

# 988 in GEORGIA

## What is 988?

988 is the nationwide 3-digit dialing code for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. 988 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year via call, text or chat at 988lifeline.org. It is one of the largest federally mandated crisis response transformations in decades designed to meet the rising needs of mental health, substance abuse disorders, and suicide interventions.

Georgia's Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities is leading the planning process and implementation of 988 in Georgia.

Moving to a 3-digit dialing code is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to strengthen and expand the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Establishing 988 for suicide prevention and behavioral health crises will make it easier for Georgians who are experiencing a crisis to access the help they need and decrease the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health.

## Funding

Georgia's General Assembly has already approved some funding for 988 support. However, just like 911, more funding is needed to help build out a system that ensures a robust mental health response. The federal legislation not only put 988 into law, but it also allows states to implement monthly fees on telecommunications bills. While other states have rushed to pass fees, Georgia will continue to assess actual call volume to determine how best to approach funding this long-term transformation of Georgia's crisis infrastructure.



## Georgia's Rollout

The 988 dialing code is available for call, text, or chat at 988lifeline.org. Callers are connected to a trained staff member who can help address immediate needs and connect the callers to care resources, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

We know that eventually 988 will become as commonly used as 911, providing appropriate mental health crisis responses for all Georgians. While 911 began in the 1960s, it took thirty years to have 93% of the U.S. population covered by 911 and it continues to evolve.

We are taking lessons learned from 911 implementation: building capacity and staffing over time, with a focus on technology and infrastructure. As more Georgians use 988, we are working hard to build capacity and infrastructure to serve the increasing demand from Georgians.



Call • Text • 988 • Anytime

## 988 Matters

The ongoing rollout of 988 has become a critical tool to address our state's needs. From 2021-2022, Georgia experienced a slight decline in suicides in urban areas, but rural suicides have consistently increased. As of fall 2023, rural Georgia continues to place a higher percentage of crisis calls by population compared to their urban counterparts. Overdose-related deaths in Georgia have also steadily increased, with the number of such deaths rising by approximately 76% from 2018 to 2021.

Georgians will continue to have access to the Georgia Crisis and Access Line, GCAL (1-800-715-4225) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year to help anyone in crisis. This will not change with the implementation of 988.

### GCAL PROFESSIONALS PROVIDE:

- + Crisis Intervention Services over the phone
- + The ability to dispatch mobile crisis teams
- + Assistance to individuals in finding an open crisis or detox bed across Georgia
- + A way to link individuals with urgent appointment services

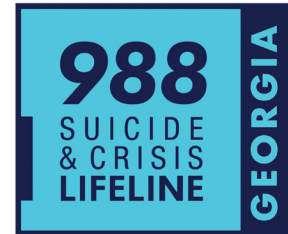
### 988 vs. 911

- + 988 was established to improve access to behavioral health crisis services.
- + 988 will provide easy access to individuals having a behavioral health crisis, distinct from 911, which focuses on dispatching Emergency Medical Services, fire and police as needed.

### RE-IMAGINING CRISIS RESPONSE WITH 988

The time is now for policymakers, healthcare providers, law enforcement and behavioral health advocates to re-imagine how Georgia responds to people in mental health, substance use, and suicide crisis.

- + 988 will help to connect a person in a mental health crisis to a trained professional responder, who can address their immediate needs and help connect them to ongoing care.
- + 988 will help to reduce healthcare spending with more cost-effective early intervention.



### SUICIDE & CRISIS

988 will reduce the use of law enforcement, public health and other safety resources.



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