



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
*of* HEALTH SERVICES

# 988 in Wisconsin

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# Introduction

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# Disclaimer

Suicide and self-harm will be discussed in today's presentation. Please be mindful of your ability to hear information on this topic. If you need to step away or skip this presentation entirely, please do.

# Overview

- Description of 988
- Data showing the need for 988
- The legislative journey to 988
- The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Overview of 988 in Wisconsin

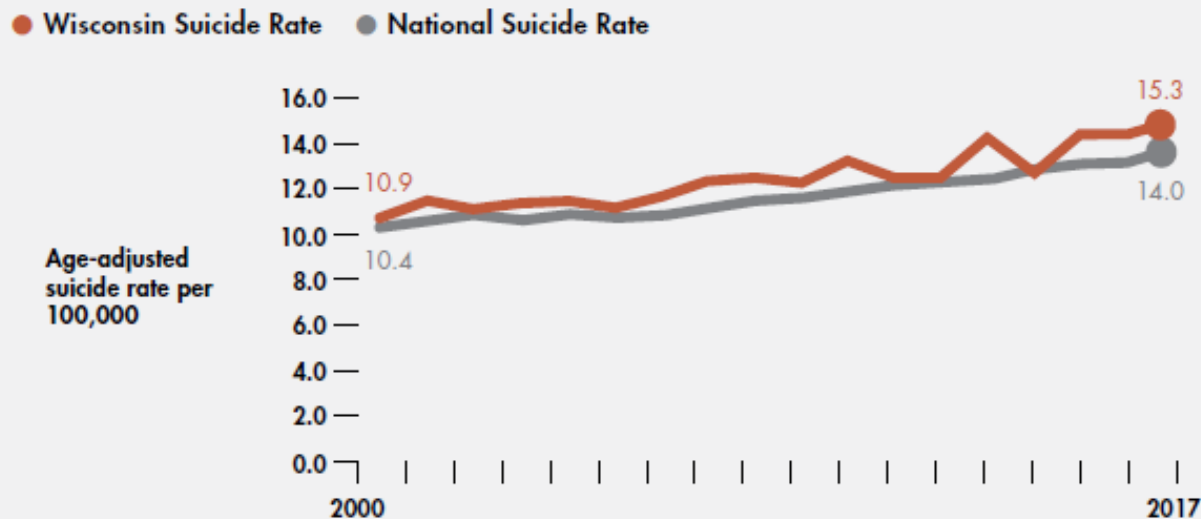
# What is 988?

- 988 is shorthand for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline which became available in the U.S. and U.S. territories July 16, 2022.
- 988 centers have counselors trained in helping others during stressful situations, supporting people in a crisis, and providing connections to local resources.
- 988 has three modalities:
  - Call 988
  - Text 988
  - Chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

# Why do we need 988?

## Wisconsin Suicide Trends

Figure 1. Suicide rate among Wisconsin residents increased by 40%, 2000–2017.



Data sources: Resident death certificates, Office of Health Informatics, Division of Public Health, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2000–2017. Mortality data from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), 2000–2017, retrieved from: <https://wisqars-viz.cdc.gov:8006/>. Accessed: October 2019

**Figure 1.** The number of suicides in the U.S. has increased from 29,312 in 2000 to 47,168 in 2017. The U.S. rate of suicide increased by approximately 35% (from 10.4 to 14.0 per 100,000) during this time period. In Wisconsin, the number of suicides has increased from 588 deaths in 2000 to 918 deaths in 2017. The suicide rate in Wisconsin was consistently above the national suicide rate.

# Why do we need 988?

In 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported:

- The total age-adjusted suicide rate in the U.S. increased 35.2% from 1999 to 2018.
- Suicide was the tenth leading cause of death overall in the U.S., claiming the lives of over 47,500 people.
- Suicide was the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34, and the fourth leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 35 and 44.
- There were nearly two and a half times as many suicides as there were homicides.

# The Legislative Journey to 988

- Mental health and suicide prevention advocates were seeking a national, easy to remember three-digit number for individuals in crisis.
- The National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, sponsored by U.S. Representative Chris Stewart (R-Utah) and signed into law August 14, 2018, directed the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in conjunction with other agencies to study the request for a three-digit number for individuals in crisis.



# FCC Report to Congress

The report found “that an expansion of 211 would not be the most effective way to support national suicide prevention and crisis contact centers and that a single-purpose, three-digit dialing code would provide a platform that can be more easily integrated in society and enhance public awareness about the different functions of each distinct three-digit number.”

# National Suicide Prevention Act of 2020

The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act directed the FCC to designate 988 as the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system on or before July 2022. It was signed into law in October 2020.

# History of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL)

- In the spring of 2022, the NSPL transitioned to a new name, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
- Although the name changed, the service of receiving support by a counselor over the phone or through chat, is the same.
- The NSPL was created in 2005 to provide 24/7, free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress across the U.S..
- Prior to July 16, 2022, you could only reach this service by calling 1-800-273-8255.

# About the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- 988 is administered by the nonprofit Vibrant Emotional Health and funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which is part of the federal government.
- 988 is a network of over 180 accredited crisis call centers across the country.

# About the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- As of July 2022, 988 routes calls through the network to a local crisis center based on the caller's area code and first three digits of their number.
- Geolocation, which provides a person's precise location, could be implemented by the federal government in the coming years.

# 988 Center Minimum Requirements

- Proof of certification/accreditation
- Liability insurance
- Coverage capacity for the geographic region
- Provide training to staff
- Contractual agreement with Vibrant
- Maintain quality assurance regarding answering practices
- Offer referrals to service providers in coverage area
- Suicide risk assessment for callers
- Assisting callers at imminent risk of suicide

# Historical NSPL Data

- Call volume has increased approximately 14% annually since 2005 with 46,000 contacts in 2005 rising to 3.6 million in 2021.
- The NSPL received over 20 million calls from people in distress from 2005-2021.
- Over 95% of all contacts are looking for support, help coping in a crisis, and connections to local providers.
- Emergency services dispatched for only 2% of calls.

# 988 for Wisconsinites

- Wisconsin has one 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline center located in Green Bay called the Wisconsin Lifeline Center.
- The Wisconsin Lifeline Center is part of a larger behavioral health organization, Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin.
- This center is staffed with trained counselors that answer 988 calls, chats, and texts.

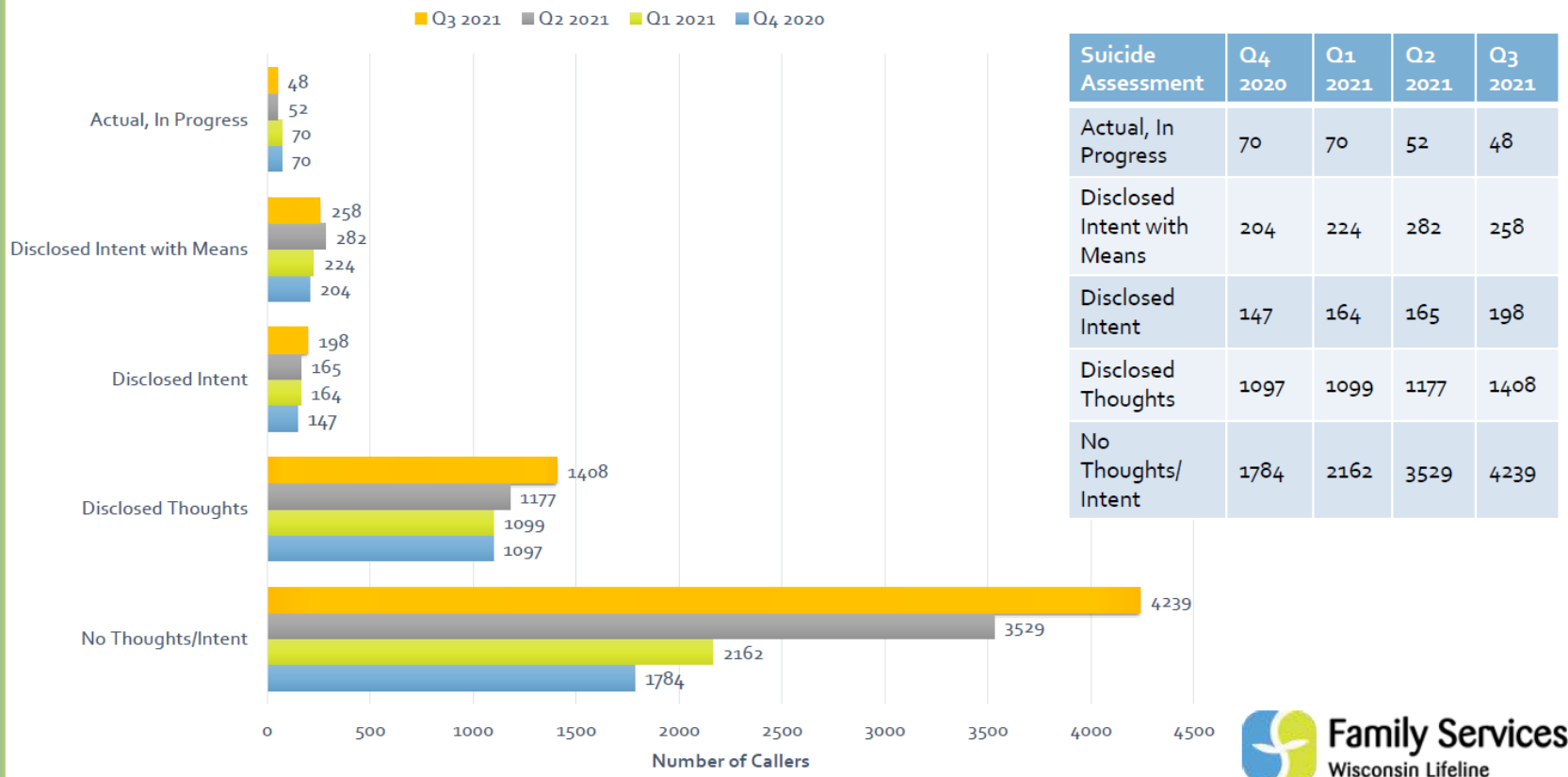


# What happens when you contact 988?

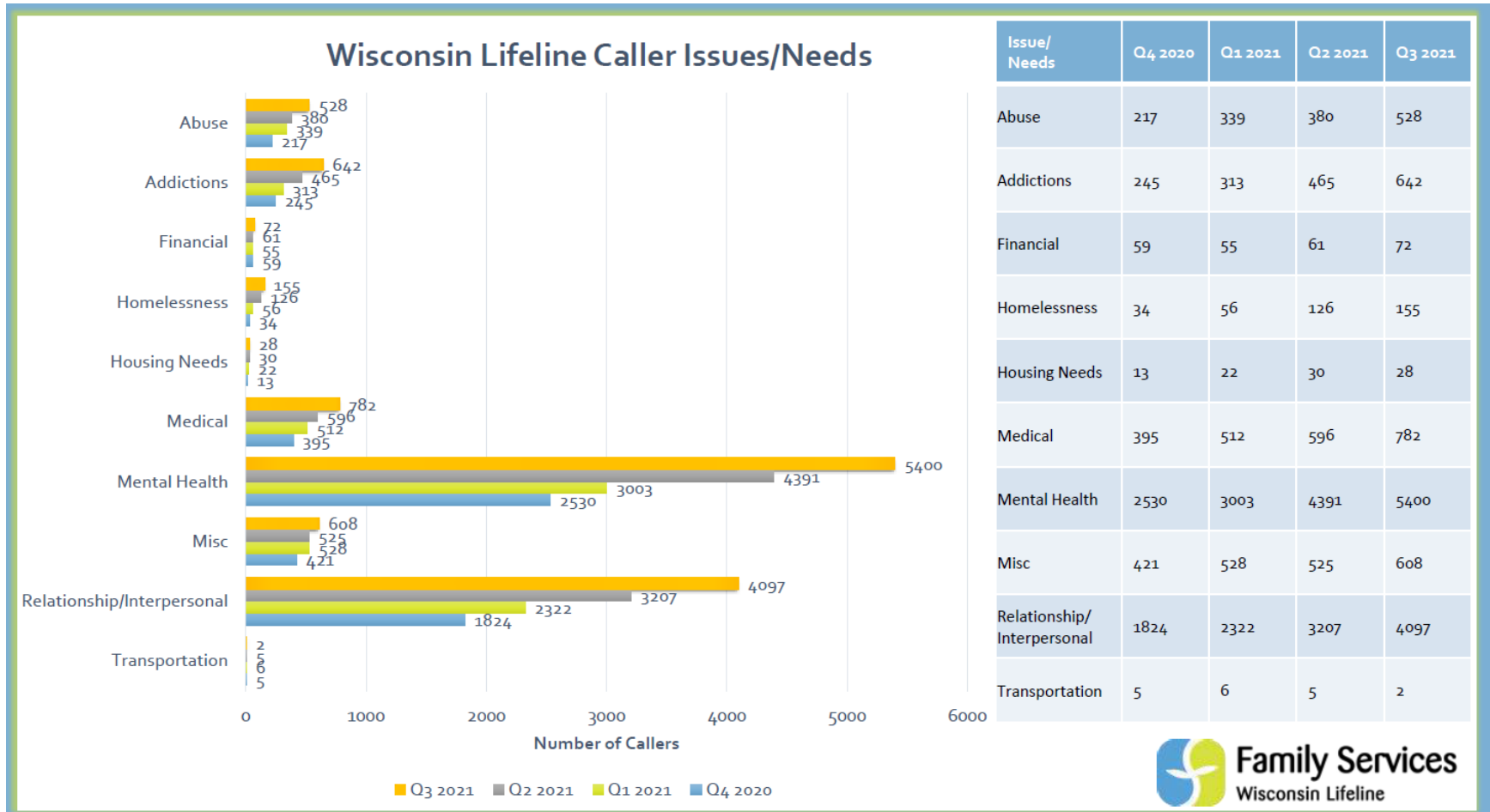
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# Wisconsin Lifeline Caller Suicide Assessment/Potential

Wisconsin Lifeline Caller Suicide Assessment/Potential



# Wisconsin Lifeline Caller Issues/Needs



# Statewide Preparation for 988

DHS was awarded a 988 State Planning Grant, spanning February 2021 through February 2022.

- 988 Planning Coalition
- Advocacy
- Creating new policies and procedures
- Funding

# Statewide Preparation for 988

- DHS received a grant from SAMHSA that began April 2022 and ends April 2024. The primary focus is capacity building for 988 call, text, and chat volume.
- Capacity building for the Wisconsin Lifeline Center.
  - Hiring call, chat, and text counselors
  - Hiring supervisors
  - Exploring a remote workforce
  - Assessing need for space and additional resources

# 988 Collaboration with Existing Crisis Resources

Although we know the vast majority of callers, chatters, and texters will not need additional services outside of communicating with a 988 counselor, some may need additional help.

- County crisis programs
- 911 centers/public safety answering points (PSAPs)

# County Crisis Programs

- County-specific crisis line available 24/7/365  
<https://www.preventsuicidewi.org/county-crisis-lines>
- Mobile crisis service 8 hours/7 days per week
- Walk-in services 8 hours/5 days per week
- Short-term voluntary or involuntary hospital care
- Linkage and coordination services
- Services for children/adolescents and their families
- Optional stabilization services (examples: adult family home, community-based residential facility, youth crisis stabilization facility)

# Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)

- Wisconsin has approximately 110 PSAPs.
- When someone calls 911, the call is routed to the closest PSAP.
- Staff at the PSAP, telecommunicators, assess the caller and identify if law enforcement, fire rescue, or emergency medical services need to be sent.



# 988 Funding

- The National Suicide Prevention Act of 2020 gave states the authority to pass legislation that uses telecommunication fees to help fund 988 operations, which is how 911 is funded in most states.
- Wisconsin is currently braiding different sources of federal and state funding to support 988 operations.

# What's next?

- DHS and the Wisconsin Lifeline will continue to meet regularly with statewide partners to capitalize on opportunities and address challenges as they come up.
- The Wisconsin Lifeline will hire and train more counselors and supervisors to meet the demand of 988 contacts.
- The Wisconsin Lifeline will transition to a new software platform for call center staff in 2023.
- DHS and the Wisconsin Lifeline will market and message 988 statewide in 2023.

# How can I learn more?

Wisconsin Department of Health Services website  
Crisis Services: 988 Implementation

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/crisis/988.htm>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration (SAMHSA) website  
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988>

# Thank You



# Contact

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