

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Praises Federal investment of \$282 million in the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Support to States to Implement 988

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin is praising an announcement today from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that will make critical investments in suicide prevention and crisis care services, with \$282 million in American Rescue Plan and Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations to help transition access to the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) from its current 10-digit number to a three-digit dialing code - 988.

[In 2019, Senator Baldwin introduced the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, which passed Congress and became law in 2020.](#) Converting to this easy-to-remember, three-digit number will strengthen and expand the existing Lifeline network, providing the public with easier access to life-saving services. The Lifeline currently helps thousands of people overcome crisis situations every day. The 988 dialing code will be available nationally for call, text or chat beginning in July 2022.

“We need to do everything we can to prevent suicide and that means improving the tools we have to help people who are suffering from depression or other mental health concerns. I worked to pass my bipartisan legislation to help ensure states have the flexibility to strengthen local crisis call centers and save lives. We must make it as quick and easy as possible for Americans in crisis to get the help and support they need through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Veterans

Crisis Line,” said Senator Baldwin, who voted for the American Rescue Plan and is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

According to the announcement from SAMHSA, 988 is a first step toward transforming crisis care in this country, creating a universal entry point to needed crisis services in line with access to other emergency medical services. With funds from the Biden-Harris Administration’s FY 2022 budget and additional funds from the American Rescue Plan, SAMHSA’s \$282 million investment will support 988 efforts across the country to shore up, scale up and staff up, including:

- \$177 million to strengthen and expand the existing Lifeline network operations and telephone infrastructure, including centralized chat/text response, backup center capacity, and special services (e.g., a sub-network for Spanish language-speakers)
- \$105 million to build up staffing across states’ local crisis call centers.

“As we continue to confront the impact of the pandemic, investing in this critical tool is key to protecting the health and wellbeing of countless Americans – and saving lives. Giving the states a tool to prevent suicide and support people in crisis is essential to our HHS mission of protecting the health and wellbeing of everyone in our nation,” said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. “We know that remembering a three-digit number beats a ten-digit number any day, particularly in times of crisis, and I encourage every state to rev up planning to implement 988 for the sake of saving lives.”

To support the initial transition to 988, SAMHSA’s investment represents a budget increase of more than 10 times the FY21 budget amount of \$24 million. A large portion of FY22 funding will be distributed to crisis centers across the country.

“This investment in states’ crisis call center operations will help strengthen our partnership as SAMHSA works with states to meet the suicide prevention and behavioral health needs of people across our nation,” said Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., the HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and the leader of SAMHSA. “Transformation of this scale is never easy – but too many Americans are experiencing suicide and mental health crises without the support and care they need. The federal government cannot do this alone.”

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among young people and was the tenth-leading cause of death in the nation in 2019, according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. In 2019, one death by suicide happened almost every 11 minutes in the US.

More recently, SAMHSA's 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) data show 4.9 percent of adults aged 18 or older had serious thoughts of suicide, 1.3 percent made a suicide plan, and 0.5 percent attempted suicide in the past year. Among adolescents 12 to 17, 12 percent had serious thoughts of suicide, 5.3 percent made a suicide plan, and 2.5 percent attempted suicide in the past year. The findings vary by race and ethnicity, with people of mixed ethnicity reporting higher rates of serious thoughts of suicide.

Until the formal launch of 988 in July 2022, anyone in mental health crisis or emotional distress should call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-275-TALK (8255). People not in crisis who are seeking treatment options for mental health conditions should visit findtreatment.samhsa.gov or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).