

911- 988 Connection Standards

The purpose of these standards is to allow the 911 service system to communicate, coordinate, and engage with the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in accordance with Nebraska Revised Statute § 86-1025. Callers to the 911 service system may be connected to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, and individuals calling the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline may be connected to the 911 service system when deemed appropriate. An example of a PSAP protocol following these standards can be found in Appendix A.

1. Definitions

a. 911(PSAP) and 988

- i. PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point): as defined in Nebraska State Statute.
- ii. 988: The three-digit number that connects individuals to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline network.

b. Reasonable Care: Operating within the PSAP's policy and protocol.

c. Telecommunicator: any PSAP employee charged with receiving, transmitting, or dispatching emergent phone, radio, or data communications.

d. Connection: The ability for a PSAP to transfer a caller with permission to the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the ability for a PSAP to receive transfers from the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

e. Warm Transfer Definition: A warm transfer refers to the process of transferring a caller to another department, organization, or service while prioritizing continuity of care. The opposite of a warm transfer is a 'cold transfer' in which a caller is simply patched through to another center without explanation or communication.

- i. 911 and 988 shall identify and agree on the best number or contact method to communicate imminent and non-imminent calls.

1. Examples include but are not limited to a dedicated 10-digit line, administrative line, or other means such as a dedicated cell phone.

- ii. Redundancies

1. Each PSAP will establish a call flow diagram and/or backup resources to follow in the event of a transfer failure. (See Appendix B for an example call flow diagram)

2. Training

a. The public will utilize both 911 and 988 for assistance. Forms of response criteria will vary based on multiple factors including, but not limited to, geography, available resources, local standard operating policies, and jurisdiction (NENA Standard).

b. Various mental health response models may be dispatched depending on jurisdictional needs, such as co-responder models built in collaboration with existing public safety entities, mobile crisis teams that may be deployed in partnership with 988 crisis contact centers, and/or other alternative response teams. Begin by identifying the local standard of care (NENA Standard).

c. PSAP Telecommunicators will meet or exceed minimum curriculum training requirements as defined in the Nebraska 911 Service System Training Requirements for Public Safety Answer Points.¹ In addition to those standards, PSAPs will;

i. Train Telecommunicators on policy and circumstances for a 988 transfer during a Telecommunicator's basic course. Initial basic telecommunicator training in PSAP policy on 988 transfers should include:

a) Calls are only transferred with the caller's permission.

b) Callers should not be denied a warm transfer for wishing to remain anonymous.

c) Callers who are injured or actively engaged in an act of suicide are not eligible for transfer.

d) Callers who represent a danger to the public or are in a public space or on top of a structure are not eligible for transfer.

e) Call should not be considered transferred until the 988 Counselor advises that the PSAP may disconnect.

f) Procedures to follow should the call fail (inability to transfer) or the call is not accepted for transfer. ii. PSAP Telecommunicators will also meet or exceed continuing education requirements found in the training standards identified above. Further consideration regarding continuing education should be given regarding the following topics;

¹ See *In the matter of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, on its own motion, seeking to implement provisions of LB 938 [2016] and to plan, implement, coordinate, fund, deploy, manage, and maintain a plan for the 911 service system.* App. No. 911-067/PI-208, ORDER ADOPTING REVISIONS TO TRAINING STANDARDS (December 12, 2023).

- a. Mental health awareness and crisis intervention, and the PSAPs policy on processing mental health crisis calls, including what calls are appropriate to transfer to 988.
- b. This standard does not endorse or require any specific training courses but recommends that PSAP Telecommunicators have the training suitable for carrying out their ability to transfer calls to and receive calls from 988, including the PSAP policy on 988 transfers.

3. Quality Assurance (QA)

- a. PSAPs must remain compliant with the state guidelines on QA.
- b. QA is a best practice, and Telecommunicators will operate within the PSAP's policy and protocol.

4. Performance Standards

- a. PSAPS should maintain a feedback mechanism with the Nebraska designated 988 center to review transfers and identify any process changes or improvements to meet identified objectives. If issues arise between 988 and the PSAP that cannot be resolved, the State 911 Department, in consultation with Nebraska DHHS Division of Behavioral Health, may provide support and guidance upon the request of either the PSAP or 988.
- b. Performance standards may include completion of transfer, protocol adherence, and data collected by the PSAP and 988.

5. Technology Reliability

- a. The PSAP and 988 shall test the technology utilized to transfer between each other as defined in their policies and procedures.
- b. Testing should be conducted monthly in the absence of transfer activity between the PSAP and 988.
- c. Any connection failure during a transfer will be communicated by the entity experiencing the failed ability to transfer. Redundancies to be considered as defined by the PSAP.
- d. The ability to transfer will be tested following any software updates, technology changes, or changes in equipment by the PSAP or 988 that impact the call processing environments.

6. Standard of Documentation

- a. PSAPs shall capture any transfers to 988 in accordance with their policies and procedures, including any call information delivered by their Call Processing Equipment (CPE).
- b. PSAPs must establish and maintain a means of documenting all 988 transfers.

Individual PSAP Considerations:

- a. Individual PSAPs should work within the bounds of their own internal policies and procedures and in conjunction with 988 regarding any potential Third-party or digital transfers

Appendix A. Model Policy on 988 Transfers for PSAPS

I. BACKGROUND

In 2020, Congress enacted the federal National Suicide Hotline using 988 as the universal three-digit number linking callers to 24x7 resources for anyone experiencing mental health related distress, including thoughts of suicide. 988 connects callers to trained counselors that are part of the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network. Crisis Counselors are trained in suicidology, crisis de-escalation, and Nebraska resource navigation.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of (PSAP name) to divert qualifying callers to the 988 Suicide Hotline with a *warm transfer* as an option over sending law enforcement within parameters listed below. Call-takers shall create an incident in CAD to document receiving the call and capture caller information, even though the call will not be forwarded to a law dispatcher. At no time will a caller be diverted to 988 without their consent. If the call-taker is in doubt if the call meets criteria for a 988 warm transfer, create a call for local response as the situation dictates. Notation of the call and successful transfer will be logged on the (PSAP method for tracking transfers).

III. DEFINITION

988 call type should be used for calls of people expressing thoughts of suicide or in a mental health crisis where no imminent threat to life or medical concern is present. This call type is for **first party** callers only and after evaluating safety as described in PROCEDURE.

IV. PROCEDURE

A- Information to gather:

1. Location and phone number of caller if known, the caller can remain anonymous.
2. Verify they are the person in crisis (first person caller).
3. Does the call meet any of the following criteria?

- **A suicide attempt is in progress or imminent;**
- **The caller needs medical attention;**
- **The caller is on a structure/bridge;**
- **The caller is engaged with a weapon*;**
- **Bystanders may be in jeopardy**

**A firearm in the household or as a means mentioned does not disqualify the call from being transferred unless they are engaged with the firearm or other means of suicide. 988 counselors are equipped to assist individuals in these situations and get calls from the public in these same circumstances without law response.*

- B- If any of the above criteria are met, the call is not eligible for 988 warm transfer** and the 911 call-taker will remain on the line and continue processing the call utilizing the appropriate call-type for the situation.

If none of the above criteria are met, the call is eligible for 988 transfer. Create a call-for-service using (PSAP determined) call-type.

C- 911 to 988 Warm Transfer

1. Tell the caller they will be connected to a 988 Crisis Counselor and not to hang up while the transfer is in progress.

Example:

“I am going to connect you with a 988 Crisis Counselor who can help you, please do not hang up. When the counselor answers, I am going to give them some background information about what you are experiencing today. After that, you will remain connected with the crisis counselor, and I will remove myself from the call.”

2. Using the (PSAP phone equipment conference call feature), connect the caller to 988 using the dedicated 911 / 988 phone line, (insert assigned phone number here). The 988 Crisis Counselor will answer, “988 Nebraska, how can I help you?”
 - a. The transfer to 988 will be discontinued if the transfer is not answered by 988 within two minutes. At two minutes, the call will be modified, processed, and dispatched to law enforcement in accordance to the appropriate call-type.
3. Introduce yourself and that you have an individual on the line who needs assistance, introduce the individual by name (if known), and provide a brief synopsis of the situation.
4. Provide the crisis counselor with the caller’s address, phone number, and any other important information (if provided).
5. Once information is acknowledged, indicate you are removing yourself from the call then release the call.
6. **If the caller disconnects at any point during the warm transfer, the call remains with the PSAP to process as per the PSAP guidelines.** *(It is permissible to return a call to the caller ONLY*

if the call was lost because of technical issues during the transfer) 988 does not take possession of the call until the warm transfer is complete.

D- Crisis Call Management

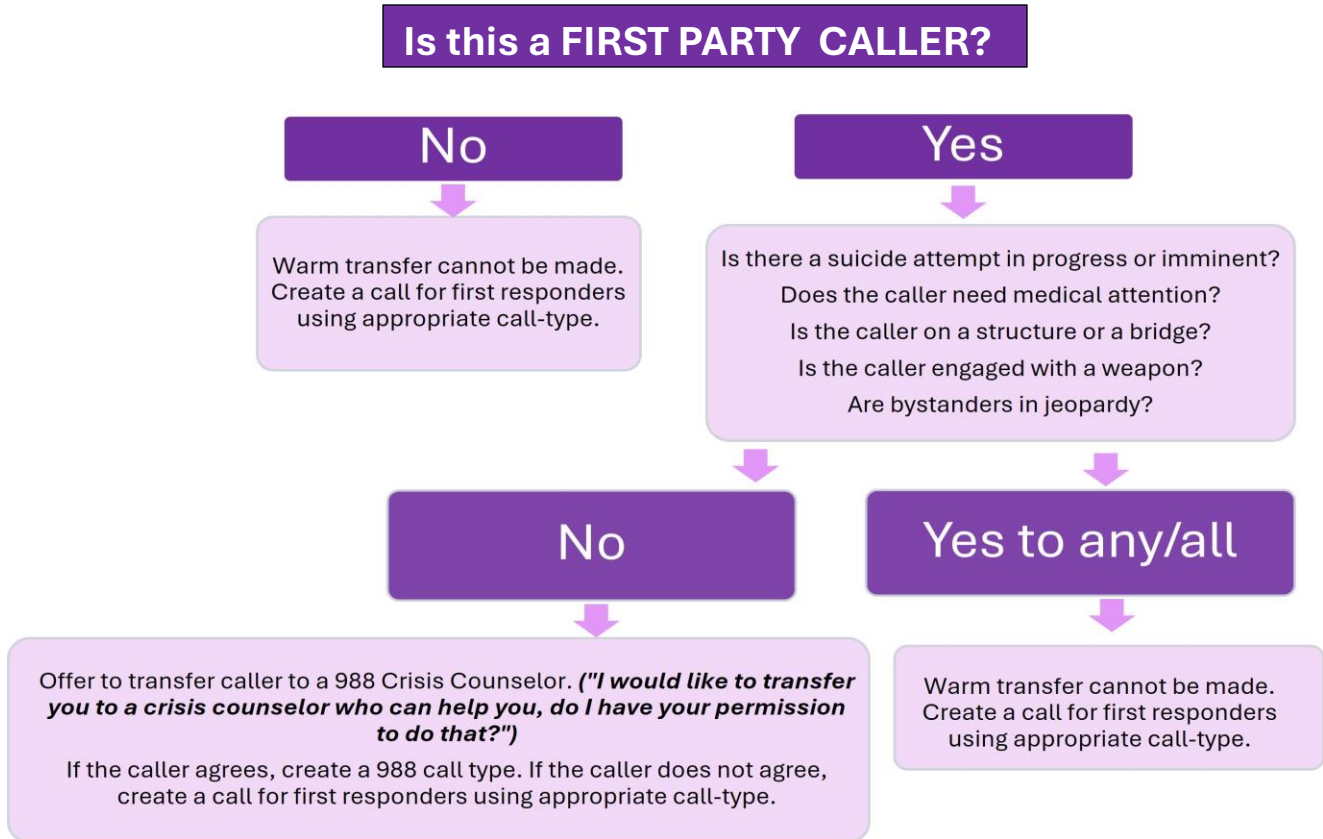
1. 988 Crisis Counselor manages the call per 988 policies and procedures.
2. If a caller disconnects with the 988 Crisis Counselor, a call may be placed back to the PSAP from 988 to request a welfare check or other appropriate call-type based on circumstances.
3. Create a call and dispatch the law enforcement unit per call-type guidelines.

E- Special requirements/Additional Info

1. Do not initiate a phone call to a *suicidal party* without specific direction or coordination with the responding agency.
2. Phone number and location information of the caller will be entered into CAD utilizing what displays on the PSAP call-handling equipment if unable to be obtained from the caller. *This does NOT prevent the call from being eligible for transfer to 988.*
3. The 988 Program phone line (insert assigned phone number here) is not a public number. This line is dedicated to 911 centers to collaborate in providing services to the communities of Nebraska.
4. If waiting for 988 to receive the transfer for any period (up to two minutes), 988 advises the following prompts to keep a connection with the caller:
 - a. “Sounds like you’ve had a hard day. What do you normally do when you have a day like this?”
 - b. Encourage conversation about kids, pets, or music.

988 Warm Transfer Criteria

(Location and phone number of caller have been recorded if available)



1. Tell the caller they will be connected to a 988 Crisis Counselor and not to hang up while the transfer is in progress.
 - ***"I am going to connect you with a 988 Crisis Counselor who can help you, please do not hang up. When the counselor answers, I am going to give them some background information about what you are experiencing today. After that, you will remain connected with the crisis counselor, and I will remove myself from the call."***
2. Once 988 answers:
 - ***"Hello, I am with (PSAP Name). I have __name__ on the line who needs assistance." (Give brief synopsis of situation)***
3. Once 988 acknowledges they have the info they need, indicate you are removing yourself from the call and disconnect.
 - ***("PSAP disconnecting.")***