

988 NM Campaign Talking Points

What is 988?

988 is a new, free and easy to remember nationwide helpline for emotional, mental or substance use crisis. It's part of a larger initiative to build out a behavioral health infrastructure for people in distress to have someone to call, someone to come and somewhere to go, also referred to as the Crisis Now model.

988 calls, texts and chat is answered by trained, compassionate behavioral health professionals who know community mental health and substance use resources. They will listen, offer support and work together with the caller to develop a plan for safety and recovery.

988 can open the door for all New Mexicans to seek mental well-being or substance use help, while sending the message that healing, hope, and help are happening every day to respond to them, and a place to go for safe and effective diagnosis and treatment.

988 is an important first, but not final step, in reimagining New Mexico's behavioral health crisis system to respond to anyone in need. HSD/BHSD believes New Mexicans deserve to have mental health within reach. The 988 Lifeline would be akin to an air traffic control system: a single entity smoothly helping people to a safe landing. Building the Crisis Now Continuum of Care model is about meeting people where they're at when they need it most. This transformation will take time and requires resources from federal, state, and local levels to prepare the crisis system to better meet these needs.

988 is the result of National Suicide Designation Act of 2020. States have had two years to prepare.

When is 988 available?

988 is available now in real-time for call, text, and chat. Spanish speakers are available.

When should I call 988?

- Worried about your safety or someone you know.
- Having a hard time managing strong emotions.
- Feeling hopeless, confused or angry.
- Worried about alcohol or drug use (substance use).
- Need information or referrals for local community services.
- Have something on your mind that you want to talk over with someone outside of current situation.
- Service member or veteran and their families.

Who answers my call?

When you call, text or chat 988 a trained behavioral health professional will answer. Many have a background in mental health or social work, but all are trained. They are there to listen non-judgmentally and help you process your feelings, think through your problem or situation and explore your options or what comes next and help figure out what you want to do, if anything. Currently, calls to 988 from New Mexico area codes are automatically routed to the New Mexico Crisis and Access Line, which will be the call center hub for the new expanded crisis response network.

What happens when I call, text, or chat 988?

When calling 988, callers first hear a greeting message while their call is routed to the local network crisis center (based on the caller's area code).

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You will also be given three options. Press 1 to connect to the Veterans Crisis Line or Press 2 to connect with the Spanish network.

Trained behavioral health professional will answer the phone, listen to the caller, understand how their problem is affecting them, provide support, and share resources if needed. If the local crisis center is unable to take the call, the caller will be automatically routed to a national backup crisis center.

Text

People who text “TALK” to 988 are currently connected to crisis centers equipped to respond to texts. This service will expand over the next few years to increase local and state-level response. Once connected, a behavioral health professional will listen to you, work to understand how your problem is affecting you, provide support, and share resources that may be helpful.

Chat

What happens when I chat via 988?

Chat is available through the Lifeline’s website <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat>

People seeking chat services are provided a pre-chat survey before connecting with a counselor that identifies the main area of concern. If there is a wait to chat with a crisis counselor, a wait-time message will appear. If demand is high, individuals can access the 988 “helpful resources” while waiting or call 988. Once connected, a behavioral health professional will listen to you, work to understand how your problem is affecting you, provide support and share resources that may be helpful.

How is 988 different from 911?

988 will improve access for all New Mexicans who may be in emotional, mental health or

substance use distress. 988 provides easier access to local network resources, which are different from 911. 988 changes the perception of what do in a mental health crisis. It is as important as having a physical emergency. It is an alternative to law enforcement as the primary intervention for mental health.

How do 988 and 911 work together?

The 988 and 911 systems will need to be closely coordinated to seamlessly allow referral of callers for appropriate care or response that addresses the unique circumstances present with each crisis encounter. HSD/BHSD is actively working with local 911 counterparts to plan for smooth coordination between the two services.

If I call 988 will first responders (like the police or EMS) be automatically dispatched?

The primary goal of 988 is to provide support for people in crisis or mental health-related or substance use distress in the moments they most need it and in a manner which is person-centered. The vast majority of those seeking help from the Lifeline do not require any additional interventions at that moment. Currently, fewer than 2% of the existing Lifeline calls involving immediate risk to someone’s life require connection to emergency services like 911. The 988 coordinated response is intended to promote stabilization and care in the least restrictive manner.

Will 988 calls be referred to 911?

A small percent of calls requires the 911 system when there is immediate risk to someone’s life that cannot be reduced during the 988 call. In these cases, the crisis counselor shares information with 911 that is crucial to saving the caller’s life.