



February 2025

DOH 140-302

988 Community Engagement

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The 988 Lifeline offers direct connection to free, confidential support for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis or seeking support for a loved one.

A mental health crisis may include thoughts of suicide, substance use concerns, or any type of emotional distress.

People contact the 988 Lifeline for many different reasons beyond thoughts of suicide, including:

- Feelings of depression or anxiety
- Relationship or family difficulties
- Financial concerns or job loss

Help-seekers define the crisis, and crisis counselors will always try to provide support.

The 988 Lifeline is available through call, text, or chat 24/7, 365 days a year, from anywhere in the United States.

Direct support is available in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language, with interpretation services in more than 240 languages.

Goals of community engagement for 988

Community engagement is a cornerstone of the success of public health programs and services like the 988 Lifeline. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Community Engagement team plays an important role in sharing information about the 988 Lifeline with communities in Washington, especially those most affected by suicide.

Through community engagement efforts, DOH can develop relationships that increase trust and raise awareness and understanding of 988, especially with marginalized communities.

Community engagement also gives DOH the chance to seek feedback about communities' needs and experiences with the 988 Lifeline. This helps put our customers at the front and center of our program.

DOH works to build and maintain trust and partnerships by working with communities to educate them about 988 and share 988 resources.

Community trust is an essential step to making sure resources like 988 are both effective and accessible for people in crisis and their loved ones.

The DOH community engagement team partners with community-based organizations, non-profits, schools, and other state agencies to:

- Increase awareness of the 988 Lifeline and share 988 information and resources more effectively
- Empower trusted community messengers by providing them with knowledge and tools to share information about 988 within their communities
- Teach people how to contact the 988 Lifeline and find other mental health resources
- Promote trust in the 988 Lifeline among people and groups most affected by suicide
- Develop relationships across Washington to receive and integrate community feedback about 988

Community engagement in 2024

In 2024, DOH used 3 different approaches for 988 community engagement and outreach:

- **988 general awareness presentation:** DOH gave 40 presentations about 988 to over 1,300 attendees. A 988 awareness survey is offered at the beginning of each presentation with 1 being “no awareness of 988” and 5 being “expert-level awareness.” The same survey is given again at the end of the presentation. Results show a 2.45 level of awareness in the pre-presentation survey and a 4.33 level of awareness in the post-presentation survey. This represents a 76% increase in understanding of 988 and related resources. The majority of the presentations also result in requests for additional presentations.
- **988 partnerships:** DOH created a support network of community advocates who can share 988 resources and help people in crisis. We achieved this by developing and fostering partnerships with over 40 organizations in various sectors, including community groups, health care providers and agencies, schools, and other state agencies.
- **988 tables at community events:** DOH staffed 988 information and resource tables at 8 community events, reaching over 8,000 attendees. These tabling events have led to additional requests for the 988 general awareness presentation.

DOH used these opportunities to give community members, health professionals, and other partners a chance to learn about the 988 Lifeline and gather 988 resources to share with their communities. As a result of these outreach and engagement efforts in 2024, DOH received presentation requests from 80 additional organizations.

In 2025, the DOH community engagement team will add a fourth level of outreach. We will gather feedback on how 988 is used across the state and the impact it has on communities. This feedback will help guide future improvements in response to the changing crisis needs of people in Washington.



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