

Widespread outage shuts down 988 mental health hotline

December 1 2022



New York Police Department officers wake up sleeping passengers and direct them to the exits at the 207th Street station on the A train, Thursday, April 30, 2020, in the Manhattan borough of New York. In New York City's latest effort to address a mental health crisis on its streets and subways, Mayor Eric Adams announced Tuesday, Nov. 29, 2022, that authorities would more aggressively intervene to help people in need of treatment, saying there was "a moral obligation" to do so, even if it means providing care to those who don't ask for it. Credit: AP Photo/John Minchillo, File

The nation's [new 988 hotline](#), intended to help anyone experiencing a mental health emergency, has been out of service for several hours Thursday.

Those trying to reach the line for help with suicide, depression or other mental [health](#) crises are greeted with a message that says the line is "experiencing a [service outage](#)."

People can still reach a mental health counselor through the lifeline by texting "988" or opening a [chat](#) at 988lifeline.org.

The Department of Health and Human Services, which oversaw the launch of the three-digit lifeline earlier this year, is in communication with the contractor that supports the line, HHS spokeswoman Sarah Lovenheim said in a tweet Thursday.

"We've taken immediate action to ensure alternative 988 channels are available to the public," Lovenheim tweeted. The outage had been ongoing for several hours Thursday, she said.

The 988 helpline, launched in July, is a national helpline staffed with mental health counselors around the country that's designed to be as easy to remember as the emergency line, 911.

Intrado, the telecommunications provider for the service, could not immediately be reached for comment.

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