

Frequently Asked Questions: New Suicide Prevention Hotline Number 988



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Overview

Signed into law in 2020, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act authorized 988 as the new three-digit number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. All telephone service providers in the U.S. must activate the number no later than July 2022; however, many providers will choose to implement the service sooner. Once a Veteran's telephone service provider makes 988 available, Veterans can use this new option by dialing 988 and pressing 1 to contact the Veterans Crisis Line. Veterans may still reach the Veterans Crisis Line with the current phone number — 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 — by text (838255), and through chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

FAQs

How does 988 impact the Veterans Crisis Line?

The 988 expansion directly addresses the need for ease of access and clarity in times of crisis, both for Veterans and non-Veterans alike.

Is the Veterans Crisis Line going away?

No. Upon 988 activation, Veterans may still dial 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, and calls will route to the same trained Veterans Crisis Line responders. The Veterans Crisis Line will still be available by text (838255) and chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat). Under the new 988 program, callers dialing 988 and intending to reach the Veterans Crisis Line will still Press 1 to be connected.

Will 988 personnel be trained specifically for Veterans?

Veterans Crisis Line responders will continue to respond to Veterans, service members, and their families via 988. Responders are trained in crisis intervention and military culture.

Will all Veterans Crisis Line branding be converted to 988?

In coordination with the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](https://www.samhsa.gov) (SAMHSA), VA is exploring the best way to get the word out to Veterans, service members, and their family members about the 988 activation to reach the Veterans Crisis Line.

When will the transition to 988 happen?

The [Federal Communications Commission](https://www.fcc.gov) (FCC) has issued the rulemaking for a July 16, 2022 activation date. This date is the final date when telecom providers will need to activate 988 services to their subscribers. Currently, a number of local/regional telecom providers and the national carriers, T-Mobile, Verizon, and UScellular, have already activated the 988 number to their customers, though their subscribers can still continue to use 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line as well.

What happens when Veterans Press 1?

To reach the Veterans Crisis Line, Veterans will still Press 1 after dialing 988. Veterans and service members who Press 1 will route to the same trained Veterans Crisis Line responders upon 988 activation, 24/7. The Veterans Crisis Line is also available by text (838255) and chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat). The Veterans Crisis Line's 800 number will remain operational for anyone utilizing the 10-digit number option.

What happens to Veterans overseas?

The Veterans Crisis Line's 800 number is partnered with SAMHSA's Lifeline network and is, therefore, a Continental United States (CONUS)-based toll-free number that will remain active after 988 activation. As such, some international calls may incur a charge, depending upon the caller's location and network provider. Nonetheless, a Veteran overseas may contact the Veterans Crisis Line via the chat modality at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat. If the Veteran prefers a phone call, they can request this within the chat venue. A Veterans Crisis Line responder will call them at the number they provide at no charge to the Veteran.

For Active Duty personnel (VeteransCrisisLine.net/ActiveDuty.aspx), the Veterans Crisis Line is available:

- In Europe, call 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118.
- In Korea, call 0808 555 118 or DSN 118.
- In Afghanistan, call 00 1 800 273 8255 or DSN 111.

