



988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Q&A

Ohioans who are experiencing a mental health or addiction crisis can now access 24/7, free and confidential help and support by contacting the easy-to-remember, three-digit number, 988. While most information online and in the news has shared the helpful and life-saving aspects of 988, as with anything new, there has also been some incorrect information being shared. Below is a list of some of the myths that have been circulating on social media about 988, along with correct information.

1. Question: If you call 988, will a police officer be dispatched to your location?

Fact: **988 is NOT 911.** 988 was created to alleviate the necessity of police involvement, and a police officer will not be dispatched to your location. When you call 988, a trained call specialist will answer your call, ask you to describe your crisis, will assist you over the phone, and link you to additional care and community resources as necessary. 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 to someone's life, the call specialists may need to involve behavioral health mobile response or 911 for an immediate and safe response. In some rural areas of Ohio that do not have behavioral health mobile response, clinicians may respond with a local sheriff's deputy in a co-responder model of care.

2. Question: Are 988 call specialists qualified to respond to crisis situations?

Fact: 988 builds on the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and all 988 call specialists receive thorough suicide prevention and crisis intervention training based on best practices. Ohio's 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.

3. Question: Did 988 replace the National Suicide Hotline?

Fact: 988 did not replace the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL), rather it builds on the existing system by utilizing a new and easy-to-remember three-digit number (988) to provide access to mental health services. Ohioans experiencing



suicidal thoughts can still call other existing local help numbers or call the still-existing NSPL number (1-800-273-TALK) to be connected to a trained crisis specialist.

4. Question: Does 988 only help people who are actively suicidal?

Fact: 988 provides 24/7, free, and confidential support to all Ohioans experiencing any type of mental health 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.

Additional Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)/Vibrant: This [document](#) contains research-based information that guides when and why the Lifeline might use emergency response. It may help provide some background for center staff if they receive calls, texts, or chats about the social media posts, or could be helpful when talking with stakeholders.

Media countering myths: <https://www.wkyc.com/article/news/verify/health-verify/988-suicide-prevention-hotline-doesnt-send-geolocation-information-police/536-ed6cfc46-9f73-4af1-8f52-46e019b2b0cd>.

