



# 988 A National Challenge

Crisis Response

## The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act

- In a historic move, the U.S. Congress passed bipartisan legislation designating the number “988” as a nationwide mental health crisis response number.
- The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2661/text>, was signed into law October 2020.

# What Congress Approved

## The federal legislation:

- Phone providers must carry 988.
- Permits a fee to fund the hotline and other services.
  - The benefit to using the phone tax is that it becomes a stable revenue source to cover 988 and the legislature doesn't have to address it after it is authorized initially, making 988 less susceptible to budget fights.

## 988 and Inclusion of I/DD

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the federal agency that oversees the hotline must ensure the hotline is equipped to provide specialized resources to high-risk populations.
- 30 to 40% of people with IDD also have a mental health condition.

## The SAMHSA Model

The Agency's best practices toolkit recommends:

1. 24/7 clinically staffed call center that can serve as the hub of an integrated mental health system;
2. Mobile crisis response teams that can respond rather than law enforcement, and;
3. Crisis receiving and stabilization facilities that provide short-term services rather than relying upon ER or hospital environments.

# Disability Justice

- Disability justice recognizes the complexities of multiply marginalized disabled people and aims to be holistic by recognizing these complexities.

## 988 and It's Importance for Disability Justice

- The lack of alternatives to 911 for people in crisis has left mental/behavioral/emotional crisis response services to armed police officers. This has had numerous negative effects including violent confrontations with law enforcement, the use of jails to stabilize people in crisis, and a lack of actual treatment for people in need of therapeutic support.
- Moreover, 50 percent of people killed by law enforcement have a disability, more than half of black people with a disability, have been arrested by the time they turn 28 [Understanding the Policing of Black, Disabled Bodies - Center for American Progress](#)

# Isaias Cervantes, Autism & Hearing Impairment

Shot and paralyzed after family called 911 during a mental health crisis

(Los Angeles, April 2021).





**Charleena Lyles,  
Chronic Mental  
Illness**



- **Pregnant mom shot and killed, in front of her small children, after calling 911 for help (Seattle, 2017).**

13-year-old,  
Asperger  
syndrome



- Survived shooting after mom calls 911 for mental crisis (Utah, 2020)

# Marcus David Peters

Shot and killed while naked and experiencing a  
mental crisis (Richmond, Virginia 2018)



# Potential Pitfalls

- 1. Overwhelmed Hotlines
- 2. Lack of ground services
- 3. Law Enforcement Involvement
- 4. Loss of public trust
  - See The National Council on Disability Report—on the Impact of Covid, including increased mental stress and calls to the current suicide prevention hotline
    - [https://ncd.gov/sites/default/files/NCD\\_COVID-19\\_Progress\\_Report\\_508.pdf](https://ncd.gov/sites/default/files/NCD_COVID-19_Progress_Report_508.pdf)

- Contents
- Acknowledgments
- Executive Summary
- Acronym Glossary
- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Healthcare
- Chapter 2: Impact of COVID-19 on People with Disabilities in Congregate Care Facilities
- Chapter 3: The Direct Care Workforce
- Chapter 4: Education and COVID-19
- Chapter 5: Employment and COVID-19
- Chapter 6: Effective Communication
- Chapter 7: Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health and Suicide
- Appendix A: Convening Participants
- Endnotes

Individuals  
been  
hospitalized  
force.<sup>816</sup>  
observed  
could  
ood  
health  
suicides  
demic  
limited

---

*Many individuals have come to avoid using these hotlines for assistance because of concerns about the requirement that hotlines contact law enforcement in certain circumstances and calls that have led to the frequent outcome of involuntary hospitalization.*

with preexisting mental health  
individuals with newly developed

Health, and  
Governors,  
concerning  
to address  
health impa  
pandemic.<sup>8</sup>  
passage of  
designating  
“988” crisi  
will use the  
Suicide Pre

for calls relating to both suicide an  
health crises generally, 988 has fe

# Federal Legislation

- **Kim Musheno**
- **Autism Society of America**



## Legislation

- 9–8–8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Implementation Act of 2021 – Rep. Tony Cárdenas (D-CA)
- Safe Interactions Act – Sen. Bob Casey, (D-PA),  
Rep. Susan Wild (D-PA) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)
- The People’s Response Act (Rep. Cori Bush D-MO)

# 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Implementation Act

- **Fund the launch, infrastructure, and modernization of new 9-8-8 hotline through:**
  - Establishment of a Behavioral Health Crisis Coordinating Office in HHS
  - Support for 250+ regional and local crisis call centers
  - Permanent authorization of \$2.23 billion in Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) with a 10% set-aside
  - Pilot program for mobile crisis response, peer teams, and in-home crisis stabilization
  - Resources for specialized services for underserved populations
  - **Amend and develop Medicaid with measures such as:**
    - Providing federal support for regional and local 988 call center operations and crisis programs
    - Expanding the existing 10 state Medicaid Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHC) demonstration to permit any state to participate
- **Support behavioral health crisis response on the ground with:**
  - Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) Capital Development Grants
  - Behavioral health workforce training program expansions
  - Access and coverage of mental health and substance use disorder crisis response services



# Safe Interactions Act

- Introduced by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) as S. 1566 with 8 bipartisan co-sponsors.
- Reps. Susan Wild (D-PA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) – HR 3127.
- Provides grants to enable nonprofit disability organizations (like the ASA and The Arc) who have formed a partnership with a law enforcement agency, to develop training programs that support safe interactions between law enforcement officers and people with disabilities.
- Inclusion of self-advocates
- A minimum of eight hours of training for new law enforcement officers, with four hours involving interactive sessions led by trainers with disabilities.
- This would also help by having trained first responders understand various disabilities.
- Need to advocate for this bill to be taken up and moved in committees.

# People's Response Act

- Introduced by Rep. Cori Bush (D-MO) with Democratic co-sponsors.
- Establishes a Division of Community Safety within the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Creates a Federal Health Response Unit that will respond to the mass health crisis and support cities and States that declare a public health emergency. mass health crisis and support.
- Award grants to community-led organizations. on a rolling basis, to support community-based organizations that are designing, implementing, monitoring, or otherwise supporting health approaches to public safety.
  - The goal of the bill is to improve crisis response and increase non-carceral, health-based approaches to public safety.

# Disability Policy Seminar



- March 28-30<sup>th</sup>
- [www.disabilitypolicyseminar.org](http://www.disabilitypolicyseminar.org)