

Uniting for Mental Health

Louisiana 988 Helpline

Communication Toolkit for
Colleges and Universities



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About 988

In 2022, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) launched the Louisiana 988 helpline to make it easier for residents to get the immediate emotional support they need when they need it.

988 replaces the 10-digit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. It was established nationally to improve access to support services and address our country's growing suicide and mental health-related care needs. 988 offers easier access to the helpline network and related resources, distinct from the public safety focus of 911, which is primarily for dispatching emergency medical, fire, and police services.

Studies show the helpline works – most people who call the helpline report feeling significantly less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to a specialist.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), almost 98% of people who call, chat, or text 988 get the support they need and do not require additional services at that moment.

The LDH Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) has contracted with two certified call centers in Louisiana to respond to 988 calls, chats and texts from Louisiana residents statewide. Both centers are certified by Vibrant Emotional Health, the federal 988 administrator, and must meet Vibrant's national standards as well as the requirements of a national accrediting agency.

LDH/OBH is committed to ensuring everyone in Louisiana has access to quality emotional and mental health support – whether they're experiencing issues around anxiety, depression, alcohol or drugs, thoughts of suicide, or anything in between.

988 is here to help.

Key Statistics & Messaging

Communicating on sensitive topics such as suicide, mental health, or emotional distress can be challenging. Consistent, clear communication is essential in addressing community concerns, particularly regarding why these topics matter and what to expect when they seek help.

Key Statistics

- + Suicide was the 11th leading cause of death in Louisiana.¹
- + Young adults ages 18-25 years had the highest prevalence of a mental, behavioral, or emotional health issue in 2023.²
- + In 2023, suicide was the third leading cause of death for Louisianans ages 10-24 (9.7 per 100,000) and 25-34 (22.2 per 100,000).¹
- + Suicide rates for youth and young adults ages 10-24 years increased 52.2% between 2000-2021.³
- + Youth and young adults have high rates of emergency department visits for self-harm.³

Key Messages

- + College life can be exciting – and overwhelming. Too many students are struggling with stress, anxiety, and depression without getting the support they need. 988 is here anytime, day or night, to listen and help.
- + If you're feeling stressed, anxious, or emotionally distressed, you don't have to go through it alone. Text or call 988 or chat online at Louisiana988.org – it's free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- + 988 specialists are here to listen – whether you're having thoughts of suicide, dealing with intense stress, struggling with classes or relationships, or worried about gambling, alcohol or drug use. No issue is too small, and you can reach out any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- + All of us need help sometimes. Being human means helping others and reaching out to help ourselves. 988 is always open, with specialists ready to listen day or night.
- + Your support network is bigger than you think. Friends, family, campus resources – they're all part of it. And so is 988, a 24/7 helpline you can text or call when you need to talk, even at 3 a.m. when everyone else is asleep. 988 specialists are here and ready to support you.

¹ CDC's WONDER website, <http://wonder.cdc.gov>

² National Institute of Mental Health. (2024, September). *Mental illness*. National Institute of Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, March 28). *Health Disparities in Suicide*. Suicide Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/disparities/index.html>

Key Terminology

Research conducted to understand how people think and talk about behavioral health shows preferences for certain language related to the topic. Recommendations based on those findings are detailed in the chart below.

Use this:	Instead of this:	Because:
Helpline	Hotline or crisis line	"Hotline" feels like it will be staffed by volunteers; "crisis" feels like things have to be out of control to call
Safe, supportive, confidential	N/A	This helps to de-stigmatize help-seeking
Everyone needs help	N/A	This helps to de-stigmatize help-seeking
Brave and courageous	N/A	This helps to de-stigmatize help-seeking
Hope, resilience, "it gets better"	Struggle	"Hope" is motivating whereas "struggle" feels diminishing
Emergency	Crisis	"Emergency" feels solvable and like something that could happen to anyone; "crisis" feels out of control and like an elevated level of need that some people do not identify with
988 specialists	Trained crisis counselors	"Trained" feels like someone with little experience
Plain language like "depression or anxiety" and "drugs or alcohol"	Mental health, behavioral health, or substance use	People can relate better to more concrete terms; the more technical terms evoke more stigma
Immediate	Fast	"Fast" feels like care might be rushed

Avoid using stigmatizing or misleading language when reporting on suicide. Phrases like "committed suicide" or referring to a suicide as "successful," "unsuccessful," or a "failed attempt" can perpetuate harmful myths and undermine prevention efforts. Instead, use nonjudgmental terms such as "died by suicide" or "took their own life" or "suicide attempt survivor."

For more guidance, visit reportingonsuicide.org.

Digital and Social Media Posts & Assets

Post 1 (image)



Don't want to "bother" your friends when things get heavy? Bother us. That's why Louisiana 988 is here, as part of your support system. We're here to listen—no matter how big or small the problem feels. It's free, confidential and available 24/7. Save 988 and pass it on to someone who might need it.

Post 2 (image)



Whether you're dealing with anxiety, having thoughts of suicide or just need someone to talk to, the Louisiana 988 helpline is here to help. Specialists will listen and provide immediate emotional support without judgment. It's free, confidential and available 24/7. Text or call 988 or chat online at Louisiana988.org.

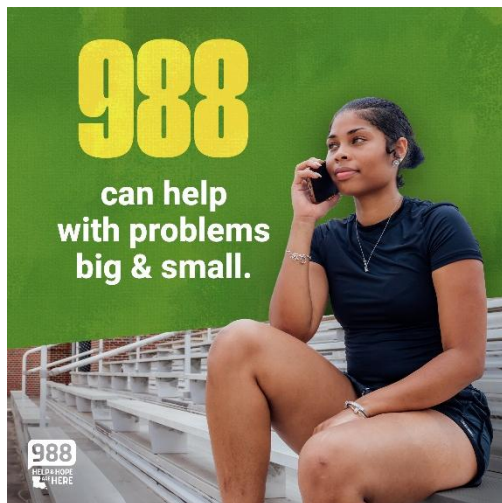
Download Assets

Post 3 (image)



Whether you're dealing with anxiety, having thoughts of suicide or just need someone to talk to, the Louisiana 988 helpline is here to help. Specialists will listen and provide immediate emotional support without judgment. It's free, confidential and available 24/7. Text or call 988 or chat online at Louisiana988.org.

Post 4 (image)



Whether you're dealing with anxiety, having thoughts of suicide or just need someone to talk to, the Louisiana 988 helpline is here to help. Specialists will listen and provide immediate emotional support without judgment. It's free, confidential and available 24/7. Text or call 988 or chat online at Louisiana988.org.

[Download Assets](#)

Post 5 (image)



You don't have to walk alone, help is just a few steps away. Whether you're dealing with anxiety, overwhelm, or thoughts of suicide – Louisiana 988 can help walk you through it. We offer emotional support to everyone in the state and most people who reach out report feeling relief right in the moment. Text or call 988, or chat online at Louisiana988.org.

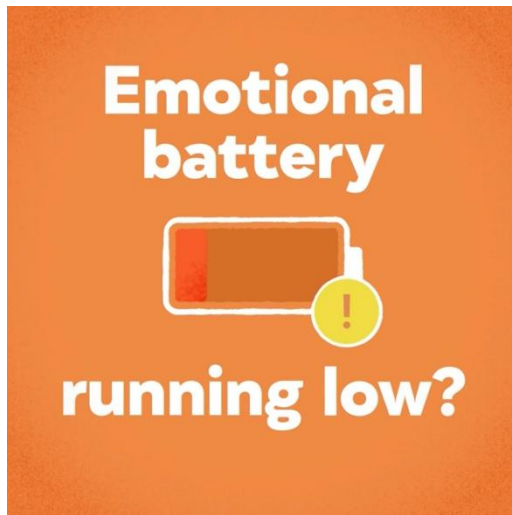
Post 6 (videos/still)



Louisiana 988 specialists provide around the clock emotional support. So if you're up at 2am with the weight of the world on your shoulders, reach out for some relief. Most callers report feeling better right in the moment. Text or call 988 24/7, we're up when you are.

Download Assets

Post 7 (video)



Emotional battery running low? Louisiana 988 is here to help with immediate emotional support. Whether you're dealing with anxiety, loneliness, thoughts of suicide, or just need someone to talk to. It's free, confidential and available 24/7. Text or call 988, or chat online at Louisiana988.org.

Download Assets

Louisiana 988 Materials Generator

Connecting the people you serve with emotional support is now only a couple clicks away

The Louisiana 988 helpline provides 24/7, free and confidential emergency emotional support for mental health, gambling, and substance use. Each state, including Louisiana, has dedicated call centers staffed with 988 helpline specialists who answer calls, texts, and chat messages from residents who reach out to 988 for support.

Louisiana 988 is a free resource providing equitable access to emergency emotional support for all Louisianans. You do not need insurance to contact 988. Services are also available to those who speak Spanish and other languages and to those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Louisiana 988 Materials Generator allows you to develop customized and tailored materials to connect your community with the emergency emotional support they need.

By answering just a few questions you can create customized materials, tailored to your community using evidence-based messaging and images of Louisiana residents. With this tool, you can create handouts, posters, and social media content, and can co-brand the materials with your organization's logo and contact information before easily downloading and printing the materials at your convenience. New material templates are being added all the time.

New!

As a part of the Louisiana Department of Health Office of Behavioral Health's ongoing commitment to community engagement, we are always optimizing the Materials Generator to better fit the needs of Louisiana partners like you. Below are some of our newest optimizations:

- + New materials templates, including postcards and digital and vinyl billboards
- + New sector-specific materials templates
- + Images of rural and young adult Louisiana residents
- + Guidance and tips to streamline the printing process

Create your customized Louisiana 988 materials today at louisiana988.org/matgen.

Don't see what you need? Let us know at helpdesk@forchange.agency.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Louisiana 988?

The 988 helpline provides immediate emotional and mental health support to Louisiana residents. The helpline is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

What are the different ways I can contact 988?

You can call or text 988 or chat online at Louisiana988.org.

Do I need insurance to contact 988?

No, you do not need insurance to contact 988. The service is free. If you need support connecting to other mental health, gambling, or substance use services in the community, contact 988 and we can help you find a provider who can work with you.

What happens when I reach out to 988?

When you contact 988, you will be immediately connected to a 988 specialist who will listen, provide support, and connect you with local resources. The helpline is free, confidential, and available 24/7. Most people receive the help they need, right in the moment.

What can I contact 988 about?

You can contact 988 for help with all types of problems. Whether you had a tough day, are overwhelmed, or are having thoughts of suicide, Louisiana 988 can help.

Some things people call about include stress, feeling overwhelmed, concerns about alcohol or drug use, feeling depressed, emotional response to mental and physical illness, help talking through money concerns, thoughts of suicide, and more.

You can reach out to 988 for yourself or for others you're concerned about.

Can you help me if I'm a service member, a veteran or part of a military family?

Yes. When you call 988, press 1 to access 988 specialists who focus on serving military members, veterans, and their loved ones. Military and veteran-specific chat (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat) and text ([838255](https://text.838255.com)) are also available.

Can I contact 988 for or about someone else?

Yes, the 988 helpline specialists provide caring support and resources for family, friends, caregivers, and advocates who reach out about another person they are concerned about.

Will you share my information with anyone if I contact 988?

No. 988 is safe and confidential and will not share your information. The helpline will only contact 911 if someone's life is in immediate danger. This is rare. Fewer than 1% of calls involve 911 without a caller's permission.

Does contacting 988 really help?

Yes, the helpline works. Numerous studies have shown that most callers are significantly more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to a 988 specialist. And most receive the help they need, right there on the call, and do not require any other services in that moment.

When should I contact 988 versus 911?

988 provides confidential and free emotional support, 24/7. Contact 911 if you need EMS, fire, or police dispatched to your location.

Will I be chatting with a bot?

No, you will never chat with a bot when you call, text, or chat online with 988. You will always connect with another human who's ready to help.

To review a full list of frequently asked questions or to learn more about 988, please visit Louisiana988.org.

What is 988 in Louisiana?

The 988 helpline provides emotional support to all Louisiana residents. Anyone who reaches out to 988 can expect immediate, safe support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The helpline is free, confidential and offers call, text, and online chat support.

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) is committed to ensuring everyone has access to quality emotional and mental health services — whether you're experiencing issues around anxiety, depression, gambling, alcohol or drugs, thoughts of suicide, or anything in between. Every Louisianan deserves that.

- + The 988 service is available in English and Spanish, with translation services in more than 250 languages. Text and chat are currently available in English.
- + Individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened can directly dial 988 on a videophone or click the “**ASL Now**” button at 988lifeline.org to connect with crisis counselors who can communicate in ASL and are trained in working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. TTY users can use their preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.
- + The chat feature is available through 988's website: Louisiana988.org.
- + People are also encouraged to reach out to 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need immediate support.
- + Most callers report feeling significantly less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to a specialist.

How Does 988 Work?

LDH's Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) has contracted with two certified call centers in Louisiana to answer 988 calls from state residents.

- + When you call, text or chat, you will quickly be connected to a specialist.
- + 988 has specialists available for service members, veterans, and their family members.
- + Your specialist will listen to you without judgment and help you reduce the intense feelings you may be dealing with.
- + Your specialist may connect you to local resources and longer-term support (like mental health professionals or drug or alcohol recovery services).

110,437

988 helpline calls
answered as of
June 2025

691

deaths by suicide in
Louisiana in 2023

1 in 5

adults live with a
mental health
condition

1 death

by suicide happens
every 11 minutes

How is LDH Promoting 988?

LDH has launched an integrated marketing campaign to raise awareness of 988 and reduce stigma surrounding depression or anxiety and drugs or alcohol.

- + LDH is committed to working with community partners, including mental health advocates and like-minded organizations, everyday influencers, and universities across the state to help amplify messaging and awareness while promoting the 988 helpline.
- + In May 2023, LDH launched the [988 dashboard](#) to provide transparent access to key monthly in-state metrics including the volume of contacts by parish, overall broad demographics, and the type of assistance individuals are requesting. The data is aggregated and allows the caller to remain anonymous.

Please visit Louisiana988.org to learn more and access Louisiana 988 resources.

- + Click on [Media Resources](#) at the bottom of the page for brand logos, Zoom backgrounds, campaign ads, FAQs, and 988 fact sheets.
- + Click on [Partner Resources](#) for a 988 materials generator.
- + Click on [What to Expect](#) to see a video of testimonials from 988 helpline specialists.



Is Here to Help



Free



Confidential



Available
24/7

RESOURCES

[Louisiana 988](#)

[988 Materials](#)

[LDH](#)

[Gambling Help](#)

