

E-Newsletter and Website

Use this sample writeup to help inform and update your networks about the need for policy action in advance of 988 implementation, via your organization’s e-newsletter(s), website, and/or other communications platform(s).

Policymakers Must Act Now to Support Historic Shift in How America Treats Mental Health Crisis Response

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, America was dealing with historically high rates of suicide and deaths by overdose, and mental health conditions. Traditionally, police have responded to mental health emergencies, which requires tremendous local resources and often result in criminalizing mental illness. For example, according to the [Treatment Advocacy Center](#), in 2017 an average of 10% of law enforcement agencies’ total budgets and 21% of state time were spent responding to and transporting persons with mental illness. In addition, a recent [The Washington Post](#) article found that in 2015, 1 in 4 fatal shootings by police were of a person with mental illness—and 1 in 3 of those were people of color.

In response, Congress recently approved the nation’s first-ever three-digit number for mental health crises—988—which will be implemented nationwide by July 2022. But a phone number alone is not enough. To be effective and save lives, 988 needs a fully-funded infrastructure in place to ensure there is someone in every state to answer the call, someone to provide the help, and someplace to go for treatment.

“Our country must prioritize treating mental health emergencies with a mental health response, rather than a law enforcement response,” said **[senior leader’s name, job title, organizational affiliation]**. “[**Organization’s name**] calls on state and federal policymakers to act now to provide the funding and support needed to establish an effective crisis response infrastructure in advance of 988’s implementation in July 2022. We also call on the general public to urge policymakers in making these necessary and life-saving changes”

To learn more, visit www.TheKennedyForum.org/988Toolkit.

Note: Include the infographic as a visual element along with the above writeup. Also consider including a personalized quote featuring a senior leader from your organization (sample quote included above).

This material, developed by the nation’s leading mental health advocacy organizations and professional associations (“The CEO Huddle”), reflects alignment with the [Unified Vision for the Future of Mental Health, Addiction, and Well-Being in the United States](#). To access more 988 resources, please visit www.TheKennedyForum.org/988Toolkit.

