



HILL DAY *at Home*

NATIONAL
COUNCIL
for Mental
Wellbeing

BOTTOM LINE



Following the July 2022 transition to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, significant investments are needed to improve and bolster the crisis care continuum.

THE ASK



Cosponsor and support passage of the [9-8-8 Implementation Act of 2023 \(H.R. 4851\)](#) and the [Local 9-8-8 Response Act of 2023 \(H.R. 4974\)](#).

WHY WE NEED THIS LEGISLATION

In July 2022, the country transitioned to a new three-digit dialing code for individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use related crisis, moving us into a new era of more equitable and accessible crisis services. The transition to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline enabled people to easily connect with trained crisis counselors 24 hours a day, 365 days a year via call, text, or chat code. This transition has brought new challenges and opportunities to enhance and further improve our response to individuals experiencing mental health or substance use crises.

While millions more people have utilized the 988 Lifeline, we need to ensure our crisis care system offers not just someone to call, but someone to respond and somewhere to go. Mobile crisis response remains elusive in many communities and the mental health and substance use crisis workforces face crippling shortages. Growing the workforce and expanding critical access to mobile crisis services nationwide requires significant investment. Expanding behavioral health workforce training programs, increasing support for mobile crisis response, and increasing awareness of 988 will bolster the crisis care continuum and save lives.

THE 9-8-8 IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 2023

We must ensure a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated care system that prevents individuals from falling through the cracks during crisis to fulfill the promise of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Critical investments in the 988 Lifeline are still needed to bolster the crisis care continuum, facilitate Lifeline and mobile crisis response systems, and enhance coverage for crisis services throughout our health care systems.

THE 9-8-8 IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 2023 (H.R. 4851) WOULD MEET THIS GOAL IN THREE WAYS:

Fund 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Call Centers and Crisis Response Programs: Since its creation in December 2004, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has fielded more than 20 million calls from people in distress. In its first full year post-transition, the 988 Lifeline answered nearly 5 million total contacts.¹ If we are to meet the growing need for suicide prevention, mental health and substance use crisis services, Congress must provide the necessary resources for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, its call centers and the lifesaving services that fund the crisis care continuum. The 9-8-8 Implementation Act includes key provisions that:

- Provide resources to 988 Lifeline crisis centers and network operations to build the capacity needed to provide specialized services for high-risk and underserved populations and expand technology, training, and operations across the network.
- Implement a new Health Crisis Response Partnership Pilot Program to create and/or enhance existing mobile crisis response teams.

Invest in the Physical and Human Infrastructure Needed for the Crisis Care Continuum: The mental health and substance use treatment workforce is already experiencing catastrophic shortages and the influx of need that comes with creating a universal, easy-to-remember three digit dialing code has only further pressured the field. Congress must invest in both the physical and human infrastructure needed to respond to this transition. The 9-8-8 Implementation Act includes key provisions to:

- Broaden eligibility for Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) capital improvement grants (used for facility alteration, renovation, remodeling, expansion, construction, and other capital improvement costs) to include crisis receiving and stabilization programs, as well as call centers.
- Expand behavioral health workforce training programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and HRSA, including the National Health Service Corps.

Incentivize Funding Mobile Outreach, Crisis Services and Innovative Care Models: We must coordinate and integrate physical and behavioral health crisis response networks to ensure that when people dial 988, they have someone to talk to and somewhere to go to access treatment and services. This requires promoting new integrated and comprehensive care models, increasing coverage for crisis services and incentivizing states to adopt more robust crisis care models and programs. The bill would accomplish these objectives through the following provisions:

- Develop national standards for a continuum of crisis services and provide coverage of those services across a variety of health coverage plans, leveling the playing field and facilitating diversified funding of crisis services.
- Extending and expanding Medicaid’s Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) financing for regional/local 988 call center operations, mobile crisis teams and crisis centers

THE LOCAL 9-8-8 RESPONSE ACT OF 2023

Calls to 988 are routed by area code; however, since individuals often live outside of the region covered by their phone’s area code, this slows access to resources on the ground. This can create a problem if a caller needs to be connected with a greater continuum of care, such as a crisis response team or crisis center. The Local 9-8-8 Response Act seeks to eliminate unnecessary delays by connecting callers with the nearest call center so they can receive the care they need as quickly and safely as possible, while still protecting user privacy.

THE LOCAL 9-8-8 RESPONSE ACT WOULD MEET THIS GOAL IN THREE WAYS:

- Requiring the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to route calls based on the proximity of the caller to the call center, not the area code. The bill specifies that a caller’s specific location should not be revealed or discernible.
- Requiring carriers to allow calls and texts to 988, even if the cell phone from which the call is placed is inactive or the carrier is experiencing service interruptions or failures.
- Requiring multi-line systems like hotel and office phones to support direct dialing of 988 rather than requiring a caller to dial 9 or another number before dialing 988.



¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA). (2023, July). *988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: The First Year and Beyond*. [988 One Year Anniversary Issue Brief \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/988-one-year-anniversary-issue-brief)