



## **Response to the 9-8-8 dialing code for mental health crisis and suicide prevention services**

Media Release

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Vancouver, BC - Local, provincial and national suicide prevention and crisis intervention phone lines are essential. In British Columbia, the BC Crisis Line Network answers 1800SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) and 310Mental Health Support (310-6789) and supports the federal decision to implement the national 9-8-8 hotline.

9-8-8 is the front door to local emergency mental health services. Crisis centres are the living room.

National crisis lines in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia are rooted in a network of local crisis centres. Canadian crisis lines are based on the same model: a single line answered by many local crisis centres. Callers have an obvious place to reach out for help, and the calls are answered by people who understand their community and the resources available to resolve the crisis.

“Canadians do have a national suicide prevention line in place - 1-833-456-4566 with TalkSuicide,” says Stacy Ashton, Chair of the BC Crisis Line Network. “9-8-8 makes it much easier to remember where to call when you are in crisis. Changing the number is the easy part. Making sure we have resources in place to answer every call is where we look to our provincial and federal governments. 9-8-8 is a promise that we will be there when you need us. We have to answer the calls to fulfill that promise.”

During COVID, the BC Crisis Line Network saw demand for crisis service increase by 90% (48% higher on 1800SUICIDE and 99.6% higher on 310Mental Health Support in 2021/22 compared with pre-COVID for incoming calls). We field over 450 staff and volunteers who provided over 1.4 million minutes of support, but we did not answer all our calls. We are keenly aware of the challenges our crisis services, alongside 9-1-1, police, fire, and ambulance, are facing serving those in need.

The BC Crisis Line Network has been working with 9-1-1, the Canadian Mental Health Association and BC Ambulance to ensure British Columbians get the right services at the right time. The Network has also been working with TalkSuicide, the national line, about what it means to be 9-8-8 ready.

We support the move towards a nationwide 988 number, and we look forward to working with partners at regional, provincial and national levels.

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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## **ABOUT THE BC CRISIS LINE NETWORK**

The BC Crisis Line Network comprises ten regional crisis centres across BC, collectively answering 1800SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) and 310Mental Health Support (310-6789). The Network operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provides lifesaving crisis intervention, suicide risk assessment, and strengths-based collaborative safety planning and follow-up to vulnerable British Columbians.

Network crisis centres in Nanaimo, Prince George, Kelowna, and Vernon have responded to Canadians calling TalkSuicide since 2017.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please reach out:

- Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789 (no area code required)
- Anywhere in BC 1800SUICIDE: 1-800-784-2433

### **ADDITIONAL BC CONTEXT**

[BC Budget Report 2023 Recommends 9-1-1 Levy to Fund BC Crisis Line Network](#)

[Almost Half of British Columbians Would be Unwilling to Call 9-1-1 Because of Possible Police Intervention](#)

[Heat and Fire Lead to Increased Calls to BC Crisis Line Network](#)

[92% of British Columbians want 9-1-1 to Refer Mental Health Calls to BC Crisis Lines](#)

