



**DMHAS**  
Division of Mental Health  
and Addiction Services

# 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Beyond the Three Digits

July 31, 2026

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# What is 988?

- 988 is the **nationwide 3-digit dialing code for suicide prevention and mental health and/or substance use crisis.**
- When you dial or text 988, you will be connected to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline which **is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.**
- You can also chat with 988 at [988Lifeline.org](https://988Lifeline.org)
- **People can dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one** who is in crisis and may need immediate support
- All U.S. states and territories transitioned from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) to 988 on July 16, 2022.



# 988's Guiding Principle

Anyone in crisis will always have

***Someone to Contact  
Someone to Respond  
A Safe Place for Help***

# 988 is more than just a number.

It is a continuum of care for individuals experiencing behavioral health struggles. This system is designed to support individuals in the least restrictive environment with the most appropriately trained professionals.

## Someone to Contact

*Call or Text 988  
Chat at [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat)*



Help is available through 988 to anyone having thoughts of suicide, a mental health or substance use crisis, or any kind of emotional distress. The Lifeline also assists people who are worried about a loved one or friend who is in crisis.

## Someone to Respond

*Mobile Crisis Outreach  
Response Teams (MCORTs)*



24 hours a day, every day of the year response to non-life-threatening mental health, substance use or suicidal crises in the community. MCORT services are only available through contacting the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

## A Safe Place For Help

*Crisis Receiving Stabilization  
Centers (CRSCs)*



24 hours a day, every day of the year home-like, non-hospital centers providing short-term (less than 24 hours) community-based services to individuals experiencing a suicidal, mental health, or substance use crisis. Walk-in services are available.

# Someone to Contact:

## *Pillar 1~Call, Text or Chat*

- New Jersey now has **four 988 contact centers** that have been responding to the NSPL since 2013
- All four centers respond to 988 **calls**
- Three of these centers respond to 988 **chats and texts**
- As of March 2025, all four major cell phone carriers participate in **georouting** for calls to 988
  - Historically, contacts were routed based on area code
  - October 2025, FCC has adopted a rule to require wireless providers to participate in georouting for texts. Major carriers have until April 2027. Smaller carriers have until October 2028.

## WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU CALL 988

You will hear an automated message while your call is being routed to your local 988 Lifeline center.

We will play you a little music while you are connected.  
A trained counselor will answer the phone.

The counselor will listen to you provide support, and help connect you to local resources.

## WHEN YOU TEXT 988

You will receive a welcome message and be asked if you would like to access a specialty line.

You will be asked a set of questions including:  
*Do you have thoughts of suicide?*  
*On a scale of 1 to 5, how upset are you?*

A live counselor will enter the conversation.  
They will understand how your problem is affecting you, provide support, and help connect you to local resources.

## WHEN YOU CHAT [chat.988lifeline.org](https://chat.988lifeline.org)

You will be asked to complete a brief pre-chat survey.  
Questions include:  
*Do you have thoughts of suicide?*  
*On a scale of 1 to 5, how upset are you?*

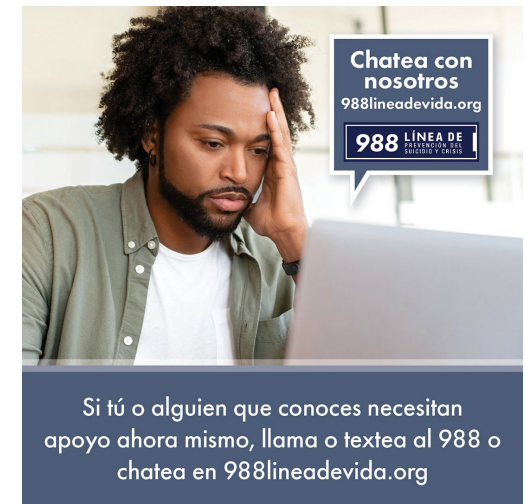
You will be notified that you have entered the chat queue.

A live counselor will enter the chat. They will understand how your problem is affecting you, provide support, and connect you to local resources.

# 988 Specialty Lines and Languages



- **Veterans Crisis Line**
  - Dial “988” and press “1”
  - Text to “838255”
- **Spanish Line**
  - Dial “988” and press “2”
  - Text “AYUDA” to “988”
- **American Sign Language (ASL) and TTY services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing**
  - Dial “988” on a phone with video capabilities or dial “711” then “988”
  - Go to 988lifeline.org and press “ASL Now”
  - Go to 988lifeline.org and press “Deaf/HoH”
- **Translation in over 240 languages**



# Other Call Lines in New Jersey



Peer-run service providing ongoing telephone support to mental health consumers as they work towards their recovery.

**1(877) 292-5588**

**M-F 8am – 10pm  
S-S 5pm – 10pm**



New Jersey's behavioral health information and referral service.

**1(866) 202- HELP  
(4357)**

**7 days per week  
8am – 8pm**



24/7 confidential peer support for NJ law enforcement officers and their families. Peer counselors are retired officers and licensed clinicians that served several different law enforcement agencies.

When the job or life gets to you, it helps to talk confidentially to another officer who has been in your shoes.

**1(866) Cop2Cop  
(267-2267)**



24/7 support to New Jersey National Guard members, active military personnel, veterans, their families, and caregivers, statewide.

**1(866) 838-7654**



24/7/365 confidential and anonymous helpline for New Jersey's youth and young adults. 2NDFLOOR is here to help you find solutions to the problems that you face.

**Call or Text  
1(888) 222-2228**

**Download the Free  
2NDFLOOR App**

The all new 2NDFLOOR Mobile App is a safe space for New Jersey youth anytime, anywhere!



24/7 central call-in line for New Jersey residents who are looking for help with a substance use disorder. Trained staff will screen callers to identify their exact needs, are able to provide referrals to supportive services and a seamless connection to a local treatment provider.

**1(844) 732-2465**



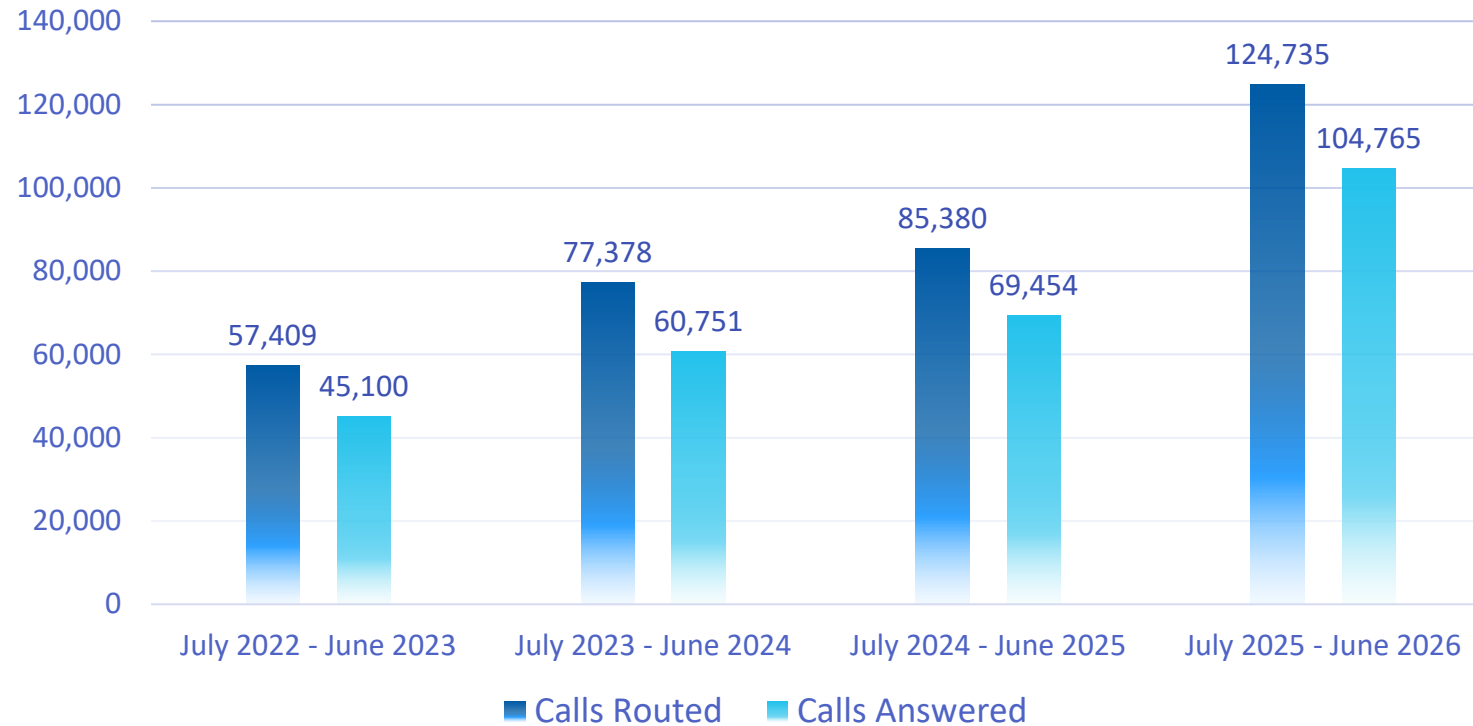
24/7 information and referral service that connects people in need with a variety of health and human service programs.

**Call 211 or  
1(877) 652-1148**

**Text your zip code  
to  
898-211**



## NEW JERSEY 988 CALLS RECEIVED AND ANSWERED



*\*based on data provided by Vibrant Emotional Health*

**SOMEONE TO CALL ~  
988 continuum, Pillar 1:**  
Additional funding was  
awarded in 2025 to  
expand NJ's 4 Lifeline  
Centers and further the  
system's goal of reaching  
a 90% in-state answer  
rate.

# WHO DO I CALL WHEN...



988

I'm having suicidal thoughts but I don't want to hurt myself.

I feel down, depressed or hopeless.

I am thinking about overdosing on drugs.

I have been sober for 1 year and I am thinking about going to the liquor store.

I have not used drugs for 6 months, but I'm stressed and thinking about using one more time.

I am thinking about using drugs for the first time.

I'm worried about my loved one/friend's mental health. I'm afraid she might hurt herself.

I am in emotional distress.



911

I have harmed myself. I am hurt or sick and need help.

I have an immediate plan to hurt or kill myself.

I'm afraid I might hurt myself or others.

Someone I know is threatening to hurt himself.

Someone I know is threatening to hurt someone.

I overdosed and I think I need medical attention.



211

I am struggling to feed my family and I need help getting food.

I cannot pay my utility bills and I need help.

I don't have anywhere to stay. Do I have to go to a shelter?

I cannot afford my mortgage and I am about to go into foreclosure.

I cannot afford my rent and my landlord is threatening to evict me.

I am going to lose my job if I cannot find affordable childcare.

I have been unemployed for a while and my benefits are about to run out.

There was a natural disaster and I cannot afford to repair my home.

# 9-1-1/988 Collaboration and Interoperability

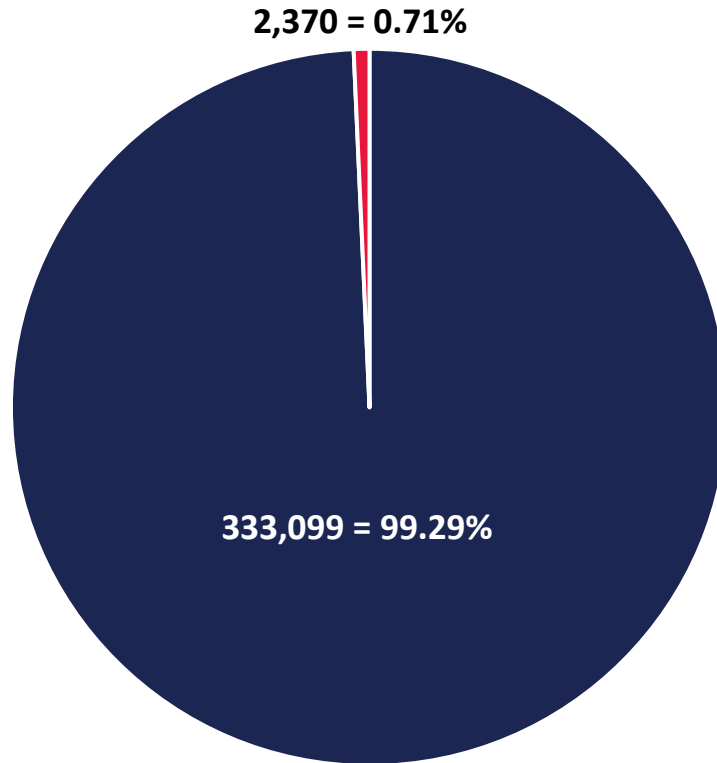


- Many calls come to 9-1-1 that are not life-threatening but are related to a mental health, substance use or suicidal crisis.
  - National data suggests that **mental health, behavioral health and substance-use related calls comprise 5-15% of the annual 9-1-1 call volume in the U.S.** ([Policing the mentally ill \(powerdms.com\)](https://www.powerdms.com/policing-the-mentally-ill/))
- Every state is developing plans for 9-1-1/988 collaboration and interoperability.
- The goal is to establish a “no wrong door” plan for transferring calls between 9-1-1 and 988 based on the needs of the caller.
- Training on transfer policies and procedures for both 9-1-1 telecommunicators and 988 crisis counselors is in development.





## 988 Contacts Resulting in Emergency Rescue July 2022 - June 2026



- 988 Contacts Resolved without the use of 9-1-1
- 988 Contacts Requiring Outreach to 9-1-1 for Emergency Services

- Since launch, **less than 1% of contacts answered by the 988 Lifeline in NJ have resulted in outreach to 9-1-1 for emergency rescue.**
- This is similar to national data.
- Data indicates the success of the 988 counselors in de-escalating crisis situations.
- Studies show that callers feel significantly less depressed, suicidal, overwhelmed, and more hopeful after connecting with a 988 Lifeline counselor.

# Someone to Respond



**Mobile crisis services already exist in New Jersey and can be accessed by individuals in crisis, including:**

- **Mobile Screening** (staff from Designated Screening Centers)
- **Mobile Response and Stabilization Services** (MRSS from Children's System of Care/PerformCare)
- **ARRIVE Together** (a co-responder, law enforcement/behavioral health professional, ride-along program)
- **First Responders** (Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Law Enforcement and Fire)



# Someone to Respond ~ 988 Pillar 2

## Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams (MCORTs)



- MCORTs respond statewide to **adults** in **non-life-threatening** mental health, substance use, or suicidal crises in the community.
- MCORTs are dispatched when a 988 Lifeline center **crisis counselor determines an in-person visit** would be helpful and the help-seeker consents to services.
- Consist of 2-person teams including Crisis Response Specialists and Peer Support Specialists supervised remotely by a Master's level clinician.
- Law enforcement is involved only in rare instances when their presence is necessary.
  - *Only 5% of outreaches so far have resulted in a contact to 9-1-1 after MCORT has arrived on scene*
- MCORTs are available statewide, 24/7/365.



# Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams (MCORTs)

## *What to Expect ~*

- Target **response time** is within one-hour of dispatch.
- Teams respond in **non-descriptive vehicles** and in plain clothes.
- MCORT response team will reach out to the help-seeker via phone call prior to arriving on scene.
- MCORTs **de-escalate the crisis**, **provide linkage** to ongoing community services, and **follow-up within 72-hours** to ensure further crisis diversion.
- Teams **collaborate with family members, friends, or loved ones** to assist and support the individual in crisis.
- If a different level of care is needed, MCORTs can **transport** individuals to the hospital, local EISS, etc.



# Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams (MCORTs)

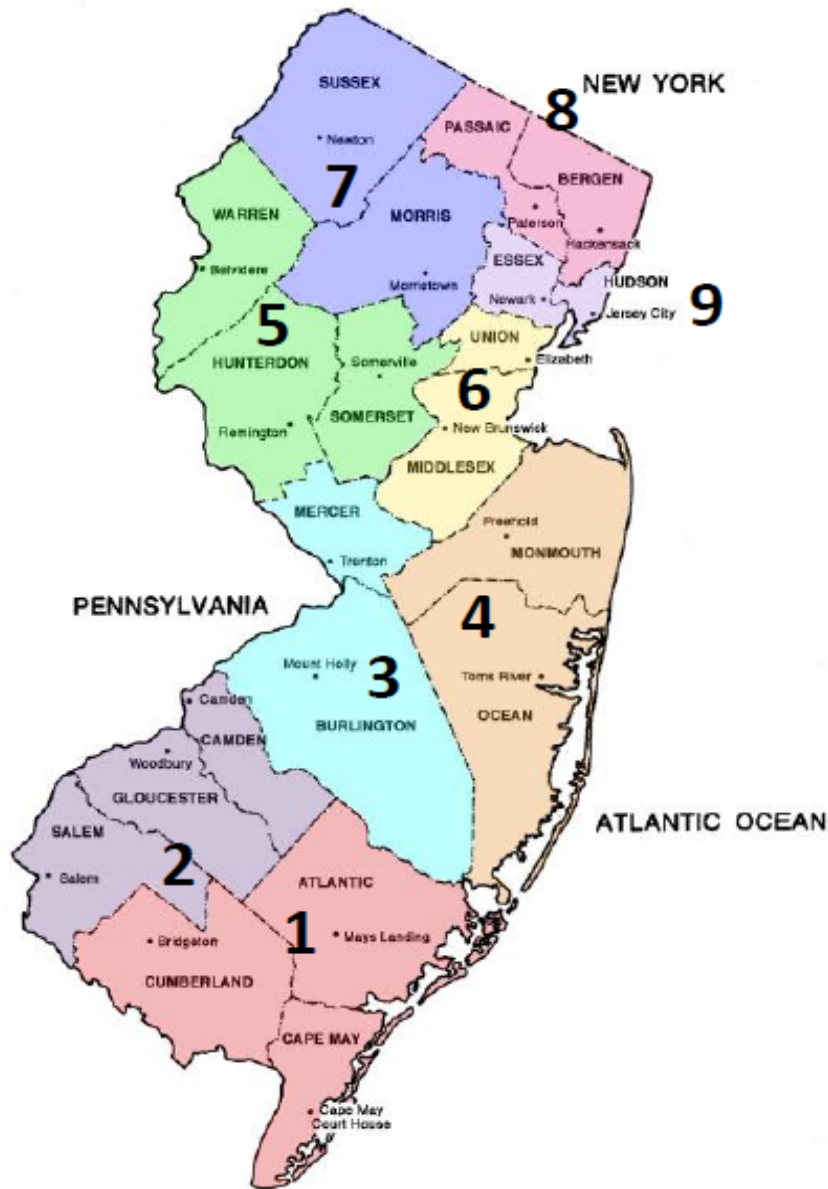
## Program Expectations & Objectives

- MCORT agencies are well-established behavioral health service providers in NJ.
- MCORT staff receive comprehensive training in crisis-response.
- MCORTs maintain relationships with relevant community partners.
- The prevailing objective is to **divert from the need for more acute care services and maintain the individual in the community without involving law enforcement.**





## MCORT: 9 Regions · 5 Providers · 62 Teams providing services 24/7



**Region 1:** Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland (*Legacy Treatment Services*)

**Region 2:** Camden, Gloucester and Salem (*Legacy Treatment Services*)

**Region 3:** Burlington and Mercer (*Legacy Treatment Services*)

**Region 4:** Monmouth and Ocean (*Collaborative Support Programs of NJ*)

**Region 5:** Hunterdon, Somerset and Warren (*Bridgeway Behavioral Health Services*)

**Region 6:** Middlesex and Union (*Collaborative Support Programs of NJ*)

**Region 7:** Morris and Sussex (*Bridgeway Behavioral Health Services*)

**Region 8:** Bergen and Passaic (*CarePlus NJ*)

**Region 9:** Essex and Hudson (*Mental Health Association of Essex & Morris*)

# A Safe Place for Help



**Stabilization services already exist in New Jersey and can be accessed by individuals or by someone concerned for a person in crisis:**

- **Designated Screening Centers** (Psychiatric Emergency Services)
- **Early Intervention Support Services** (Mental Health and Substance Use Urgent Care)
- **Crisis Residential Services Programs** (Residential Respite Programs)
- **Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics** (Mental Health and/or Substance Use Treatment with care coordination)





# A Safe Place for Help ~ Pillar 3

## Crisis Receiving Stabilization Centers (CRSCs)

- CRSCs will offer **community-based behavioral health urgent care services** in a facility designed to meet the immediate needs of people experiencing a suicidal, mental health or substance use crisis.
- 5 CRSCs will be located throughout the state, and staff will include **mental health counselors, nurses, prescribers, substance use disorder specialists, and peer professionals.**



# Crisis Receiving Stabilization Centers (CRSCs)



## *What to Expect ~*

- Once operational, CRSCs will be open for referrals, walk-ins, and drop-offs by first responders 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, every day of the year
- Services will include access to trained staff who can provide intensive supports including assessment, crisis stabilization, engagement, psycho-education, identification of strengths, collaborative problem solving, and individualized crisis planning.
- Medication management, administration, and psycho-education will also be offered.
- Continuity of care promoting continued stability and ensuring linkages are arranged that meet the needs of the individual.
- Provided in a home-like, living room environment with 22 recliners, planned in 5 locations:
  - Morris County ~ Center for Family Services
  - Care Plus ~ Bergen
  - Essex County ~ Rutgers University Behavioral HealthCare
  - Monmouth County ~ Monmouth Medical Center
  - Camden County ~ Legacy Treatment Services

# **988 Awareness and Messaging**

# Public Awareness Campaign

- Launched in August 2023
- Statewide messaging campaign to **promote awareness of 988**
- Target audiences include:
  - Non-Hispanic African Americans
  - Native Americans
  - Hispanic
  - LGBTQ+
  - Youth and College Students
  - Older Adults
- Various platforms including roadways, buses, trains, social media, sports media, streaming ads, etc.
- A larger campaign launched in early 2025 and is currently underway





# Public Awareness Campaign





# 988 *Messaging Do's and Don'ts*

## Messaging Do's:

- Use a natural, personal tone
- Reinforce 24/7 availability for reaching someone who cares
- Stress privacy
- Emphasize counselors are trained
- Reinforce counselors are live and always available
- Educate about 988 and warning signs of suicide

## Messaging Don'ts:

- Use hyperbole, clinical or scripted language
- Use ambiguous language about confidentiality
- Fail to communicate the “human” aspects of a caring, understanding, nonjudgmental person to talk to
- Compare 988 to 9-1-1
- Imply that 988 is a last resort or only for dire emergencies

# Key take aways ~ 988

- Free, confidential support
- For mental health or substance use distress or crisis, whether you or someone you know
- Answered by trained crisis counselors that are kind, caring, and non-judgmental



**No Judgment. Just Help.**

**Life can get**

**988**  
LIFELINE

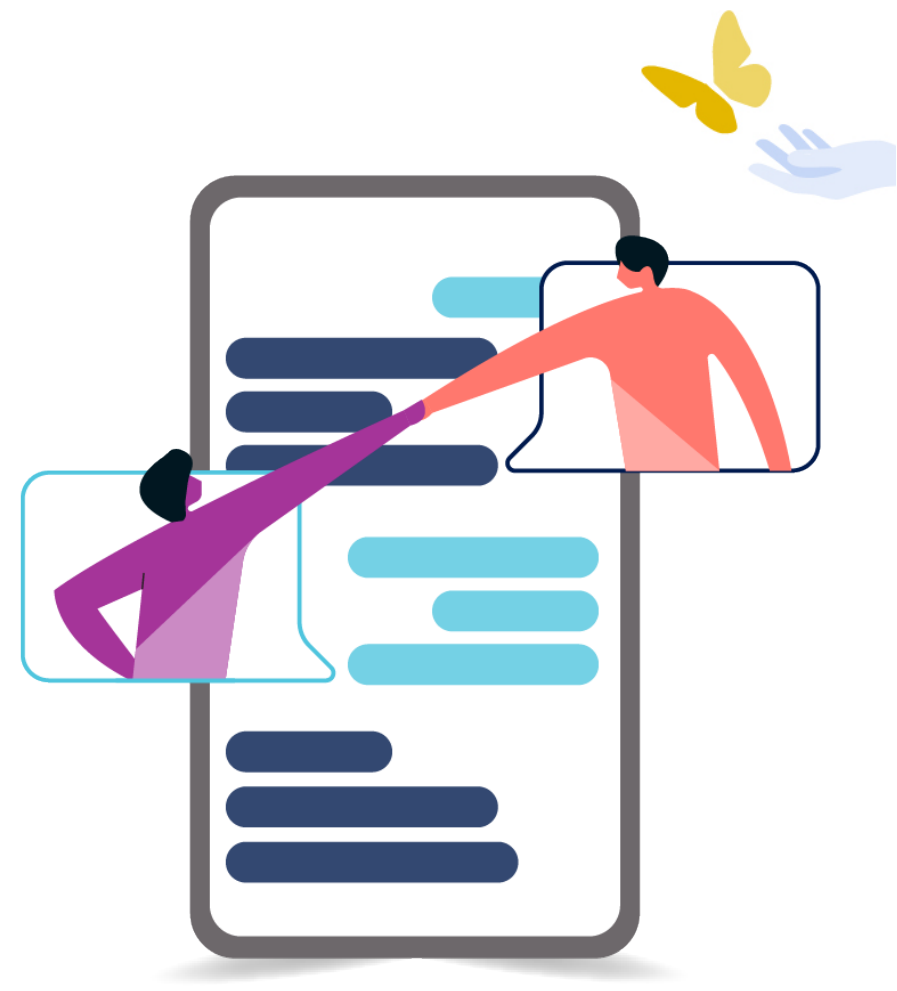
# The Road Ahead...

- Adding staff, bolstering trainings, and **growing to meet the need** in our state.
- NJ DMHAS has also received a grant to help bolster the wellness of the 988 workforce to prevent burnout and increase staff retention.
- Ad campaign via various platforms to **promote awareness of 988** for those in need (i.e.. roadways, buses, social media, sports media, streaming ads, etc.)
- CRSCs are in development.



# In Closing...

- 988 is the nationwide 3-digit dialing code for **suicide prevention and mental health or substance use crisis**.
- Call/chat/text **24 hours a day, every day**.
  - Call or text **9-8-8**
  - Chat at <https://chat.988lifeline.org>
- **MCORTs** are available statewide 24/7/365.
- **CRSCs** are in development.
- 9-1-1/988 interoperability is a high priority.
- If you or someone you know needs help, **contact 988 for free, confidential support**



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# Need resources?

[orders.gpo.gov/SAMHSA988/Pubs.aspx](https://orders.gpo.gov/SAMHSA988/Pubs.aspx)

[988Questions@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:988Questions@dhs.nj.gov)

<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/initiatives/988/>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>

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# Additional Resources



988 Lifeline: <https://988lifeline.org/>



SAMHSA 988 Lifeline Site: <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>



New Jersey DMHAS 988 Site: <https://nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/crisis/index.shtml>



Follow-Up Matters: <https://followupmatters.988lifeline.org>



Arrive Together Program: <https://www.njoag.gov/programs/arrive-together/>



988 Partner Toolkit: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit>



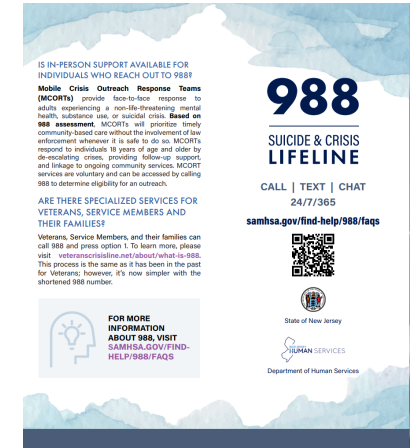
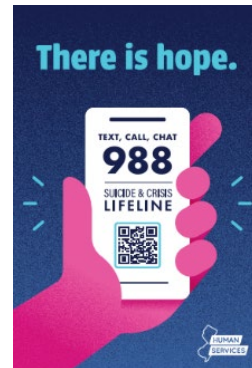
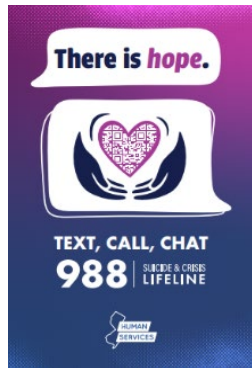
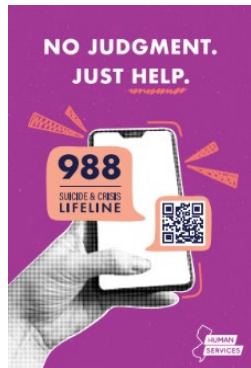
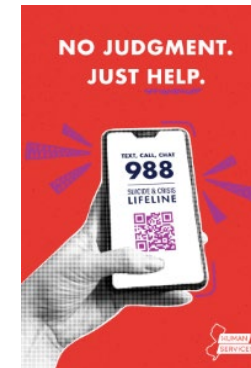
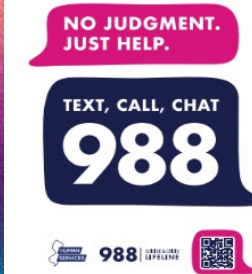
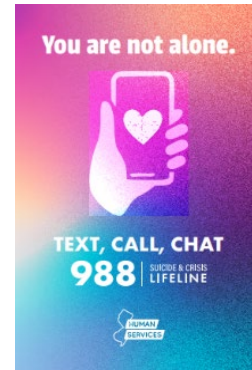
DMHAS Community Services: <https://nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/resources/consumers/index.shtml>

# Magnets and Brochures Available!

| NJ Crisis Services: Who Should I Call?    |                                 |                            |                     |  |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Someone to Call For...                    | 988   SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE | 9-1-1   Emergency Response | 2-1-1   Basic Needs |  |
| 24/7 services                             | 24/7                            | 24/7                       | 24/7                |  |
| Overdose in progress or medical emergency |                                 |                            |                     |  |
| Suicide attempt in progress               |                                 |                            |                     |  |
| Someone is a threat to self or others     |                                 |                            |                     |  |
| Mental health crisis                      |                                 |                            |                     |  |
| Substance use crisis                      |                                 |                            |                     |  |
| Suicidal thoughts                         |                                 |                            |                     |  |
| Referrals                                 |                                 |                            |                     |  |

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national hotline offering one-on-one support for mental health, suicide, and substance use-related problems for anyone 24/7. No matter where you are in the United States, you can call or text the number 988 or chat online at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) and connect with a skilled, compassionate crisis counselor. There is no reason too big or too small to reach out to 988.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY | DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



# Have questions?

[988Questions@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:988Questions@dhs.nj.gov)

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