



## **9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Implementation Act** Representative Tony Cárdenas (D-CA)

- Suicide rates have increased by nearly 33% in the last two decades, and the CDC reports a death from suicide every 11 minutes in the United States.
- Since 2010, more than 65,000 veterans have died by suicide – more than the total number of deaths from combat during the Vietnam War and the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan combined.
- More than 100,000 people died in 2021 alone due to drug overdoses, and the number continues to rise
- The US Surgeon General and other major organizations have announced a state of emergency for youth mental health

We are facing a national mental health pandemic and the COVID-19 public health emergency has only worsened these devastating numbers. **Our country's lack of an effective and widely available mental health crisis system is leading to tragic results for people in crisis.** For marginalized communities, limited access to crisis care and mental health specialists is causing even more devastation.

In response, in 2020 the United States Congress on a bipartisan basis directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to implement the three-digit dialing code 988, which will replace the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline on July 16, 2022. **Similar to 911 but for mental health emergencies, the 988 response system is intended to provide callers with local crisis support.** The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has worked with state leaders to provide guidance on the continuum of crisis services that should be accessible by 988. Key components include 24/7 call centers who can dispatch mobile crisis teams, and crisis facilities, where people can get the help they need in a supportive environment.

Public response to this has been immense. An October 2021 poll found that more than 80% of Americans believed that *mental health professionals should be the primary first responders for a mental health crisis* and were supportive of *24/7 crisis call centers to respond effectively to callers in crisis.*



While the 988 number is expected to support millions of people each year who face a mental health or substance use crisis, robust investment in the hotline and crisis response care is necessary to ensure that people who call 988 can actually access crisis services. Without congressional action, many areas of the country will continue to lack the ability to provide crisis services to those who call for help in an emergency.

**The 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Implementation Act provides federal guidance and resources to enable states to establish their 988 systems and crisis services.** This transformative bill provides the outline and infrastructure needed for crisis management to successfully intervene and change the narrative of mental health intervention in America.

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**The 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Implementation Act will:**

Fund the launch, infrastructure, and modernization of the new 9-8-8 hotline through:

- Establishment of a Behavioral Health Crisis Coordinating Office in the office of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Support for 250+ regional and local crisis call centers
- Permanent authorization of \$2.23 billion in Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) funding with a 10% crisis services set-aside
- A new pilot program for mobile crisis response, peer teams, and in-home crisis stabilization
- Resources for specialized services for underserved populations

Amend and develop Medicaid with measures such as:

- Providing federal support for regional and local 988 call center operations and crisis programs
- Excluding crisis centers from the federal IMD payment prohibition
- Expanding the existing 10 state Medicaid Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHC) demonstration to permit any state to participate

Support behavioral health crisis response on the ground with:

- Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) Capital Development Grants that include crisis receiving and stabilization programs and call centers
- Behavioral health workforce training program expansions
- Access and coverage of mental health and substance use disorder crisis response services