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# **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and 988 Planning Grant Overview**

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**Texas Suicide Prevention Symposium 2022**

**Reilly Webb | Director – Mental Health Programs,  
Planning, and Policy**

**Behavioral Health Services**

# Agenda



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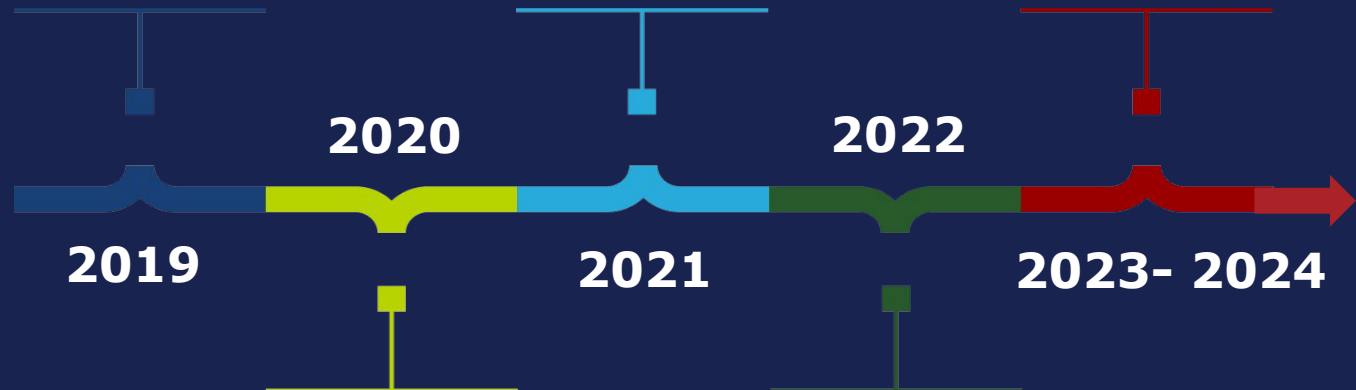
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
  - Overview
  - Timeline
  - Lifeline in Texas
  - Historical Funding
- **Transition to 988**
  - 988 Planning Grant
  - Implementation Status
  - Challenges and Barriers
- **Next Steps and Priorities**
  - Keys to 988 Success
  - Rider 58 Report



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# Timeline

- Vibrant awarded HHSC the Lifeline Capacity Building Initiative grant.
- Vibrant awarded HHSC the 988 Planning Grant.
- Texas 988 Stakeholder Coalition formed.
- Legislative session 2023.
- Sustainability plan due 3/30/23.
- SAMHSA Grant ends.



2019

- The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act was signed into federal law.
- Lifeline center starts expanding primary coverage.
- HHSC committed MHBG funds for Lifeline centers.

2020

2021

- HHSC submitted final 988 Implementation Plan to Vibrant.
- HHSC applied for the SAMHSA Cooperative Agreements Grant.
- 988 rollout on 7/16/22.
- Submission of Rider 58 report by 9/1/22.

2022

2023- 2024

# Lifeline Call Routing

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- One of the key performance metrics used to evaluate Lifeline centers is their **in-state answer rate**.
- Any calls generated from a Texas area code automatically route to their assigned Lifeline center.
- The goal of Lifeline calls is for Texans to speak to Texans to ensure they receive community-based resources and assistance whenever needed.



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# Lifeline Network in Texas



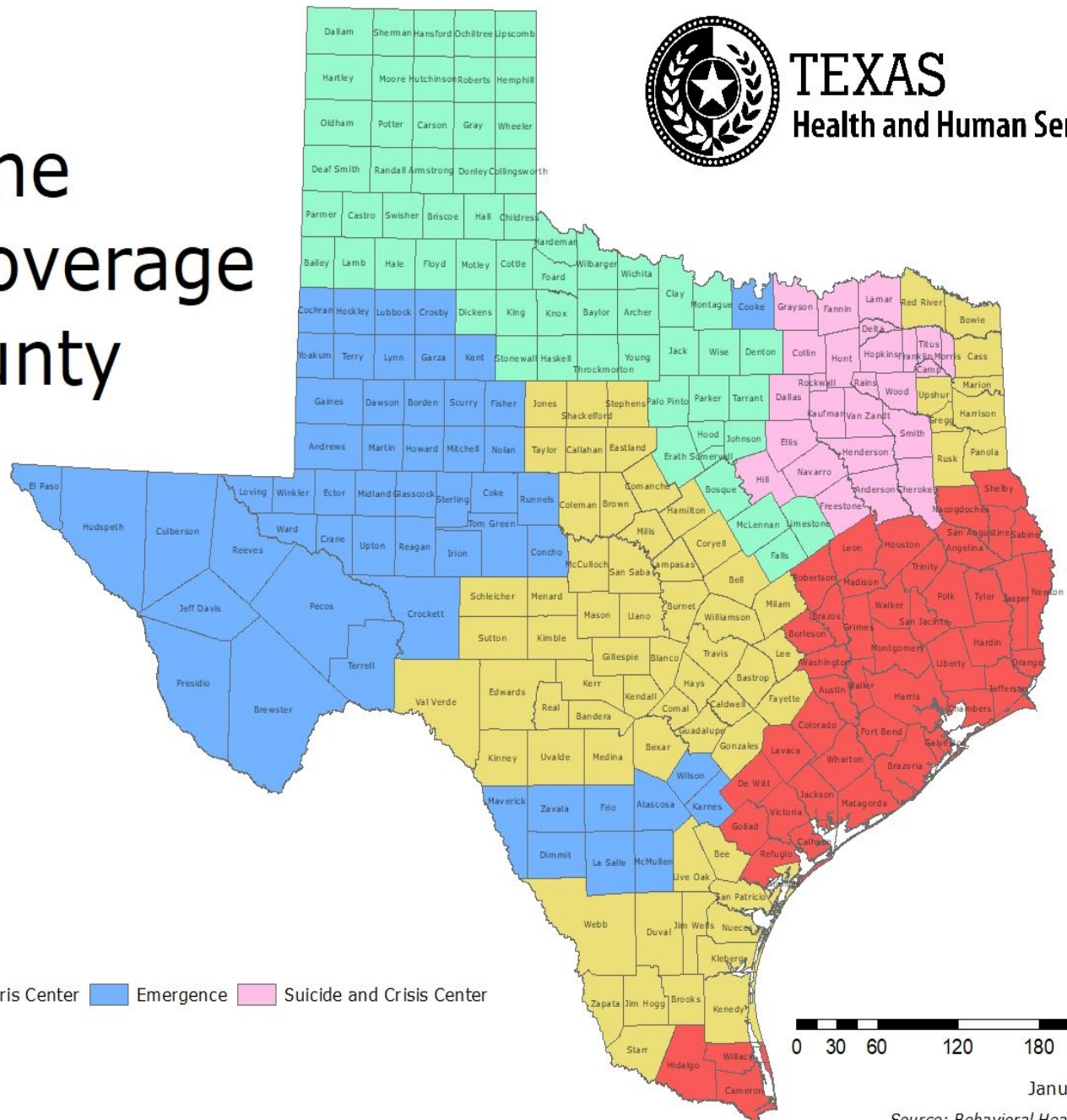
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- There are five Lifeline-affiliated call centers in Texas:
  - The Suicide & Crisis Center of North Texas
  - The Harris Center
  - Integral Care
  - Emergence Health Network
  - ICARE Call Center of MHMR Tarrant
- To be part of the Lifeline network, a center must:
  - Be certified, accredited, or licensed by an external body;
  - Follow specific standards for answering Lifeline calls; and
  - Be willing to participate in Lifeline evaluation activities.

# Lifeline Primary Coverage by County

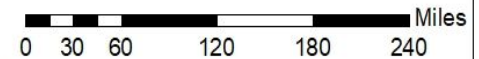


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### Lead Region

- Tarrant
- Integral Care
- Harris Center
- Emergence
- Suicide and Crisis Center



January 2022  
Source: Behavioral Health Services

# Lifeline: Resources and Linkages

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- Texas Lifeline centers have access to various resource listings:
  - 2-1-1
  - Aunt Bertha/findhelp.org
  - Network of Care
- Lifeline centers have written procedures for:
  - Providing access to resources, making referrals for services; and
  - Activating emergency services for callers outside the Lifeline center's local service area.



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# Lifeline: Follow-Up and Transfer to Local Services

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- Vibrant requires a follow-up call for callers with current thoughts of suicide 24 to 72 hours after contacting Lifeline.
  - About 15% of callers require follow-up.
  - Most Texas Lifeline centers report they conduct follow-up calls within 24 hours.
- Callers requiring emergent or urgent care services are warm transferred to the crisis hotline of the local authority in their county of residence or current location.



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# 988 Planning Grant

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The grant assists state agencies in planning for the implementation of a new, national, three-digit number (988) for mental health crisis and suicide response.

- Grant awarded to HHSC on February 20, 2021.
- Funds stipends for the Texas Lifeline call centers, and contracting with a strategic planning consultant: Texas Suicide Prevention Collaborative.
- Grant period ended January 31, 2022.



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# 988 Planning Grant Milestones



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- **Goal 1:** Develop a clear roadmap to address key coordination, capacity, funding, and communication strategies foundational to launching of 988, which occurs on or before July 16, 2022.
  - Created and submitted the Final 988 Implementation Plan on January 21, 2022.
- **Goal 2:** Plan for the long-term improvement of 988 contacts in-state answer rates.
  - Created and convened a monthly 988 key stakeholder coalition workgroup; and
  - Developed strategies in alignment with Vibrant's eight core 988 planning and implementation considerations.

# How Is 988 Different From 911?



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988 is designated as the U.S. universal telephone number for the purpose of the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system operated through Lifeline.

- Centralized network routing
  - Backups and efficiencies
  - Centralized quality assurance and operating standards
- Crisis care service
  - Effectively reduces emotional distress and suicidality (free and accessible to all, 24/7/365)
  - Can link to care, outreach services, and follow-up
  - Care is grounded in a focus of least restrictive intervention possible

# 988 Implementation Barriers and Challenges

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Possible delays to full implementation:

- **Local workforce:** Lifeline center staff hiring challenges for qualified professionals
- **Text and chat adoption:** Lifeline center adoption and rollout of required Vibrant software.
- **24/7 coverage:** Ensuring 24/7 primary coverage for all counties and adequate backup coverage
- **Funding and sustainability:** Currently subsidizing operations with existing funding streams
- **Expansion of 988:** Unknown scaling, growth, and public adoption of 988 including intersections with 911



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# Next Steps and Priorities

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1. Ensure 24/7 statewide primary coverage of Lifeline calls meet Vibrant and SAMHSA answer rate goals.
2. Ensure adequate workforce pipeline meet projected call volume estimates.
3. Evaluate Texas Lifeline system for adherence to Vibrant best practices and ensure plans are developed to close any gaps in operating policies and procedures or service provision.
4. Ensure all Lifeline centers have access to appropriate, reliable, and accurate resources, referrals, and linkages to all Texans who contact 988.
5. Develop plans to secure sustainable and diversified funding to support 988 implementation.



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# Eight Core 988 Planning and Implementation Considerations (1 of 2)

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1. Ensure statewide coverage for 988 calls, chats, and texts.
2. Secure adequate, diversified, and sustained funding streams for Lifeline member centers.
3. Expand and sustain center capacity to maintain target in-state answer rates for current and projected call, text, and chat volume.
4. Support crisis centers in meeting Lifeline's operational standards, requirements, and performance metrics.



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# Eight Core 988 Planning and Implementation Considerations (2 of 2)

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5. Convene a coalition of key stakeholders to advise on 988 planning and implementation.
6. Maintain a comprehensive, updated listing of resources, referrals, and linkages; plan for expanded services.
7. Ensure all state centers can provide best practices follow-up to 988 callers/chatters/texters.
8. Plan and implement campaign awareness for 988.



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# Rider 58 Report

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- Rider 58 requires HHSC to study adequacy and efficacy of the Lifeline infrastructure.
- Report must include:
  - Strategies to improve linkages between the Lifeline infrastructure and crisis response;
  - Strategies to improve access to mental health crisis and suicide response; and
  - Recommendations for sources of sustainable funding for the Lifeline infrastructure.
- Report due to legislature by September 1, 2022.



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# Questions?

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# Thank you

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