

# **Mental Health Crisis Intervention Program & 988 Update**

**DHS Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
(OMHSAS)**

- National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020
  - Established 988 as the nationwide number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) and Veteran’s Crisis Line (VCL)
    - Will maintain ability to select VCL or a Spanish speaking operator
  - Provided a mechanism for states to fund call centers **and** mobile crisis and crisis stabilization services to be deployed in response to calls.
    - Telecommunications surcharge similar to 911 uniform surcharge.
  - Federal Communications Commission Report and Order 20-100 (RE: WC Docket No. 18-336) requires phone service providers to direct all 988 calls, nationwide, to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.
    - Telecom companies in PA have already ensured this is activated

- Easy-to-remember three-digit national telephone number for individuals to reach mental health crisis & suicide prevention services – national promotion July 2023
- Doorway to a coordinated system of crisis responses for behavioral health needs that includes:
  - 1) “Someone to talk to” – call centers providing crisis intervention services via telephone or text/chat. Can dispatch mobile response when needed. Est. 80-90% calls resolved.
  - 2) “Someone to respond” – Community-based, face-to-face intervention to individuals in need, provided wherever they are located (mobile response teams)
  - 3) “Somewhere to go” – Home-like, non-hospital environment for emergency MH care, open 24/7/365. Includes first responder referrals & law enforcement drop-off.

## **Section 4 of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020:**

“A fee or charge collected under this subsection shall only be imposed, collected, and used to pay expenses...that are reasonably attributed to -

(A) ensuring the efficient and effective **routing of calls** made to the 9-8-8 national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline to an appropriate crisis center; and

(B) **personnel and the provision of acute mental health, crisis outreach and stabilization services** by directly responding to the 9-8-8 national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.”

## Similarities

- Three-digit emergency response number
- Funded through a telecommunications surcharge
- Similar technology

## Differences

- Call centers **provide a service** (“someone to talk to”) – vast majority of crises are reduced during contact with call center
- 988 centers are capable of dispatching mobile services when needed.
- Mobile crisis and crisis stabilization services dispatched in response to 988 calls **are funded** by the 988 surcharge; EMS, fire, police, etc. services dispatched by 911 **are not funded** by the 911 surcharge.
- Structure: Counties will have agreements/ contracts with PA-National Suicide Prevention Lifeline call centers and local crisis services providers.

Using the federal framework, DHS is planning a robust, sustainable Crisis Response & Stabilization system in PA that:

- Reduces emergency department utilization and subsequent "boarding" of patients with complex needs
- Reduces incarcerations
- Reduces suicides in Pennsylvania
- Connects people experiencing mental health crises with local mental health, ID, Aging & SUD treatment professionals and peer supports
- Ensures assessments are completed by mental health professionals to connect individuals to the most appropriate and cost-effective level of care

- To prepare for 988 implementation in Pennsylvania, DHS has undertaken several efforts to assess and enhance services related to 988:
  - 988 Planning Grant
    - Coordination with NSPL call centers, advocacy coalition, and DHS/Thomas Jefferson University project team
    - **Next:** Continued coordination and evaluation
  - Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (CMHSBG) COVID-19 Supplemental Funding Grants to Counties
    - Issued RFP for counties to apply for funding to enhance crisis services through staffing, technology, and innovation
    - **Next:** Award performance and monitoring

- To prepare for 988 implementation in Pennsylvania, DHS has undertaken several efforts to assess and enhance services related to 988:
  - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services - State Planning Grants for Qualifying Community-Based Mobile Crisis Intervention Services
    - Grant to complete assessment of crisis services, reimbursement rates, Medicaid state plan, coordination between NSPL centers and mobile crisis providers
    - **Next:** Comprehensive analysis through Mercer Government and county interviews
  - Crisis services regulations
    - Conducted workgroups with multiple stakeholders to develop crisis services regulations; completed draft
    - Next: Currently under legal review before next steps & promulgation



- To prepare for 988 implementation in Pennsylvania, DHS has undertaken several efforts to assess and enhance services related to 988:
  - 911 Coordination
    - Working with PEMA (administers 911) and other emergency responders to coordinate between 988 and 911 services, efficient call routing between services, and potential technology sharing, if possible
    - **Next:** Continued coordination as 988 legislation and federal directives develop
  - 988 Capacity Building Grant
    - SAMHSA grant to enhance workforce at NSPL call centers
    - **Next:** Award was just announced; funding distribution is next
  - Pennsylvania 988 Legislation
    - Created draft legislation, discussing support with multi-disciplinary group of stakeholders; preliminary conversations with potential legislative sponsors
    - **Next:** Bill sponsored and introduced to the legislature

- What's in the draft legislation?
  - Outlines mental health crisis services – aligns with federal legislation
  - Defines role of DHS in oversight of those services
  - Establishes funding mechanism for three allowable crisis services and related administration
  - Intend to propose 0.99 fee per line/bill/month

# Thank you!