



FAQs for the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Marylanders can connect to a local behavioral health crisis call specialist through the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. People experiencing mental health or substance use crises can call or text 9-8-8, or chat online: 988Lifeline.org.

What does this mean for Marylanders?

When someone in Maryland calls 9-8-8, the call is routed based on the caller's area code. For those calls routed to Maryland, the call is answered by one of the strategically located call centers. These centers provide phone-based support and information regarding local resources.

Who can call 9-8-8?

Anyone in need of assistance with behavioral health-related problems.

The Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Spanish and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in over 240 additional languages for people who call 988. To connect with an interpreter, callers can call 988 and ask for one in English if they are able, or they can say the name of the language they need to prompt the crisis counselor to get an interpreter on the line.

Here are all of the ways to connect:

- Call 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
 - press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line
 - press 2 for Spanish
 - press 3 for LGBTQ+ support
- Text 988 (English and Spanish)
- Chat online: 988Lifeline.org
- Learn more: 988.maryland.gov

What can you expect when calling 988?

- Callers will hear a greeting message while their call is routed to the Maryland Lifeline network crisis center (based on the caller's area code)
- A trained call specialist will answer the phone, listen to the caller, understand how their problem is affecting them, provide support, and share resources if needed.
- If the Maryland crisis center is unable to take the call, the caller will be automatically routed to a national backup crisis center.

What happens when you text 988?

- When someone texts 988, they are responded to by a group of Lifeline crisis centers that answer both chats and texts. This service will expand over the next few years to increase local and state level response.
- Once you are connected, a crisis counselor listens to you, works to understand how your problem is affecting you, provides support, and shares resources that may be helpful.
- Currently, texting is available in English and Spanish only.

What happens when you chat via 988?

- Chat is available (in English and Spanish) through the Lifeline's website: 988lifeline.org/chat.
- People seeking chat services are provided a pre-chat survey before connecting with a counselor, who identifies the main area of concern.
- If there is a wait to chat with a crisis counselor, a wait-time message will appear. If demand is high, people can access the Lifeline's "helpful resources" while waiting.
- Once you are connected, a crisis counselor listens to you, works to understand how your problem is affecting you, provides support, and shares resources that may be helpful.

How does 988 help Marylanders?

988 call specialists located at crisis call centers around Maryland can immediately provide phone-based support and connections to local resources.

By directing cases to 988 when a behavioral health crisis (mental health and substance use) isn't life threatening, the response provided by public services, such as law enforcement and EMS, can be reserved for situations in which lives are endangered.

In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 calling code to be operated through the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA) sees 988 as a first step towards a transformed crisis care system in America.

Learn more: 988.maryland.gov