

## How to Report on the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

In July of 2022, our country entered a new era of crisis services as the [National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020](#) was implemented nationwide. This officially ushered in 988 as the easy to remember three-digit dialing, texting, and chat code for anyone experiencing a suicidal or mental health crisis and connects users with the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network of crisis call centers.

### Media Contact

Please direct any media inquiries about 988 to the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention at [info@theActionAlliance.org](mailto:info@theActionAlliance.org). We will triage your request to the appropriate partner/expert.

This exciting development is understandably the topic of considerable public attention and news coverage. Given the life-saving nature of 988 and the important role news media plays in educating audiences about it, it is essential that all reporting is accurate, effective, and safe. To help members of the media effectively report about 988, we encourage all reporters to use this media toolkit, which is part of a larger 988 Messaging Framework. To learn more about the framework, visit [988messaging.org](http://988messaging.org).

### Reporting on Suicide, Suicide Prevention, and Mental Health

News coverage can play a key role in shaping public behaviors and discourse, especially when it comes to important health topics like suicide prevention and mental health. For example, research has found that the way media covers suicide can either influence behavior negatively. Reporting on these topics should always be informed by best practices, like those listed in the [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#) and [Words Matter: Reporting on Mental Health Conditions](#), including the following recommendations:

- **Share prevention stories.** Including stories about those people who were able to find hope and healing may reduce the risk of contagion and encourage help-seeking in others.
- **Include helpful, action-oriented resources.** Provide information, such as the warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors for suicide. Also always include hotline and treatment resources, like the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) and [Crisis Text Line](#), or local crisis phone numbers.



- **Use appropriate language and images.** Certain phrases and images can stigmatize mental health and suicide and undermine prevention objectives. For example:
  - Instead of “committed suicide” use “died by suicide” or “killed him/herself” and refer to someone as “a person with schizophrenia” rather than “schizophrenic.”
  - Instead of using dark images of people alone in despair use images of people support one another or seeking professional help.
  - Use photos with diverse age, gender, race, and ethnicity representations in stories about 988 to ensure the story conveys that the service is for everyone.
- **Ask an expert.** Interview suicide prevention or mental health experts to ensure that you're sharing verified information about suicide and mental health as well as providing the most accurate local supports that meets your outlet's audience(s).

### Reporting on 988

In addition to best practices for reporting on suicide and mental health, please consider the following key messages when covering 988:

- On July 16, 2022, the country transitioned to using the 988 dialing code. As the U.S.-based universal dialing code connecting to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Lifeline)—a network of local crisis centers throughout the country—988 increases the accessibility and use of life-saving interventions and resources.
- 988 is more than just an easy-to-remember number—it is a direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for anyone experiencing mental health related distress—whether that is thoughts of suicide, symptoms of mental illness or substance use disorder, or other factors. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need these types of crisis supports.
- The 988 dialing code is just a first step. The transition to 988 is an opportunity for states and territories to re-imagine their crisis service provision, and to ensure adequate financing for key services, such as crisis call centers, mobile crisis response teams, and crisis stabilization services.
- Over time, the vision for 988 is to have additional crisis services available in communities across the nation, much the way emergency medical services work.

For media inquiries or to connect with an expert, please contact the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention at [info@theActionAlliance.org](mailto:info@theActionAlliance.org). To learn more about 988, please visit the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) and [Vibrant Emotional Health](#)—who serve as the national leads for 988 rollout and implementation.