



988: Support for Young Children, Families, and School Communities

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) is a free, confidential service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By calling or texting 988, students, parents, caregivers, and school staff can connect with trained crisis counselors who provide emotional support, guidance, and help finding local resources. Even young children (grades K-6) can benefit from 988 services with support, guidance, and help finding local resources. Even young children (grades K-6) can benefit from 988 services with support from families and school staff.

How Does 988 Work?

- Anyone in need of support can call, chat, or text 988 anytime, day or night.
- A trained crisis counselor will:
 - Listen without judgment.
 - Provide emotional support and coping strategies.
 - Help identify immediate needs and concerns.
 - Connect families with local resources when appropriate.

How Can 988 Help School Staff Interacting with Young Children?

- Crisis in young children can show up in a variety of ways and look different depending on the situation. Staff can bring 988 into the conversation by calling, texting, or chatting with 988 while they are with the child. A trained 988 crisis counselor can help staff understand the situation, identify appropriate next steps, and provide real-time referrals.
- Situations that may prompt a school staff member to reach out to 988 include concerns related to:
 - Mental health concerns, such as severe emotional distress, inconsolable crying, or a marked increase in agitation or rage.
 - Trauma (e.g., abuse, neglect, domestic violence).
 - Family-related problems (e.g., divorce, parental substance use, family history of suicide or mental health concerns, issues with child welfare system involvement).
 - School issues such as expulsion, suspension, changing schools, chronic absence, or bullying.

When Should Families Use 988?

- School staff should offer 988 as a resource to parents and caregivers. For example, 988 may be useful if the parent or caregiver is experiencing the following:
 - Feeling overwhelmed, worried, or emotionally distressed.
 - Having concerns about changes in a child's mood, behavior, or well-being.
 - Looking for guidance on supporting a child experiencing crisis.
 - Seeking help for themselves or someone they care about.
 - Experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.
 - Being unsure where to turn for support.

Talking About 988 with Families

- “988 is a resource for anyone who needs emotional support or isn't sure where to turn.”
- “You don't have to wait until a situation becomes an emergency to reach out.”
- “Parents and caregivers can contact 988 if they are worried about their child.”
- “Seeking help is a sign of strength, and support is available 24/7.”

Helpful Resources for School Staff, Parents, and Caregivers

- [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
- [988 Lifeline to Help Someone Else](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\)](#)
- [The Child Mind Institute](#)
- [Family Guide to Supporting Young People's Mental Health and Well-Being](#)
- [Mental Health for Children and Families—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [K-12 Suicide Intervention Guide: Identifying Students at Risk and Responding to Crisis—Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

Everyone needs support sometimes. Whether you're concerned about a child, supporting a family, or seeking help for yourself, 988 is here to listen and connect you with care.

