

## Frequently Asked Questions about 988 in Minnesota



There are many questions about 988, how it works, and the impact that it will have on communities across the state. Outlined below are specific questions that addresses 988 in Minnesota.

*For general questions about 988, the role of the federal government, and the Lifeline, please visit [SAMHSA's 988 Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/faqs) (<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/faqs>).*

### **How should we refer to the Lifeline?**

The official name that should be used to reference the service is **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**. Other acceptable ways to refer to the service are:

- "988 Lifeline" (preferred short name)
- "Lifeline"
- "988"

The former name, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, should not be used.

### **Does the number 1-800-273-8255 still work?**

Yes. The previous phone number for the Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255, will continue to function indefinitely. Whether you dial 988 or 1-800-273-8255, you will reach the same service provided by the Lifeline.

### **What is the phase out plan of 1-800-273-8255 in Minnesota?**

MDH recommends that organizations phase out 1-800-273-8255 from promotional materials starting immediately. Organizations may continue to distribute existing materials with the 10-digit number but should not print or order new materials with the 10-digit number.

Organizations should update websites and promotional materials with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline information. 988 logos and branding guidelines can be found on the [SAMHSA webpage](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit/logo-branding) (<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit/logo-branding>).

### **How many 988 Lifeline Centers are in Minnesota?**

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There are five certified 988 Lifeline Centers designated to answer calls, chats, and texts routed to Minnesota. If you call or text from a Minnesota area code, your call/text will be routed to one of these centers. For chat, you will be asked to enter in a zip code. Entering a Minnesota zip code will route you to a Minnesota Lifeline Center.

The five 988 Lifeline Centers are:

- Carver County Health and Human Services, Mental Health Crisis Program
- First Call for Help
- FirstLink
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- Mental Health Minnesota

### **What will I hear when I call the 988 Lifeline?**

After dialing 988 on your phone, you will hear an automated greeting message. The message will prompt you to a few options:

- Press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line. Available for veterans, active military, and their families
- Press 2 for a Spanish speaking crisis specialist
- Press 3 for a crisis specialist specializing in LGBTQ+ Youth and Young Adults under the age of 25

If you do not select one of the above options, your call will be routed to your local 988 Lifeline Center.

### **If I choose one of the specialized options for 988 calls, will my call be routed to a Minnesota 988 Lifeline Center?**

No. By selecting one of the three options (Veterans Crisis Line, Spanish Language Network, or LGBTQ+ Youth/Young Adults), your call will be routed to a 988 Lifeline center specializing in one of those areas. These specialized 988 Lifeline Centers are not located in Minnesota, and they provide service to the entire U.S.

All 988 Lifeline Centers must be certified and accredited by the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline before they can be authorized to answer 988 contacts. These specialized 988 Lifeline Centers meet the same standards as Minnesota 988 Lifeline Centers.

### **Who answers the phones at Minnesota Lifeline Centers? What type of training do they receive?**

When you contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, you will be connected to a trained crisis specialist. Crisis specialists are trained to listen and support each person through their distress with a focus on de-escalation, safety planning, and coping skills.

### **What happens during a conversation with a crisis specialist?**

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After a person is connected to a Lifeline Center, a crisis specialist will engage in a dialogue with them. The crisis specialist provides listening and support, information and referrals to local community health and service programs, crisis intervention, safety planning, follow-up services.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a place to speak openly about suicide, mental health, and substance use. It is also a place to receive education on how to talk about suicide with loved ones.

### **What do people call, text, or chat about?**

People connect to the Lifeline for all sorts of reasons. Some examples include suicide, concerned about someone else experiencing a mental health crisis, anxiety, PTSD, suicide attempt survivor, COVID-19, depression, disability/health condition, discrimination, grief/loss, parenting, relationships, sexuality/gender identity.

### **What is a 988 Lifeline follow-up service?**

During the contact with a crisis specialist, they may ask if the person would like to participate in follow-up service. A follow-up service is defined as receiving a phone call from the Lifeline Center, 24 to 72 hours after your initial contact.

Follow-up service is a short-term service that is meant to provide a little extra support. This service is optional and does not replace professional counseling or treatment.

### **Can a 988 Crisis Specialist respond in person when someone contacts the Lifeline?**

No, 988 crisis specialists do not respond in person. If a crisis specialist determines that a face-to-face interaction is needed, they can facilitate a transfer to the appropriate services.

### **What is the difference between 988 Lifeline Center and a mobile crisis team?**

The 988 Lifeline and local Mobile Crisis Teams are two distinct and different services.

A 988 Lifeline Center only answers when a person dials or texts 988 or when they chat online through 988lifeline.org. 988 Lifeline Centers operate 24/7 and offer confidential listening and support at no cost. 988 Lifeline Centers are staffed by crisis specialists that are trained to focus on de-escalation, safety planning, and coping skills. 988 Lifeline Centers do not offer in-person response or other higher-intensity care and support. If additional care and support is needed, a call specialist may connect the person with the local mobile crisis team.

A local Mobile Crisis Team responds to crisis calls and situations that come to the team's local crisis phone line. A mobile crisis team serves a specific county or region within the state of Minnesota. They operate 24/7 and can provide in-person response in some situations as well as

other mental health services like stabilization. Mobile crisis teams are often staffed with mental health practitioners and mental health professionals.

**Will the 988 Lifeline connect 988 calls to 911?**

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline strives to work collaboratively with each person who reaches out for support. In a small number of cases, a Lifeline Center may need to contact 911 emergency services (police, sheriff, emergency medical services) when a risk to self or others is imminent or in progress, and when a safety plan with the person cannot be established.

In Minnesota, less than 2% of calls to the Lifeline need to be connected to 911 emergency services.

**What information do people have to disclose when they contact 988?**

People reaching out to the Lifeline do not need to disclose any personal information in order to connect with the Lifeline. Some people may choose to disclose their name or other self-identifying information (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.).

To provide the most appropriate information and referral sources, the crisis specialist may ask for some demographic information. The caller/chatter/texter may disclose this information if they choose, but it is not required to receive support from 988.

**What languages does the Lifeline accommodate – will there be translation services, or will I be speaking to a crisis specialist who speaks my language?**

All Lifeline Centers across the country have access to a third-party language interpretation service. A crisis specialist can access this service for anyone. This service supports over 150 languages.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline does operate a Spanish language subnetwork of Lifeline Centers. If you dial 988 and Press 2, you will be connected to a Spanish speaking Lifeline Center.

**Is translation available for 988 Text and Chat?**

No. Text and chat are only available in English currently. Please call 988 if interpretation services are needed.

**Can you dial 988 even without active phone service?**

No. According to the Federal Communications Commissions, calls and texts to 988 require an active phone service. A person must be subscribed to a paid phone service (monthly or pre-paid subscription) to dial 988.

### **What is the difference between text and chat?**

988 Chat can be accessed through any device with a web browser. To chat online, visit [www.988lifeline.org/chat](http://www.988lifeline.org/chat). People will need to complete and submit a pre-chat survey before being connected to a crisis specialist.

988 text is available through any mobile device with capabilities to receive and send text messages. After texting to the number 988, you will receive a pre-text survey to complete.

The purpose of the pre-survey is to know a bit about the person, what they are going through and how they are feeling to help the counselor provide better support. After the connection is established with a live crisis counselor, clients will be able to engage in message exchanges through their preferred device. Please note that there may be a wait during busy times. Call 988 to speak to a crisis specialist immediately.

### **What is the difference between 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line?**

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a nationwide three-digit dialing code that anyone can use to connect to crisis support. A person can call or text to 988 or use web-based chat to connect to a crisis specialist. 988 is operated through the former National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. It is a distinct and separate service from the Crisis Text Line.

The Crisis Text Line is a separate service from the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. They offer text support when a person texts to the number 741741. Trained crisis counselors are available to respond to text messages. The Crisis Text Line is available 24/7 and can be reached by texting HOME to 741741.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line offer similar service, responding to anyone who is experiencing a crisis. People access the 988 Lifeline and Crisis Text Line for similar reasons.

### **Can I connect to the Veterans Crisis Line through 988?**

Current military service members, veterans, and their families can connect to the Veterans Crisis Line for specialized support. To reach the Veterans Crisis Line, a person can call 988 and Press 1 to be transferred.

The Veterans Crisis Line is operated independently from the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Chat for the Veterans Crisis Line can be accessed through [Veteranscrisisline.net](http://Veteranscrisisline.net) or by texting to the number 838255. *Currently, text to 988 does not support transfers to the Veterans Crisis Line.*

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### **Who can I contact if I am seeking data or more information about the 988 Lifeline in Minnesota?**

Please email all 988 questions to [health.suicideprev.mdh@state.mn.us](mailto:health.suicideprev.mdh@state.mn.us).

Minnesota Department of Health  
Suicide Prevention Unit  
PO Box 64882  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882  
651-201-5400  
[health.suicideprev.mdh@state.mn.us](mailto:health.suicideprev.mdh@state.mn.us)  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

4/28/23 To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5400.