

Myth Busters



Anyone across the U.S. experiencing a mental health or addiction crisis can now access 24/7, free and confidential help and support by contacting the nationwide easy-to-remember, three-digit number, **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**. The 988 system helps to prevent people experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis from becoming involved with the juvenile/criminal justice systems or sent to hospitals.

If you call 988, will a police officer immediately be dispatched to your location?

Fact: 988 is NOT 911. A goal of 988 is to reduce the necessity for police involvement, and a police officer will not immediately be dispatched to your location. When you call 988, a trained call taker will answer your call, ask you to describe your crisis, and will assist you over the phone. Research has shown that 80% of calls to the Lifeline can be managed and resolved over the phone; however, in the rare circumstance where there is imminent risk of harm to self or others, or when the caller/texter's situation cannot be resolved and needs more support in-person, the call taker may need to coordinate with a mobile crisis response team to go to the individual's location. These teams are made up trained mental health professionals. Law enforcement may be asked to respond only as a last resort, to ensure safety for all.

Are 988 call specialists qualified to respond to crisis situations?

Fact: All 988 call specialists receive thorough suicide prevention and crisis intervention training based on practices or guidelines that have been shown to have good outcomes. Illinois' 988 call specialists are trained to listen and support callers who are in distress with a focus on de-escalation and coping skills. Callers can expect to receive compassionate and accessible care aimed at meeting the individual needs of each caller including linking them to additional care and community resources as necessary.

Did 988 replace the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline?

Fact: Yes, 988 was built upon the existing National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline although the original crisis number remains in existence (1-800-273-TALK). Your local provider may also have warm lines to assist individuals in need. You may reach out to those providers in your community for more information.

Does 988 only help people who are actively suicidal?

Fact: 988 provides 24/7, free, and confidential support to all Illinoisans experiencing any type of mental health or substance use related distress — whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or addiction concerns, or any other kind of emotional distress. Individuals concerned about the mental well-being of someone they care about may also call 988 for support.