



In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 dialing code to operate through the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

On July 16, 2022 the transition to 988 will happen across the nation.

Moving to a 3-digit dialing code is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to strengthen and expand the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (the Lifeline). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the lead federal agency, in partnership with the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs, making 988 a reality for America.

But 988 is more than just an easy-to-remember number — it is a direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for anyone experiencing mental health related distress – whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. Preparing for full 988 implementation requires a bold vision for a crisis care system that provides direct, life-saving services to all in need.

Chester County sees 988 as a first step towards a transformed crisis care system in much the same way as emergency medical services have expanded in the US. Chester County's 988 planning process is being coordinated by the County's Department of Mental Health/ Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, with consulting support from Capacity for Change, LLC. As part of Pennsylvania's effort to support counties in this transition, Chester County was awarded a \$300,000 grant in September 2021 for the current 988-planning process.

How is 988 different from 911?

988 was established to improve access to crisis services in a way that meets our country's growing suicide and mental health related crisis care needs. 988 will provide easier access to the Lifeline network and related crisis resources, which are distinct from 911 (where the focus is on dispatching Emergency Medical Services, fire and police as needed).

Until July 16, those experiencing a mental health or suicide-related crisis, or those helping a loved one through crisis, should continue to reach the Lifeline at its current number, **1-800-273-8255**.



988 Questions? Email:
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