YES. The National Lifeline currently serves TTY users either through their preferred relay service or by dialing 711 then 1-800-273-8255. The National Lifeline also offers services through chat and text. Lifeline is in the process of expanding to video phone service to better serve deaf or hard of hearing individuals seeking help through the Lifeline/988.

15. How do I access Youth Mobile Crisis Intervention Services?

Call either 988 (after 7/16/22) or call 211 and press 1 for crisis and then 1 again for the youth mobile crisis line.

16. How do I access Adult Mobile Crisis Services?

Call either 988 (after 7/16/22) or 211, press 1 for crisis and 2 for the adult ACTION line.

Talk with us.



17. When should I call 988/211?

There is hope.



- When you are in distress, or you are concerned about any aged person in distress who:
 - Is talking about or is at risk of suicide
 - Threatens or is at risk for violence
 - Has been victimized/traumatized
 - Is in harm's way without immediate assistance
 - Is behaviorally "acting out" or out of control
 - Is in emotional or mental distress and/or uncommunicative
 - Is depressed and you are worried
 - Is having any other behavioral health crisis
 - Is experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis and you don't know what to do
- When you are considering going to or sending a person to the Emergency Department for a mental health evaluation
- When you can't reach the person's mental health service provider during a crisis
- When you have already called the police, but need mental health support as well

18. When should I call 911 for the Police or Ambulance?

- When the person needs immediate police intervention (weapons involved, serious assault, immediate risk of suicide attempt, etc.)
- When the person needs immediate medical attention (overdosed, seriously injured, for a suicide attempt in progress or that has already occurred, etc.)

19. When will 211 be ready to accept 988 calls?

The United Way of Connecticut/211 Contact Center is currently ready to respond to 988 calls and to provide crisis intervention and help.

20. Does 211/988 have enough staff to answer calls to support callers in need?

The United Way of Connecticut/211 Contact Center continues to work closely with DMHAS and DCF to ensure staffing is sufficiently robust to ensure that whenever someone in crisis calls, the call is answered quickly, and help is provided.

**If in the rare instance 211CT is unable to take the call, the caller will be automatically routed to a national backup crisis center.*