



988 is Coming to Vermont



On July 16, 2022, we in Vermont will join the rest of the United States in launching the 988, the new three-digit number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This service provide compassionate, accessible care and supports for anyone experiencing mental health related distress. The chat feature will be available through the Lifeline's website located at [Lifeline \(suicidepreventionlifeline.org\)](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

WHAT PARTNERS NEED TO KNOW:

- 988 will accept calls from anyone who needs support for a suicidal, mental health, and/or substance use crisis. People can also contact 988 if they are concerned about a loved one in crisis.
- 988 offers callers multiple languages, while text or chat are currently provided in English only.
- Implementation of chat and text features at Vermont Lifeline Centers is still developing. Chats and texts sent to the Lifeline are routed through the national network and responded to by any available counselor.
- After July 16, 2022, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline will still be accessible by calling 1-800-273-TALK(8255) while also being available to anyone dialing 988. Prior to July 16, the 988 dialing code should not be promoted.
- Callers in Vermont who dial 988 will be connected with in-state operators when available. The most recently available information, from April 2022, shows that 82 percent of calls are answered by Vermont Lifeline Centers.

ABOUT 988

- Vermont's Suicide Prevention Lifeline answers calls, chats, and texts that come from residents throughout the state.
- Vermont has two Certified Lifeline Centers. These centers are staffed and run by two designated agencies: Northeast Kingdom Human Services and Northwestern Counseling and Support Services.
- Lifeline counselors receive extensive training and are there to listen and support callers through their distress while providing coping skills.
- Vermont's Lifeline Center calls, texts, and chats are backed up by neighboring states and the national network. If a local center isn't immediately available, the individual will be routed quickly to another counselor.
- Access is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

INFORMATION FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Before July 16, 2022, continue to call 1-800-273-8255 to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This number will remain live after the launch of 988.
- Vermont Lifeline counselors are trained to reduce stress, provide emotional support, and connect you with anyone in distress to local resources.
- Over 95% of calls do not result in the need for in-person response. If an in-person response is requested or required, the counselor may transfer to another service which could involve a crisis response team or law enforcement.
- More information about public messaging will be provided by SAHMSA and Vibrant Emotional Health in the coming months.
- If you or someone you know is in imminent danger, call 911.

FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

- Begin conversations with staff in your agency on the existing referral sources and how your teams will incorporate 988 into treatment and crisis planning.
- Continue to provide the 10-digit number (1-800-273-8255) to clients and other individuals until the launch of 988 on July 16, 2022.
- 988 should be incorporated as part of a comprehensive safety plan, but it should not be the only resource provided for individuals in crisis.

THE WORK OF COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- Engaging local partners including behavioral health, law enforcement agencies, schools, and 911 centers to discuss how your community will use 988.
- Vermont Lifeline counselors can refer 988 callers to community mental health programs, or other local resources.

FOR 911 CENTERS

- The National Emergency Number Association has a 911-988 Interoperability Standards Workgroup that will release best practice recommendations on 911 and 988 interactions this summer.
- Vermont's 988 Workgroup has been meeting since last February of 2021 to enhance coordination between 911 and 988 and will continue to meet through the implementation of 988.