

From mass.gov *What is 988?*

About 988

- 988 is a direct three-digit phone line to trained [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) call takers.
- 988 can be used anytime, anywhere you or a loved one is in emotional distress or having suicidal thoughts.
- Trained call takers, who are not licensed clinicians, are available to provide free, confidential emotional support to all callers. You do not need to be suicidal to call 988.
- With an easy to remember number like 988, the Lifeline hopes to reach many more people in emotional distress and connect those to services if needed.
- As of July 16, 2022, 988 is available 24/7, 365 days a year.

What to expect when you call 988

- Calls will be routed to a call center based on a caller's area code.
- All calls will be answered by a highly trained staff or volunteer who will provide compassionate, non-judgmental support.
- Although the number is shorter, it will still connect to the same service which has been available in Massachusetts for many years.

What to expect when you text or chat

Chat is available through the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988lifeline.org.

- People seeking chat services will complete a pre-chat survey before being connected with a counselor that 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, individuals can access the Lifeline's "helpful resources" while waiting or call 988.
- Once connected, a crisis counselor will listen to you, work to understand how your problem is affecting you, provide support, and share resources that may be helpful.

Text is available through 988 as of July 16, 2022.

- When someone texts to 988, they will complete a brief survey before connecting to a group of Lifeline crisis centers that respond to chat and text.

- Once connected, a crisis counselor will listen to you, work to understand how your problem is affecting you, provide support, and share resources that may be helpful.

988 accessibility and services available for specific groups

- Those who are deaf or hard of hearing may use the [online chat function](#) or TTY users may use their preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988. More information for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have hearing loss can be found [here](#).
- Language translation services are also available to all callers, specifically the Spanish Language Line can be accessed by pressing 2 after dialing. Information on [Spanish Language services](#) through 988 can be found [here](#).
- Service Members, Veterans, and their Families may reach the Veterans Crisis Line by pressing 1 after dialing 988, as well as by chatting online at [veteranscrisisline.net](#) or texting 838255.
- LGBTQ youth may also use the [Trevor Lifeline](#) by calling 1-866-488-7386 or texting 678-678 to access information and support for LGBTQ youth.

Behavioral Health BHHL (BHHL) Overview

Access to treatment by call, text, or chat 24/7/365 at 833-773-BHHL or online at masshelpline.com

The **Behavioral Health BHHL (BHHL)** was launched January 3, 2023. It is a valuable resource available for behavioral health needs to anyone in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It will provide individuals with assistance in times of need and will offer access to a variety of services.

The **BHHL** is a **critical tool** that will **help people connect with a provider before there's a mental health emergency, for routine or urgent help in their community, or even right at home**, including mental health assessments and referrals. In addition, warm handoffs to local Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHC) as well as other partners and providers are available. If the Help Line identifies someone at imminent risk of harm, 9-1-1 will be contacted.

What the Help Line Is

Broader service/navigation support

- Connect individuals & families to the full range of comprehensive treatment services for mental health & addiction offered in MA, including **outpatient, urgent and immediate crisis intervention**.
- Provide real time, live clinical triage, and service navigation in multiple languages 24/7.
- Collaborate with existing statewide services such as Mass211, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) Substance Use Helpline and 988, including protocols for connecting help seeker and raising awareness about the statewide toll-free behavioral health crisis line.

How the Help Line Connects

- Staffed with Clinicians, Peer Supports, Community Relations, Resource and Referral Specialists.
- Connection to 9-1-1 when emergency services are needed.
- Deployment of Crisis Services when clinically appropriate, as well as handoff to community providers for callers as needed.
- Follow up contact with callers to ensure transitions of care are successful.
- Resources to ensure callers get to the support they need (e.g. - transportation, childcare, food, etc.)
- Caller intake and clinical information transmitted to other healthcare providers, reducing redundancy & accelerating service delivery.

Hand-off from 9-1-1 to BHHL



In all circumstances, 9-1-1 responders should follow local policy and procedures for handling and responding to behavioral health emergencies in regards for life, safety, and property.

9-1-1 RISK LEVEL	CRITERIA	ACTIONS TAKEN
ROUTINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When there is no imminent/emergent risk or medical emergency. When there is a routine behavioral health need identified, where the caller is in emotional distress, further behavioral health assessment is best, and social/family support and resources are immediately available. If the caller has only mild impairment in judgment, psychosocial functioning and impulse control, and no check on well-being is necessary by emergency services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9-1-1 can initiate assistance from BHHL as a conference call using the button titled “Behavioral Health Help Line”. 9-1-1 should maintain phone contact to ensure no additional resources are needed.
URGENT NEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The caller is distressed, or risk factors are present, but there is <u>no current potential danger of harm to self or others.</u> The caller indicates intoxication or mild substance withdrawal symptoms not requiring medical assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9-1-1 can initiate assistance from BHHL as a conference call using the button titled “Behavioral Health Help Line”. 9-1-1 should maintain phone contact to ensure no additional resources are needed.

Hand-off from BHHL to 9-1-1



BHHL will contact 9-1-1 when emergency services are needed and require a response from police, fire, or medical services. Information displayed will be for BHHL and not the caller.

BHHL RISK LEVEL	CRITERIA	ACTIONS TAKEN
EMERGENCY NEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When failure to obtain immediate care would place the caller's life, another's life, or property in jeopardy, or cause serious impairment of bodily functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">BHHL will contact 9-1-1 & remain on the line with the caller to give as much information as available to 9-1-1.BHHL will remain on the line with the caller until First Responders arriveMay also include a behavioral health co-response dispatched by the BHHL.

Please visit www.masshelpline.com