

DROP-IN ARTICLE

988 Coming Soon: New Number to Call for People Facing Mental Health Crises

Everyone deserves access to the support they need, when they need it – and that includes mental health support. That's why this year, starting on July 16, 2022, anyone facing a mental health crisis can call 988 and get connected to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (also called the Lifeline).

The line will be staffed with trained crisis counselors who know what callers are going through and know what local resources might make a difference. The phone line is staffed 24/7, and is free and confidential.

When someone is facing a mental health concern or living with a mental health condition, it's really common to feel like no one understands what you're going through. It may be difficult to imagine that someone who picks up the phone could totally understand what you're feeling, and even harder to imagine that recovery is possible.

The current way of doing things isn't working. Calling 911, the de facto response in our country, is not serving people in a mental health crisis well. A police response can inflict additional trauma on someone in crisis, or worse, attempt to criminalize the person.

Unlike 911, counselors will be at the other end of the Lifeline when you dial 988. They are trained to understand exactly how you're feeling and to pair you with resources that are specifically tailored to helping you meet the moment you're in.

Having concerns about your mental health is a common experience. It's time to make this kind of support just as common. This is why 988 is an easy, three-digit phone number to remember. This resource was created for everyone, including you: if you're ever feeling like you need help with a mental health or substance use crisis, but not sure if you should call, starting in July, you can just dial 988. It is a direct connection to compassionate, accessible support.

It's never too early – or too late – to seek help. In the U.S., the average amount of time between the onset of symptoms of a mental health condition or challenge and a diagnosis is 11 years. It's never too early to get support: If you're facing a mental health crisis for the first time, reaching out can help.

Mental health challenges and crises are widespread. This is why resources and support for people facing mental health and substance use crises must be just as widespread. Starting July 16, 2022, it will become even easier for people living with these challenges to get the help they need.

If you or someone you know needs to be connected to someone who will understand what you're going through and how to help, they can soon call 988 to be directly connected with a trained crisis counselor at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Note: 988 will not be available to everyone until July 16, 2022. In the meantime, if you or someone you know is in crisis, please continue to contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Crisis Text Line by texting MHA to 741741.