



Dear Community Partners,

On July 16, 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) transitioned to an easy-to-remember, 3-digit number (988) across the U.S. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24/7 access to trained staff who can help people experiencing behavioral health-related distress. The need is tremendous, considering that:

- In 2020, the U.S. had one death by suicide every 11 minutes, and for every person who dies by suicide annually, 316 people seriously thought about suicide,
- In Delaware, someone dies by suicide every three days,
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among Delawareans ages 10–34.¹

People can call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org for themselves or if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. 988 serves as a universal entry point so that no matter where you live in the U.S., you can connect with a crisis counselor.

Individuals with a Delaware area code (302) who reach out to 988 are routed to *ContactLifeline, Inc*, Delaware's Lifeline Center. *ContactLifeline* has been operating in Delaware since 1974. This year, *ContactLifeline* launched a pilot to add text and chat answering capacity. As early as spring 2023, Delaware will add a second Lifeline Center operated by DHSS's Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH).

Existing behavioral health crisis lines in Delaware continue to operate:

- Adult Crisis Hotlines: 1-800-652-2929 (Northern); 1-800-345-6785 (Southern)
- Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-969-HELP (4357)

988 Data: August 1 – November 30, 2022

According to Vibrant Emotional Health, the administrator of the Lifeline network, during the first four full months of the transition to 988 (Aug 1, 2022- Nov 30, 2022):

- 1,187 calls were answered by Delaware's *ContactLifeline*, representing 75% of the 1,583 calls routed to the state.
- The average speed to answer ranged from 19 to 24 seconds.

¹ Source: SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention



- Some callers (145 calls, or 9%) hung up before anyone answered the call.
- Calls not answered by *ContactLifeline* were redirected to a national Backup Center and answered by an out-of-state counselor (251 calls, or 16%).
- Eleven calls to 988 required an activation of 911/police/EMS and 5 contacts to 988 involved a suicide attempt in progress.

Additionally,

- 33 calls originating from a Delaware area code were answered by the Spanish-speaking subnetwork (caller pressed “2”)
- 372 calls originating from a Delaware area code were answered by the Veterans Crisis Line (caller pressed “1”)

Nationwide, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline experienced a 38% higher call volume when comparing November 2022 to the same month in 2021. In Delaware, the call volume is at a similar level as the previous year.

November 2022 Call Statistics: U.S. and Delaware

Calls (excluding VCL)	United States	Delaware (ContactLifeline)
Routed	222,285	365*
Answered	195,083 (88%)	272 (75%)
Abandoned	27,202 (12%)	35 (10%)
Average Speed of Answer	00:00:33	00:00:18
Average Contact Time	00:13:21	00:08:45
Rollover to Backup Call Center(s)	-	58 (15%)

* In addition, 10 calls were connected to the Spanish subnetwork and 83 to the Veterans subnetwork.

Other Updates

- Since September 2022, Delaware’s three behavioral health crisis service providers—*ContactLifeline*, DSAMH, and Delaware Guidance Services—have been meeting monthly to review 988 data and coordinate response.
- In Q4, Delaware applied and received three federal grants, totaling \$948,333, to support 988 staffing, technology, and public messaging in the next two years.
- DSAMH’s Crisis Intervention Services (CIS) has established a Change Management Team to improve staffing, transition to electronic management of crisis episodes, and obtain accreditation to become a 988 Lifeline Center.

On the Horizon

While this is an exciting time to reimagine how we provide crisis services in Delaware and across the U.S., the full vision of a transformed crisis care system with 988 at its core will not be built overnight. Coming in 2023:



- DSAMH Crisis Intervention Services will complete accreditation to become a second Lifeline center for Delaware.
- In collaboration with Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families (DSCYF) and partner agencies, DHSS will work towards a statewide crisis communication center to consolidate multiple behavioral health crisis call services for adults and children using 988.
- Delaware will leverage multiple new federal grants, as well as cultivate new funding sources, to support continued expansion of Delaware's crisis care continuum. This includes enhancing partnerships with 911 and first responders.
- Consistent with federal guidance, DHSS and DSCYF will begin the planning for 988 public education and marketing campaigns with a goal to launch in Summer 2023.



988 National Resources

- 988 Partner Toolkit: Including Frequently Asked Questions, Fact Sheets, Logo & Branding, Printable Materials, and Social Media Shareables.
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit>
- 988 Lifeline Performance Metrics <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/performance-metrics>
- 988 Crisis Learning Community Jam <https://talk.crisisnow.com/>

