



Georouting of Calls to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Historically, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has routed calls to crisis centers based on the help-seeker's area code. Beginning in fall 2024, the 988 Lifeline will use a new service called georouting. This service will direct 988 calls to a crisis center based on the help-seeker's geographic location.

Georouting will allow the 988 Lifeline to more easily connect help-seekers to regional services. This change will help the 988 Lifeline provide more effective support to people in crisis.

On September 17, 2024, the 988 network will activate georouting for T-Mobile and Verizon, 2 of the 3 largest wireless carriers in the nation. Georouting will be activated for AT&T later this fall. Smaller carriers will follow in the future. Calls will route by area code until each carrier enables georouting.

How georouting works

- When someone calls the 988 Lifeline, their wireless carrier turns their location details into a broad geographic area.
- The carrier shares that area with the 988 routing platform.
- 988 routes the call to the crisis center serving that geographic area.
- If that crisis center can't answer the call, it will be routed to another crisis center in Washington.

Georouting does not reveal a help-seeker's specific location. It only uses general location data.

Highlights

- Georouting doesn't use a help-seeker's specific location.
- Georouting only uses general location data, which maintains privacy and confidentiality for all callers.
- The 988 Lifeline doesn't receive or store pinpoint data or other detailed location information.
- Georouting allows help-seekers to reach a crisis center near their physical location. This change means the 988 Lifeline can serve people in crisis more effectively by providing them with local resources.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

Operational changes

Vibrant Emotional Health, the 988 Lifeline national administrator, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration anticipate some changes to 988 Lifeline crisis center call volume when georouting takes effect.

- Small volume changes may happen at the state level.
- Individual crisis centers may notice moderate changes in call volume and help-seeker location.
- About 75% of 988 Lifeline crisis centers will experience less than a 20% increase or decrease in call volume.

The warm transfer process will stay the same. A warm transfer involves sharing some of the help-seeker's details before transferring the call and then speaking to the help-seeker again before the transfer. This reduces the need for help-seekers to tell their story over and over.

However, the need for warm transfers will most likely decrease since most help-seekers will reach their closest local crisis center.

SMS, WiFi, and VOIP routing

At this time, only Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile will make the switch to georouting. Other smaller carriers may make the switch to georouting at a future date.

According to Vibrant, contacts from these carriers make up 50% of 988 network volume.

Georouting will not affect:

- Calls from small carriers
- WiFi calls
- Voice over internet protocol (VoIP) calls
- Roaming calls
- Text and online chat messages to 988

These contacts to the 988 Lifeline will continue to route by area code for now. Chat messages are routed by ZIP code.

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Familiar callers

Familiar callers are help-seekers who regularly contact the 988 Lifeline for support. The switch from area code routing to georouting means some familiar callers may be routed to different 988 Lifeline crisis centers than they're used to.

Crisis counselors will work to support and reassure familiar callers by letting them know the following:

- Georouting can provide more effective support by connecting them to local resources and services.
- All 988 Lifeline counselors get similar training and can provide similar crisis support.

988 Lifeline crisis counselors at centers new to familiar callers will work with them to create a new care plan and explore local resources.



Questions? Contact

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