



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
*PO Box 47890 | Olympia, Washington 98504-7890
360-236-4030 | 711 Washington State Relay*

August 28, 2025

Re: Informative - Native & Strong Lifeline Text and Chat Services

Greetings Honorable Tribal Leaders, Partners, and Professionals:

In accordance with chapter [43.376 RCW](#), the [Washington State Centennial Accord of 1989](#), and [DOH Consultation and Collaboration Procedure](#), we are providing information on the addition of text and chat services for the [Native & Strong Lifeline](#).

In June 2024, we [informed](#) you that the Department of Health (DOH) and [Volunteers of America Western Washington \(VOAWW\)](#) had requested authority from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Vibrant, the national administrator for 988, to begin offering text and chat services for the Native & Strong Lifeline.

Authority has been granted and Vibrant has developed technological changes to support text and chat routing for the [Native & Strong Lifeline](#). DOH will use appropriated funding from [E2SSB 6251](#) so VOAWW can implement these services *beginning August 25, 2025*. Please see [this one-pager](#) for more details about the Native & Strong Lifeline's text and chat services.

For additional information, you may contact Beth Schuurmans, 988 Engagement, Equity, and Partner Relations Supervisor, at Beth.Schuurmans@doh.wa.gov or (360) 236-3332, or Candice Wilson, Executive Director, Office of Tribal Public Health and Relations (OTPHR), at Candice.Wilson@doh.wa.gov or (360) 819-7626.

Respectfully,

Michele Roberts MPH, MCHES
Assistant Secretary, Division of Prevention and Community Health

cc: Dennis E. Worsham, Secretary of Health, Office of the Secretary, WA-DOH
Jessica Todorovich, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary, WA-DOH
Kristin Peterson, Chief, Office of Policy, Planning & Evaluation, WA-DOH
Lacy Fehrenbach, Chief, Office of Prevention, Safety and Health, WA-DOH
Candice Wilson-Quatz'tenaut (Lummi), Executive Director, OTPHR, WA-DOH
Beth Schuurmans, 988 Equity, Engagement & Partner Relations Supervisor, WA-DOH



July 2025

Native & Strong Lifeline Text and Chat

Since November 2022, the [Native & Strong Lifeline](#) has operated as a subnetwork of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

The Native & Strong Lifeline is available in Washington only and is the first program of its kind in the nation. It provides free, confidential crisis services for all Indigenous people in Washington, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, First Nations, enrolled Tribal members and unenrolled descendants, and urban Indians.

This suicide and crisis helpline is staffed 24/7, 365 days a year by Native crisis counselors trained in crisis intervention and support, with special emphasis on cultural and traditional practices related to healing. The line currently provides support to about 500 help-seekers each month.

Text and Chat Services Begin August 2025

Previously, the Native & Strong Lifeline was only available by phone call. On August 25, 2025, Volunteers of America Western Washington (VOAWW) will begin offering Native & Strong Lifeline text and chat services to all Washington help-seekers. VOAWW is the 988 Lifeline crisis center that administers the Native & Strong Lifeline.

Adding text and chat will increase access by providing more options for contacting the Native & Strong Lifeline. As with phone calls made to the Native & Strong Lifeline, Native crisis counselors will answer all text and chats.

Contacting the Native & Strong Lifeline

You can contact the Native & Strong Lifeline in 3 ways:

- Call 988 and press 4.
- Text N8V to 988.
- Check the "All Native people in Washington state" box in the pre-chat survey when [chatting online](#).

The Native & Strong Lifeline is only available in Washington. To reach this line, you can use a phone with a Washington area code or a phone that gets service from T-Mobile, Verizon, or AT&T. These 3 carriers use georouting to route calls. Georouting means these carriers [route calls to local 988 crisis centers](#) by general geographic location.

If you get service from a different carrier or make the call using Wi-Fi, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), or roaming, you'll need to use a phone with a Washington area code to hear the option to press 4 for the Native & Strong Lifeline.

Texts to 988 are routed by area code, and chat messages are routed by ZIP code.

Funding for Text and Chat Services

In March 2024, Governor Inslee signed the [Engrossed 2nd Substitute Senate Bill \(E2SSB\) 6251](#) into law.

This [bill](#) authorizes DOH to coordinate with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the national 988 administrator, Vibrant Emotional Health, to offer American Indian and Alaska Native people "services by text, chat, and other similar methods of communication to the same extent as does the general 988 crisis hotline."

Following this directive, DOH and Volunteers of America Western Washington, the 988 Lifeline crisis center that administers the Native & Strong Lifeline, requested authority from SAMHSA and Vibrant to begin offering text and chat services. Vibrant then developed technological changes to support text and chat routing. DOH will use appropriated funding from E2SSB 6251 so VOAWW can implement chat and text services for the Native & Strong Lifeline.



**Native
& Strong
Lifeline**



**988
PRESS 4**



Questions? Contact

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www.doh.wa.gov/988

July 2025

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.