

# Building and Supporting Comprehensive Behavioral Health Crisis Response Systems

September 14, 2023



SHAPING CRISIS RESPONSE:

## SPOTLIGHTING DOUGLAS COUNTY, KAN.



Douglas County, Kan.  
County Seat: Lawrence, Kan.  
Population: 118,785

The National Association of Counties (NACo), in collaboration with [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#) and [RAND](#), hosted a series of conversations with county leaders to understand the progress, challenges and lessons learned from 911/988 interoperability across various models, including embedded clinicians, call transfer and co-located response. This series will spotlight the work of five of the innovative counties shaping crisis response systems.

Douglas County exemplifies how investment in partnerships between local systems and human services can streamline behavioral health care. Kansas Suicide Prevention Headquarters (KSPHQ), located in Douglas County, is Kansas's primary crisis call center – responding to 988 calls placed in 103 out of the state's 105 counties. Since 988 calls route to call centers based on a phone number's area code, people calling from a different location often experience delays in reaching the closest call center with nearby services.

To overcome this problem, KSPHQ created a 911/988 transfer program that utilizes 911 location technology so that callers within the counties that KSPHQ serves, regardless of their phone's area code, are located and transferred directly to KSPHQ. Piloted in Douglas County, this program incorporates a "quick button" that local 911 call centers can press to swiftly transfer callers to KSPHQ crisis counselors, minimizing wait time. KSPHQ's 988 quick button is an integral part of streamlining

access to Douglas County's new continuum of care, which includes the Mobile Response Team (MRT) that KSPHQ can dispatch to provide on-site behavioral health crisis support and the [Treatment Recovery Center](#), where people in need of crisis observation or stabilization can go.



To facilitate the program's implementation, Douglas County funded a program coordinator who works alongside a 911 law enforcement liaison at KSPHQ. Together, they developed criteria for diverting cases to enhance the number of calls transferred from 911 to 988. Douglas County also provided funding for KSPHQ to hire call supervisors to enhance care coordination. **Currently, 81 percent of calls made to the Douglas County Crisis Line, managed by KSPHQ, are resolved on the phone and 86 percent of the mobile crisis team interventions result in keeping people in the community, avoiding hospitalization or incarceration.**

*NACo would like to thank Jared Auten, crisis line director, Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ for sharing information on Douglas County. This spotlight was created with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts.*

# Shaping Crisis Response: A Spotlight Series



# SPEAKERS



**Shannon Scully**  
Director of Justice Policy  
and Initiatives  
National Alliance on  
Mental Illness (NAMI)



**Lilly Simmering**  
Deputy County Executive  
Officer  
Orange County, Calif.



**Jared Auten**  
Crisis Line Director  
Kansas Suicide  
Prevention Headquarters



# Shannon Scully

Director of Justice Policy and Initiatives  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

# 988: Brief Overview

- **A 3-digit universal dialing code for suicide prevention, substance use and mental health crisis**
  - Launched July 2022
- **Builds on/replaces the 1-800 number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
  - Now the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- **Created by congressional action – *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act***
  - Signed into law October 2020



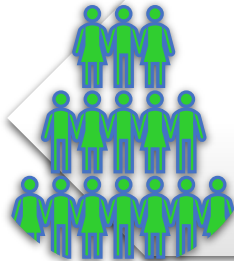
# Why 988 is Important to NAMI

Someone experiencing a mental health crisis **deserves a mental health response.**

Tragically, most people in crisis **don't get the help they need.**



5,500 times a day, people with mental illness are booked into our nation's



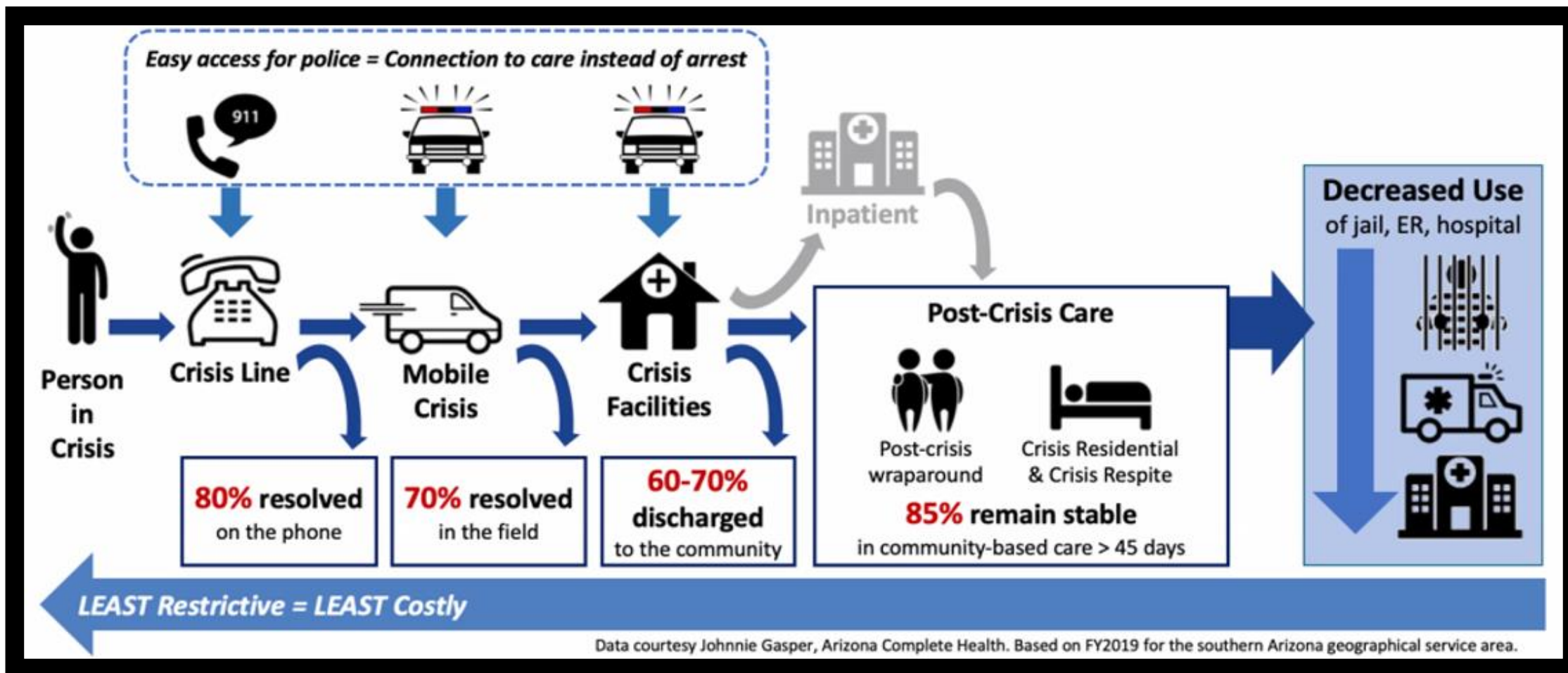
3,300 suicide attempts are made every day in the U.S.



Millions of mental health crisis calls are made to 911 every year

# Impact of a Crisis Response System

1. Alignment of crisis services toward **common goals**
2. Provide the least **restrictive care**





# 988: A Year in Review (Usage)

## 988 turns ONE!

- ~5M contacts (2M increase)
  - 40% increase year over year
- 1135% increase in texts
- 141% increase in chats
- 46% increase in calls
  
- 1M contacts to Veterans Crisis Line
- 75% decrease in "Average Speed of Answer"



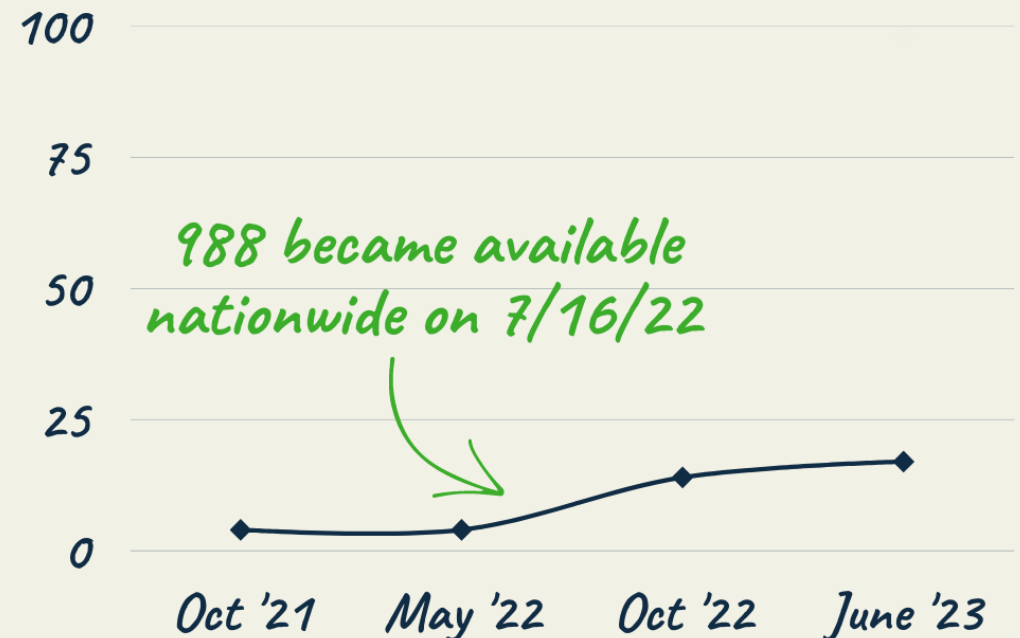


# 988: A Year in Review (Awareness)

## After one year of 988:

- **Only 17%** of Americans are familiar with 988
  - *Just 4% are very familiar with 988*
- **2 in 5** Americans don't know what to do if someone they love is experiencing a mental health crisis or suicidal
  - *These are the exact situations 988 is intended to **help***

Unfortunately, fewer than 1 in 5 Americans are familiar with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline after one year.





# Why Care About 988?

## *According to the NAMI/IPSOS June 2023 Survey:*

- **3 in 4** Americans are **not content** with the state of mental health treatment in the US
- **62%** say mental health care should be a **high or the highest priority** for funding in Congress
- **85%** of Americans want a **mental health response** to someone experiencing a mental health, drug, or suicide crisis, not a police response
- Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely than white Americans to agree that they would **not feel safe calling 911** for a loved one having a mental health crisis



**1 in 2**  
**Americans**

say funding the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline should be a high priority for Congress



**nami**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

This NAMI/ipsos poll was conducted June 2 – 11, 2023, by Ipsos using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®. This poll is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 2,073 general population adults age 18 or older. The survey has a margin of error of ± 2.3 percentage points.

# More Work Needs to be Done

**Crisis services must be championed at all levels to ensure everyone in crisis gets the help they need, when they need it.**

## We need:

- A **consistent response** to mental health crises in communities across the country
- To **expand** our mental health crisis response workforce
- To **invest** in robust crisis services and ensure **sustainability**
- To **build more awareness** of 988 and our state's needs





# FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 988 hub: [www.reimaginecrisis.org](http://www.reimaginecrisis.org)
- State 988 legislation: [988 State Bill Tracking](#)
- Receive NAMI [Federal Advocacy Alerts](#)
- Connect with your [local NAMI](#)
- SAMHSA [Resource Page](#)
- *Contact me: [hwesolowski@nami.org](mailto:hwesolowski@nami.org)*

## A 988 Crisis System

*Someone to call  
Someone to respond  
A safe place to go*



# Lilly Simmering

Deputy County Executive Officer  
Orange County, Calif.





# Jared Auten

Crisis Line Director  
Kansas Suicide Prevention  
Headquarters

# Questions & Answers



# Thank you!



**STRONGER COUNTIES.**  
**STRONGER AMERICA.**

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