

# 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Service goes LIVE on July 16, 2022 — What you need to know



## The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020

In 2020, the [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC) adopted the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act. The act made 988 the new, nationwide, easy-to-remember 3-digit dialing, texting, and chat number for anyone experiencing a suicidal or mental health-related crisis. Once dialed, people in crisis or emotional distress are connected to suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors.

988 is not replacing existing crisis centers in Washington, but is the newest addition to the state's network of crisis center providers. Those who need help should continue to contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and through online chats.

To increase access to services for people in crisis, including people with disabilities and those who prefer text, the FCC adopted a Second Report and Order on November 18, 2021, to allow texting to 988. Partners across the country are working hard to increase capacity to answer texts and chats.

Veterans and service members may reach the Veterans Crisis Line by pressing 1 after dialing 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Spanish speakers may reach the Spanish Language Line by pressing 2.



## Call Volume

Once 988 goes live in July, Washington should be prepared for an increase in calls, texts, and chats.



## NSPL Crisis Centers

There are three NSPL crisis centers in Washington: **Volunteers of America of Western Washington, Frontier Behavioral Health, and Crisis Connections.**



## HB 1477

HB 1477 provided funding to Washington's three NSPL crisis centers, including funding to begin hiring staff in anticipation of increased call volume.

# 988, WASHINGTON'S CRISIS RESPONSE

Building understanding, hope, and a path forward for those in need, where and when they need it.

## Readiness and Preparation

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Health Care Authority (HCA) are working closely with state and national partners to prepare for 988 to go live in July. DOH is also working closely with Washington's NSPL crisis centers to assess challenges and support needs for the July activation.

Through funding from the [Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1477](#) (HB 1477), NSPL crisis centers are focused on recruiting, hiring, and training additional crisis center staff. Procuring the technologies necessary to support the increased workforce is also a priority.

For most phone carriers, 988 is already connected to NSPL crisis centers. Public promotion will not begin until all carriers make the adjustments needed to ensure that all 988 calls route directly to NSPL. 988 is not replacing existing crisis centers in Washington, but is the newest addition to the state's network of crisis center providers. NSPL will continue to answer and provide services for calls made to NSPL at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and through online chats. All other local crisis and support lines will continue services with no disruption.

## HB 1477 enacts changes to expand services in Washington

By July 16, 2022, HB 1477 requires Washington to follow national guidelines required by the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020. As such, all NSPL crisis centers will answer calls to both 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and 988.

HB 1477 outlines several key changes to Washington's Behavioral Health Crisis Response System, including:

- Health plans making next-day appointments available (January 2023)
- The establishment of best practices for deployment of mobile crisis response teams (July 2023)
- The designation of crisis center hubs (July 2024)
- An expansion of options for youth and adults to receive help while in crisis

Over the next few years, the [Crisis Response Improvement Strategy \(CRIS\) Committee](#) will develop recommendations to the Governor and Legislature to support these important components of HB 1477.

## Highlights

- On July 16, 2022, phone calls to 988 will redirect to the NSPL crisis centers.
- The current NSPL number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), will remain active after 988 goes live.
- Washington has three NSPL crisis centers: Volunteers of America of Western Washington, Frontier Behavioral Health, and Crisis Connections.
- Vibrant Emotional Health, the National Administrator of 988, has done extensive planning to provide states with anticipated call, chat, and text volume estimates for when 988 goes live in July. Washington will monitor actual call volume to improve planning over time.
- HB 1477 dedicates crucial funding, via a tax on Washington's phone and Voice over Internet Protocol lines, to support the state's NSPL crisis centers' recruitment and hiring of additional staff to answer the anticipated increase of calls after July 16, 2022.
- Learn more at the [DOH 988 webpage](#).

## Contact

Washington State Department of Health  
[988ProgramInfo@doh.wa.gov](mailto:988ProgramInfo@doh.wa.gov)

Washington State Health Care Authority  
[HCAProgram1477@hca.wa.gov](mailto:HCAProgram1477@hca.wa.gov)



DOH 971-053 June 2022

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).