



Georgia Department of Behavioral Health  
& Developmental Disabilities

Judy Fitzgerald, Commissioner

Office of Public Affairs

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## **Georgia prepares for increased demand for mental health crisis services *Plans informed by 9-8-8 Planning Coalition***

Georgia has completed the first phase of planning for its implementation of 9-8-8, the new number for the National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

9-8-8 is expected to increase awareness and access to support for individuals in a mental health crisis. The easy-to-remember, three-digit dialing code is slated to “go live” on July 16, 2022.

Establishing 9-8-8 as the “9-1-1” for suicide prevention and mental health crisis services will make it easier for Georgians in crisis to access the help they need and decrease the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health. It is expected to increase demand on the crisis system twofold.

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), as Georgia’s behavioral health authority, is responsible for responding to National Suicide Prevention Lifeline calls and coordinating services and support for Georgians who seek help through the line. Once implemented, 9-8-8 calls from Georgia will be routed through the Georgia Crisis and Access Line, which was established in 2006 to provide around-the-clock support to individuals in crisis.

DBHDD submitted its initial plans to federal partners, which were informed by a broad range of stakeholders who are involved in responding to mental health crises: emergency responders, healthcare providers and advocates, individuals with experience with mental health disorders and entities serving special populations.

The planning coalition, which was assembled in April, will continue to inform Georgia’s planning process and ensure there is statewide coverage for 9-8-8 response.

Commissioner Judy Fitzgerald attributed the success of the first phase of the planning process to the numerous people who have joined to help DBHDD plan for the implementation of 9-8-8.

“Georgia’s work to develop its crisis network over the past 12 years has DBHDD well positioned for change, and as we prepare to evolve, I am grateful to those who have stepped up to help inform our planning process in a thoughtful way,” said Fitzgerald. “I am very excited about this work, how important it is, both in preventing suicide and in building a diverse coalition to develop an infrastructure that supports Georgians’ mental wellbeing for generations to come.”

If anyone you know needs help related to mental health, substance use, or intellectual and developmental disabilities immediate assistance is available 24/7/365. Please call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at **1-800-715-4225**.

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*The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) is the state agency, which supports people with mental health needs, substance use disorders, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Department's vision is easy access to high-quality care that leads to a life of recovery and independence for the people it serves. Judy Fitzgerald has served as commissioner of DBHDD since 2016.*

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