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DOH 140-300

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. Now, a new service called georouting will direct 988 calls to a crisis center based on the help-seeker's geographic location.

Georouting will make it easier for the 988 Lifeline to connect help-seekers to regional services and other local resources and 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, with smaller carriers to follow in the future. Once the 988 network enables georouting for a carrier, all calls made from phones serviced by that carrier will be georouted. This includes calls made from Tribal reservations.

Calls will continue to route by area code until each carrier enables georouting.

Georouting for the Native & Strong Lifeline

The switch to georouting will make it easier for Native people in Washington to reach the Native & Strong Lifeline and get crisis support for themselves or a loved one. The [Native & Strong Lifeline](#) is Washington's crisis line for all Indigenous people living in Washington state.

Previously, only people who called 988 from a Washington area code would hear the option to press 4 to reach the Native & Strong Lifeline. Once georouting is enabled, all people physically located in Washington using a phone that gets service from one of the 3 major carriers will hear the option to press 4 for the Native & Strong Lifeline.

People who want to reach the Native & Strong Lifeline but get service from other carriers will still need to dial 988 from a phone with a Washington area code until those carriers enable georouting. Those who don't have a phone with a Washington area code can dial 988 and ask to be transferred to the Native & Strong Lifeline.



**Native
& Strong
Lifeline**



**988
PRESS 4**



How georouting works

Georouting does not reveal or use a help-seeker's pinpoint data or any other specific location information. It only uses general location data, so this service maintains privacy and confidentiality for all callers. The 988 Lifeline has no plans to enable geolocation, or the use of specific location details like pinpoint data.

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, and 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.

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. Georouting won't affect WiFi calls, voice over internet protocol (VoIP) calls, roaming calls, or text and online chat messages to 988. These contacts to the 988 Lifeline will continue to route by area code for now. Online chat messages are routed by ZIP code

General 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 type of transfer 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.

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.



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