



For immediate release

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES RECOGNIZES 988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE EFFORTS IN CONNECTICUT

Rocky Hill, CT – Tuesday – The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the United Way of Connecticut (UWCT) proudly celebrated the success of Connecticut’s 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline with an event at UWCT’s office in Rocky Hill. This event, attended by government officials, community leaders, mental health advocates, Lifeline staff, and supporters, highlighted the significant impact that the Lifeline has made in Connecticut since its implementation two years ago. Since 2022, over 80,000 calls have been received and 95% of calls are answered within seconds, placing Connecticut in the top 5 states nationally for in-state answer rates.

“The 988 system is designed to connect anyone who has thoughts of suicide or who knows someone who may be at risk of suicide with the resources they need to immediately respond and resolve a crisis.” said Governor Ned Lamont. “I strongly urge anyone who is having thoughts of self-harm to call 988 and speak with a counselor who can provide free and confidential support. I applaud our partners at the United Way of Connecticut for operating this invaluable service on behalf of our state.”

The highlight of the event was the presentation of a citation from HHS to UWCT to honor their commitment and exceptional service.

“United Way of Connecticut is proud to partner with DMHAS, DCF, HHS and SAMHSA to provide the critically important service of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in Connecticut,” said Lisa Tepper Bates, United Way of CT President and CEO. “Our team consistently ranks among the top 988 call centers in the nation for speed-to-answer – we know that lives can depend on picking up the phone and providing support quickly. We are proud of the fact that 90% of our 988 callers self-report after the call that their sense of crisis is diminished – there’s nothing more important to us than that result for these callers.”

Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, added, “I am proud to celebrate the achievements of Connecticut's

988 Crisis and Suicide Lifeline, a vital resource in our state's mental health services. 988 has been integral to our continuum of crisis services, alongside the ACTION Line and DCF's Youth Mobile Crisis Intervention Services, all expertly operated by United Way. With exceptional speed and effectiveness, the dedicated team at United Way has answered over 44,000 calls from July 2023 to May 2024 alone, demonstrating their commitment and capability in crisis response."

"Connecticut's crisis service systems for children and families are particularly strong because of the many years of close collaboration between state and federal partners. United Way 2-1-1/9-8-8 is the anchor of our crisis response system and this recognition is well-deserved. Thank you to our federal partners SAMHSA and HHS for making this possible through their continued leadership and investment," said DCF Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly. "For anyone struggling, we want to let you know that seeking help is a sign of strength. There's no wrong door but 2-1-1/9-8-8 is a great place to start."

HHS Region 1 Director Everett Handford, who presented the citation to UWCT, said of the Lifeline, "Today we celebrate the second anniversary of 988. Through 988 our message to the American people and individuals and families who are in crisis is clear. Support is here. Thanks to President Biden and his administration, millions of Americans have been able to seek out the help they need. The people of Connecticut can call, text, and chat 24/7 thanks to the unwavering commitment of our partners at United Way."

For more information about 988, visit 988lifeline.org.

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