

Media Contact:

Katie Gorscak, (202) 418-2156
katie.gorscak@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

**FCC WILL VOTE AT JULY MEETING ON
FINAL RULES DESIGNATING ‘988’ AS 3-DIGIT NUMBER
FOR NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE**

***Rules Would Help Combat Rising Suicide Rates by Making It Easier for
Americans in Crisis to Obtain Assistance from Trained Counselors***

WASHINGTON, June 23, 2020—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai today presented his colleagues with draft rules to establish 988 as the new, nationwide, 3-digit phone number for Americans in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. The rules, if adopted by the Commission at its July 16 Open Meeting, would require all phone service providers to begin directing all 988 calls to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022. While this transition takes place, Americans who need help should continue to contact the Lifeline by calling 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) and through [online chats](#).

“988 will save lives. Helping Americans in crisis connect to counselors trained in suicide prevention is one of the most important things we can do at the FCC,” said Chairman Pai. “We believe that 988—which has an echo of the 911 number we all know as an emergency number—will help people access mental health services. Establishing this special purpose number will also highlight the urgency of addressing rising suicide rates in America and reduce the stigma too often associated with seeking assistance from suicide prevention and mental health services. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting these final rules. By doing so, we would send a message to every American: You are not alone.”

If adopted, these rules would apply to all telecommunications carriers as well as all interconnected and one-way Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service providers. They would be required to complete this transition by July 16, 2022. The draft final rules reject a request from phone service providers for a longer transition period. But they also reflect the real challenges of such a nationwide effort including the need for widespread network changes and providing time for Congress, other federal agencies, and local call centers to prepare for the expected increase in the volume of calls. Under the proposed rules, calls to 988 would be directed to 1-800-273-TALK, which will remain operational before and after the 988 transition is completed.

An FCC staff [report](#) to Congress in 2019 proposed establishing 988 as the three-digit code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Staff analyzed various options and determined 988 was the best option for increasing access to crisis resources and ensuring the fastest possible transition.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of approximately 170 crisis centers. The centers are supported by local and state, public and private sources, as well as

with Congressional appropriations through the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

###

Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / TTY: (888) 835-5322 / Twitter: @FCC / www.fcc.gov

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).