



Men's Health Network
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Comments on the Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Federal Communications Commission
Comments Submitted February 14, 2020

[Men's Health Network](http://www.MensHealthNetwork.org)
www.MensHealthNetwork.org

The proposal for a “988” short-hand phone number for mental health crisis (similar to the Emergency Response “911” phone number) is a positive step towards increasing accessibility for United States citizens. Recognizing that the present suicide hotline, 800-273-TALK (8255), has saved thousands of lives, the proposed use of a shorthand alternative, supported by the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), should increase awareness and utilization of the service, saving additional lives.

Following the 988 proposal introduced by Congress, which passed last year, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has continued to evaluate the feasibility of the shorthand versus traditional dial for the public service. Support by FCC Chairman Pai echoes sentiments that Men’s Health Network (MHN) stands by in his statement:

“...it’ll ultimately save lives.”

Standing as a face of advocacy for men and boys, who are fathers, young adults, sons, siblings, uncles, grandparents, widowers, and members of the crucially underserved Veterans populations, MHN believes that the ability to increase the Hotline service for any individual such as these or their female counterparts is logical and rightfully deserved.

Men's Health Network has a strong focus on mental health, making mental health awareness a key issue in each [Men's Health Month](http://MensHealthMonth.com) (June) (MensHealthMonth.com) proclamation request and producing a number of publications on mental health and suicide that feature the existing Suicide Hotline, such as [Your Head, An Owner's Manual](http://YourHead.org) (YourHead.org). But the existing number, the best effort considering that it must be a 10-digit number, is not universally known, nor is it easily remembered or recognized.

That work has continued with an ongoing series of Dialogue on Men's Health discussions funded in part by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) and a series of Congressional Briefings in collaboration with the Congressional Men's Health Caucus. This work only emphasizes the immediate need for quick and easy access for help for those in distress.

A sampling of that work can be seen here -

info@menshealthnetwork.org * www.menshealthnetwork.org
Men's Healthline 888-MEN-2-MEN

Behavioral Aspects of Depression and Anxiety in the American Male – An Expert Panel Report

<http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/depression-anxiety-males-report-summary.pdf>

<http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/depression-anxiety-males-report.pdf>

<http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/depression-anxiety-males-report-summary-spanish.pdf>

And a sampling of Congressional briefings and interest -

Veterans and Active Military: Mental Health and Suicide Issues

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiZIGdW8v48&t=1257s>

One lesson we have learned from the launch of 911 is that simple numbers can reach quick, wide acceptance, and are easily remembered - and they save lives.

988 can gain the same wide acceptance, and quick implementation is critical as suicide continues to be a major public health problem, one that is devastating to families and friends.

We recognize the financial and logistical ramifications of the FCC's proposal for requiring all telephone service providers to accommodate this new revamped service in the next 18-month duration. However, despite timelines and the financial burden by telecommunications providers, the long-term benefit of this adjustment will provide life-saving services that can bring loved ones back home to their families through ease of connection, and provide hope to armed forces members who are suffering severe stress and trauma.

The launch of the 988 Suicide Hotline will allow stressed individuals, both men and women, who see no hope for the future, one last opportunity to reach out for help.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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