

# 9-8-8 IN GEORGIA

Coming July 2022

## NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION AND MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS SYSTEM

Georgia Department  
of Behavioral Health  
& Developmental  
Disabilities



### WHAT IS 9-8-8?

A direct, national three-digit line, **9-8-8**, will open the door for millions of Americans to seek the help they need, while sending the message to the country that healing, hope and help are happening every day. In Georgia, the 9-8-8 calls will be answered by the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

#### Some of 9-8-8's key features include:

- Connecting a person in a behavioral health crisis to someone who can address their immediate needs and help connect them to ongoing care
- Promote cost efficiency by providing the most appropriate response
- Reducing burden on law enforcement, public health and other safety resources when not appropriate
- Helping end stigma of seeking or accessing behavioral healthcare

Right now, in Georgia, anyone experiencing a suicidal crisis or emotional distress should call GCAL at:

**1-800-715-4225**

or download the

**MY GCAL app,**

available on both iOS and Android devices, to access GCAL via text and chat.

GCAL is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### WHY DO WE NEED 9-8-8?

When there is a mental health or substance use crisis, many do not know what to do. Call their primary care doctor? Call the police? Call 9-1-1? Go to the emergency room? These responses place an unnecessary burden on local law enforcement and emergency services and rarely provide the most effective result for the individual experiencing the behavioral health crisis.

In Georgia you can call/text or chat GCAL now, but starting on July 16, 2022, individuals will be able to dial 9-8-8 for behavioral health crisis resources. 9-8-8 provides an easy-to-remember three-digit number to provide access to immediate behavioral health support.

The 9-8-8 law requires Georgia to enhance the current systems' ability to respond to those experiencing a behavioral health crisis by providing:



#### Someone to talk to

- Available 24/7 for calls, text and chat
- Peer-run hotline offering callers emotional support, staffed by individuals who are in recovery themselves, also called a peer warm line



#### Someone to respond

- Mobile crisis available statewide
- Coordinate with 9-1-1/EMS as appropriate
- Outpatient community provider response



#### Somewhere to go

- Crisis stabilization units
- Crisis service center
- Peer wellness respite
- Detox and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment
- Inpatient beds
- Outpatient crisis intervention

### GEORGIA'S RESPONSE

In Georgia, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) is the state behavioral health authority as designated in O.C.G.A. § 37-1-20 and, as such, is the lead agency for the 9-8-8 implementation. To help ensure a smooth transition to 9-8-8, DBHDD is engaging with a coalition of stakeholders across the crisis continuum,

such as behavioral health providers, 9-1-1, law enforcement and lived experience advocates. Coalition members provide subject-matter expertise on elements of the current crisis system and where there may be improvement opportunities. 9-8-8 will have linkages and impacts across multiple groups, and the coalition will help shape the future of crisis services in Georgia.