

## How is 988 different from 911?

If a life-threatening crisis is underway (i.e. a suicide attempt in progress), then 911 is the best number.

For individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts, 988 provides a trained crisis counselor who can effectively de-escalate the person's distress and provide connection to local resources.

911 is a relay service for dispatching a response team (fire, EMS or law enforcement).

Contacting the Lifeline is an intervention in itself, and most individuals currently contacting the Lifeline are served by engaging with its trained crisis counselors. However, as more people utilize 988 in the future, the need for more robust in-person response capacity and crisis stabilization services is expected to grow.

## Special Resources:

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) youth and young adults under 25 who want to connect with a counselor can call 988 and select option 3, text "Y" to 988 or access the service via chat.

TTY (Teletypewriter) users can use their preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988. American Sign Language (ASL) services are incorporated into the 988 Lifeline. To connect directly to a trained 988 Lifeline counselor in ASL, callers who are Deaf, Deaf Blind, Deaf Disabled, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened can click the "ASL Now" button on [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org).



**MCES CRISIS NETWORK CENTER**

**988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE**

*TALK WITH US*

**Montgomery County  
Emergency Service  
50 Beech Drive  
Norristown, PA 19403  
610-279-6102  
[www.mces.org](http://www.mces.org)**

## **What is the 988 Lifeline?**

The 988 Lifeline is a free 24/7 telephone link to crisis counselors who can help with behavioral health needs, thoughts of suicide, and more.

## **Why does MCES do 988?**

Being part of the Lifeline fits our crisis services mission, helps us divert persons in crisis from criminal justice contact, and makes us part of a national network offering a wide range of resources

988 is the nation's mental health safety net. It was created to reduce suicides and mental health crises, and provide a pathway to well-being.

Callers can reach crisis counselors who can offer support and counseling, discuss optional solutions, and make connections to resources.

## **How did 988 come about ?**

In 2005, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline was established to provide mental health emergency support to callers 24/7. It became a network of more than 200 call centers providing emotional support, suicide risk assessment, transfers to emergency services, and referrals to treatment.

MCES joined what is now known as the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Network in 2013.

In 2020, Congress enacted the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act that established a three-digit number (988) as the mental health emergency number.

988 is easier to remember than the original Lifeline number (1-800-273-8255) and is supported by the county, state, and national governments.

## **What about confidentiality?**

988 is minimally invasive of individual privacy. Callers are not required to give their name. Calls are not traced. A counselor may ask for personal information if needed to save lives or to refer to other services. Caller phone numbers are recorded for follow-up by counselors.

## **Is texting available for 988?**

Yes. Text "4HOPE" to 741741 to reach a crisis counselor. Texting is available in English and Spanish.

## **Can chat be used on 988?**

Yes. Chat is available in both English and Spanish on the 988 Lifeline's website at [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat). People using chat do a pre-chat survey on their concerns before connecting with a crisis counselor.

*MCES serves 988 callers in Montgomery and Delaware Counties*