

Largest Suicide Prevention Membership Organization Calls for Dedicated National 3-Digit Hotline Number

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, May 30, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) is grateful that the field of suicidology, legislators, and advocates are currently working to develop a designated telephone

resource for people in mental health crisis. We are currently experiencing a suicide crisis in this country with historical increases in suicides over the last 10 years. The suicide rate is up in almost every demographic at a national level, it is the 10th leading cause of death overall, and the 2nd leading cause of death for youth under 25. We need to take action now to change this course. A major step in this effort must include using a dedicated telephonic system across the United States to improve access to life saving services.



AAS is in full support of individuals in crisis and their families/friends to have a suicide prevention number exclusive to this purpose.”

Becky Stoll, LCSW, AAS Crisis Center Division Chair

As the FCC is reviewing this matter, AAS believes it is important to make a statement about the options being discussed and to add our voice to this discussion. AAS strongly believes suicide prevention deserves its own unique 3-digit telephone code. To date, suicide prevention has been relegated to the already overburdened 911 system. Changes to this inadequate and inefficient system

should not be addressed by simply adding onto an existing 3-digit code, such as 211, who most often are not prepared to handle these calls. This is not only important in terms of global suicide prevention and public health messaging, but in prioritizing the needed simplicity of telephonic access during these crises. Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and their families should not be confused about who or where they are calling for help.

“We have known for a long time that the 911 system in the United States is not the ideal location to handle calls for mental health emergencies and request for assistance,” said Becky Stoll, LCSW, AAS Crisis Center Division Chair. “AAS is in full support of individuals in crisis and their families/friends to have a suicide prevention number exclusive to this purpose. We are aware that 211 centers have been put forth as an option to serve in this capacity and AAS has crisis center partners in the 211 network who do important work. Our endorsement of a unique 3-digit code should not be seen as any attempt to invalidate their work, however, suicide prevention deserves its own 3-digit telephone code.”

We know crisis centers across the country are currently underfunded, understaffed, and overworked. A unique 3-digit code for mental health crisis and suicide prevention will increase volume and demand for these centers. For this reason, AAS strongly encourages lawmakers to include provisions for appropriate financial resources to fund this suicide prevention-specific service at scale.

The FCC recently called for public comments with a deadline for public comments of June 7,



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[You may file your comments on this report via the fcc.gov site.](#)

For the Media: Responsible reporting on suicide, including stories of hope and resilience, can prevent more suicides. Please visit the [Suicide Reporting Recommendations](#) for more information.

About AAS: Founded in 1968 by Edwin S. Shneidman, PhD, AAS promotes the research of suicide and its prevention, public awareness programs, public education and training for professionals and volunteers. The membership of AAS includes mental health and public health professionals, researchers, suicide prevention and crisis intervention centers, school districts, crisis center volunteers, survivors of suicide loss, attempt survivors, and a variety of lay persons who have in interest in suicide prevention. You can learn more about AAS at www.suicidology.org.

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