

988 Update: DHS Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS)

- National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020
 - Established 988 as the nationwide number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) and Veteran’s Crisis Line (VCL)
 - Provided a mechanism for states to fund call centers **and** mobile crisis and crisis stabilization services to be deployed in response to calls.
 - Telecommunications surcharge similar to 911 uniform surcharge.
 - Federal Communications Commission Report and Order 20-100 (RE: WC Docket No. 18-336) requires phone service providers to direct all 988 calls, nationwide, to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.

Section 4 of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020:

“A fee or charge collected under this subsection shall only be imposed, collected, and used to pay expenses...that are reasonably attributed to -

(A) ensuring the efficient and effective **routing of calls** made to the 9-8-8 national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline to an appropriate crisis center; and

(B) **personnel and the provision of acute mental health, crisis outreach and stabilization services** by directly responding to the 9-8-8 national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.”

Important Facts



- 988, as designated by the federal legislation to be the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline launches on July 16, 2022.
- Pennsylvania has 13 crisis call centers that collectively serve the entire state to answer Lifeline calls now and 988 calls beginning in July.
- 988 will reduce the workload of 911 call centers, allow 911 personnel to focus on other incidents requiring an emergency response, and ensure the public can be quickly and directly connected to resources to respond to mental health crisis events.
- Federal law prohibits the use of 911 funding for 988. Nor can 988 funding be used for 911 services.

- Proposed state legislation, named the Mental Health Crisis Intervention Program, will effectively establish the 988 crisis response system for individuals experiencing suicidal distress or a mental health crisis by supporting the existing crisis call centers in Pennsylvania and new and existing mobile crisis outreach and crisis stabilization services to directly respond to individuals in need.
- Passage of state 988 legislation will effectively establish the 988 crisis response system for individuals experiencing suicidal distress or a mental health crisis by supporting the existing crisis call centers in Pennsylvania (which will also answer texts and chats) and equally important, new and existing mobile crisis outreach and crisis stabilization services to directly respond to individuals in need.

- **Specifically, 988 legislation:**
 - Outlines mental health crisis services – aligns with federal legislation
 - Defines role of DHS in oversight of those services
 - Establishes funding mechanism for three allowable crisis services and related administration
 - Includes a telecommunications fee of \$.99 that Pennsylvanians will pay much like they pay toward 911 services.

- Legislation is needed to ensure adequate and sustainable funding is in place to expand the availability of crisis intervention services and crisis care coordination to individuals in need.
- This first step to help those in need is answering the phone, but care can go well beyond the phone call to providing immediate response to a mental health crisis.
- The goal is to ensure those in need of care get the care they need when they call 988.
- To more effectively build on the promise of 988, state lawmakers must take steps now to develop and fund an effective crisis response infrastructure that includes three key components: *Someone to answer the call, Someone to respond, and Someplace to go for care*

- While supporting people in mental health crisis and saving lives are the priorities, we know that in the long run keeping people out of hospital emergency rooms, freeing law enforcement to focus on public safety and making space available for medical emergencies in our hospitals and with our EMS are all important and will save money.
- This legislation goes beyond simply ensuring someone answers the phone - it funds a complete crisis response plan to be developed over the course of five years.
- When you have a police, fire or rescue emergency, you call 911. When you have an urgent mental health need, you'll call 988.

Similarities

- A three-digit emergency response number that dispatches help.
- Funded through a telecommunications surcharge
- Similar technology

Differences

- 988 call centers **provide a service** (“someone to talk to”) – vast majority of crises are reduced during contact with call center
- 988 centers can dispatch mental health mobile services when needed.
- Mobile crisis and crisis stabilization services dispatched in response to 988 calls **are funded** by the 988 surcharge; EMS, fire, police, etc. services dispatched by 911 **are not funded** by the 911 surcharge.
- Structure: Counties will have agreements/ contracts with PA-National Suicide Prevention Lifeline call centers and local crisis services providers.

Using the federal framework, DHS is planning a robust, sustainable Crisis Response & Stabilization system initiative in PA that:

- Reduces emergency department use and subsequent "boarding" of patients with complex needs
- Reduces incarcerations
- Reduces suicides in Pennsylvania
- Connects people experiencing mental health crises with local mental health & SUD treatment professionals and peer supports
- Ensures assessments are completed by mental health professionals to connect individuals to the most appropriate and cost-effective level of care

- To prepare for 988 implementation in Pennsylvania, DHS has undertaken several efforts in addition to legislation to assess and enhance services related to 988:
 - 988 Planning Grant
 - Coordination with NSPL call centers, advocacy coalition, and DHS/Thomas Jefferson University project team
 - **Next:** Continued coordination and evaluation
 - Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (CMHSBG) COVID-19 Supplemental Funding Grants to Counties
 - Issued RFP for counties to apply for funding to enhance crisis services through staffing, technology, and innovation
 - **Next:** Award performance and monitoring

- To prepare for 988 implementation in Pennsylvania, DHS has undertaken several efforts to assess and enhance services related to 988:
 - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services - State Planning Grants for Qualifying Community-Based Mobile Crisis Intervention Services
 - Grant to complete assessment of crisis services, reimbursement rates, Medicaid state plan, coordination between NSPL centers and mobile crisis providers
 - **Next:** Grant performance
 - Crisis services regulations
 - Conducted workgroups to develop crisis services regulations; completing draft
 - **Next:** Internal Review

- To prepare for 988 implementation in Pennsylvania, DHS has undertaken several efforts to assess and enhance services related to 988:
 - 911 Coordination
 - Working with PEMA, which administers 911, to ensure coordination between 988 and 911 services, efficient call routing between services, and potential technology sharing, if possible
 - **Next:** Continued coordination as 988 legislation and federal directives develop
 - 988 Capacity Building Grant
 - Submitted application for SAMHSA grant to enhance workforce at NSPL call centers
 - **Next:** await notification of award
 - Pennsylvania 988 Legislation
 - Created draft legislation, preliminary conversations with potential legislative sponsors
 - **Next:** Bill sponsored and introduced to the legislature

Questions?