

**WEBINAR SESSION**

# Evidence-Based Practices in Crisis Care

April 2, 2026



*Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*



# Disclaimer

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# About the Crisis Systems Response TTAC

SAMHSA has selected Altarum to provide training and technical assistance (TTA) support to states, territories, Tribal organizations, and community partners across the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and crisis continuum of care. Along with our partners, W2 Consulting Corporation and Change Matrix, LLC, who have extensive experience with crisis services and technical assistance, the CSR-TTAC was formed to support the continued growth of the 988 Lifeline and build a more robust crisis care system.



# SAMHSA Team: Jill Mays



**Jill D. Mays, MS, LPC**

**Division Director of  
Crisis System  
Transformation for the  
988 & Behavioral Health  
Crisis Coordinating  
Office (BHCCO)**

**Jill D. Mays, MS, LPC**, is the Division Director for Crisis System Transformation for the 988 & BHCCO at SAMHSA. She currently leads the evolutionary and collaborative work of pillars two (someone to respond) and three (a safe place for help) of the 988 Behavioral Health Crisis Continuum.

Before coming to SAMHSA, Mrs. Mays served as Director of the Office of Behavioral Health Prevention and Federal Grants at the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), where she most recently oversaw all substance misuse prevention, suicide prevention, and mental health promotion, and served as principal investigator for the agency's multimillion dollar portfolio of federal grants, including 988 and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) grants and as planner for the mental health block grant. Additionally, as Assistant Director of the Office of Adult Mental Health at DBHDD, she was the Project Officer for Crisis Services. Mrs. Mays previously coordinated operation of SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) Core Regional Call Center in Atlanta, serving FEMA Regions III & IV.

Mrs. Mays is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), with over 30 years of experience in the behavioral health field and is a person with mental health shared experience.

# SAMHSA Team: Laura House



**Laura House, PhD,  
MSW, LCSW-C**

**External Engagement  
and Capacity-  
Building Lead for the  
988 & BHCCO, OAS**

**Dr. Laura House** is the External Engagement and Capacity-Building Lead for the 988 and BHCCO. In this role, she is a senior advisor to 988 and BHCCO senior leadership on strategic engagement efforts and advancing capacity-building efforts in 988 and across the crisis continuum. Throughout her federal career, Dr. House has managed agency-wide strategic planning, national program evaluations, research, performance management, information dissemination, TA, training, engagement, partnership, and coalition building efforts, grants, and federal contract management as a certified Contract Officer Representative-Level III.

Prior to her current role at SAMHSA, Dr. House served as the Region 3 Regional Administrator for the Administration for Community Living (ACL) representing the ACL Administrator in providing oversight to states and areas and conducting engagement, partnership and coalition-building, and grant oversight and support. Subsequently, she served as a Senior Management and Program Analyst in the Center for Policy Evaluation in ACL leading the development of a national performance reporting system for grantees, provision of technical and programmatic training and guidance to interest holders nationally, and the agency-wide learning agenda.

Dr. House has also worked in career and detail positions at a federal justice agency, the Office of Management and Budget, and the HHS Office of Strategic Planning. She completed the competitive Key Executive Leadership Program in the Graduate School of Public Affairs at American University. Dr. House received her PhD from Howard University, MSW from the University of Pennsylvania, and BA from American University.

# 988 TTAC Workstream Team



**Bre Carr**  
CSR-TTAC Co-Director  
Behavioral Health  
Project Manager



**Meagan MacGregor**  
Senior Training and  
Technical Assistance  
Specialist



**Jennifer Sedivy**  
Senior Consultant/Senior  
Data Analyst

# Objectives

1

Apply core ethical principles to decision-making in crisis care

2

Understand how to protect individual autonomy and recovery by prioritizing trauma-informed approaches in crisis care

3

Describe the challenges and potential ethical implications of crisis response in rural areas

# National Guidelines

## Someone to Contact

Balancing caller autonomy with duty to report/imminent risk concerns.

## Someone to Respond

On-the-scene decisions around involuntary transport or escalation.

## A Safe Place for Help

Ethics of admitting individuals involuntarily or denying access based on capacity.

## When it comes to ethical decision-making in crisis response, what feels most challenging for you?

- Balancing client autonomy with safety concerns
- Navigating unclear or conflicting policies
- Making decisions quickly under pressure
- Managing personal values vs. professional role
- Knowing when to escalate or involve others

# The Nature of Ethical Decision-Making

*“Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have the right to do and what is right to do.”*

— **Potter Stewart, U.S. Supreme Court Justice**

# Why Do Ethics Matter in Crisis Response?



Crisis situations compress time, heighten emotion, and amplify power dynamics making ethical clarity both harder and more essential



Every decision carries weight: for the person in crisis, for the worker, and for the system



Ethics isn't just about avoiding harm, it's about actively honoring the dignity and humanity of every person



Today's session is a space for honest reflection, not a checklist of right answers



# Guest Speaker



**Frederic G. Reamer**  
**PhD, LCSW**  
Professor Emeritus  
School of Social Work  
Rhode Island College

**Frederic G. Reamer, PhD, LCSW** is professor emeritus in the graduate program of the School of Social Work at Rhode Island College where he has been on the faculty since 1983. His research and teaching have addressed a wide range of human service issues, including mental health, health care, criminal justice, public welfare, and professional ethics.

Dr. Reamer has dedicated his career to reforming education, practice, and ethics in the field of social work through his work as a researcher, professor, and author. These efforts include extensive research on professional ethics, including national research projects sponsored by the Hastings Center, the Carnegie Corporation, the Haas Foundation, and the Scattergood Program for the Applied Ethics of Behavioral Healthcare at the Center for Bioethics, University of Pennsylvania. He has published extensively including 24 books and 175 journal articles, numerous book chapters, and encyclopedia articles.

Dr. Reamer chaired the task force that wrote the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. He currently chairs the NASW Technology Standards Task Force and continues to serve on the Code of Ethics Revisions Task Force.

**PRESENTATION**

# **Ethical and Risk-Management Issues in Behavioral Health: Ethical Decision-Making in Crisis Response**

Frederic G. Reamer, PhD, LCSW  
School of Social Work  
Rhode Island College

The logo for Rhode Island College, featuring the text "RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font, centered within a dark red square.

**R H O D E  
I S L A N D  
C O L L E G E**

# Training Objectives

## At the conclusion of this training, participants should be able to:

1. Evaluate ethical challenges and risks in behavioral health crisis response.
2. Utilize risk management tips to for best practice.
3. Determine ethical dilemmas providers face surrounding use of technology to serve clients remotely (e.g., in rural settings), communicate with clients, and store information.
4. Apply an ethical decision-making framework to recognize, analyze, resolve or prevent ethical dilemmas.
5. Employ state-of-the-art documentation guidelines and protocols.
6. Determine ethical/legal standards of care as they pertain to behavioral health crisis response.

# Please Note

Today, my comments will include references to relevant laws (statutes, regulations, case law) and legal concepts. I am not an attorney and cannot offer legal advice. My advice is limited to ethical and risk-management issues. If you feel the need for legal consultation on these and related issues, please consult an attorney licensed in your jurisdiction who has expertise pertaining to the topics we are addressing.

# Key Risk Areas When Providing Crisis Response and Services

Privacy, confidentiality, and privileged communication

Consent to treat

Informed consent

Conflicts of interest

Boundary issues and dual relationships

Termination of services and abandonment

Preventing suicide and harm to third parties

Consultation, supervision, and referral

Documentation decisions and use of AI

# How Confident Are You That You Know (1)

How to handle an individual's explicit request that you not disclose sensitive and important protected health information about them to a behavioral health program to which you have referred them.

## How Confident Are You That You Know (2)

Whether a program that provides substance use disorder services to adolescents is permitted to provide those services *without* parental notification or consent.

# How Confident Are You That You Know (3)

What confidential information you can and cannot disclose to law enforcement officials.


# How Confident Are You That You Know (4)

How to respond to a subpoena of your documentation, case notes, or clinical records that include information that could be used against your client.





**How  
Confident  
Are You That  
You Know  
(5)**



Guidelines that govern delivery of remote services to individuals located in another state and delivery of remote services.



## How Confident Are You That You Know (6)

How to apply ethics and legal guidelines when during an individual's discussion of their trauma history and deep feelings of remorse about past mistakes, they disclosed that he committed a murder seven years earlier for which he has never been charged.

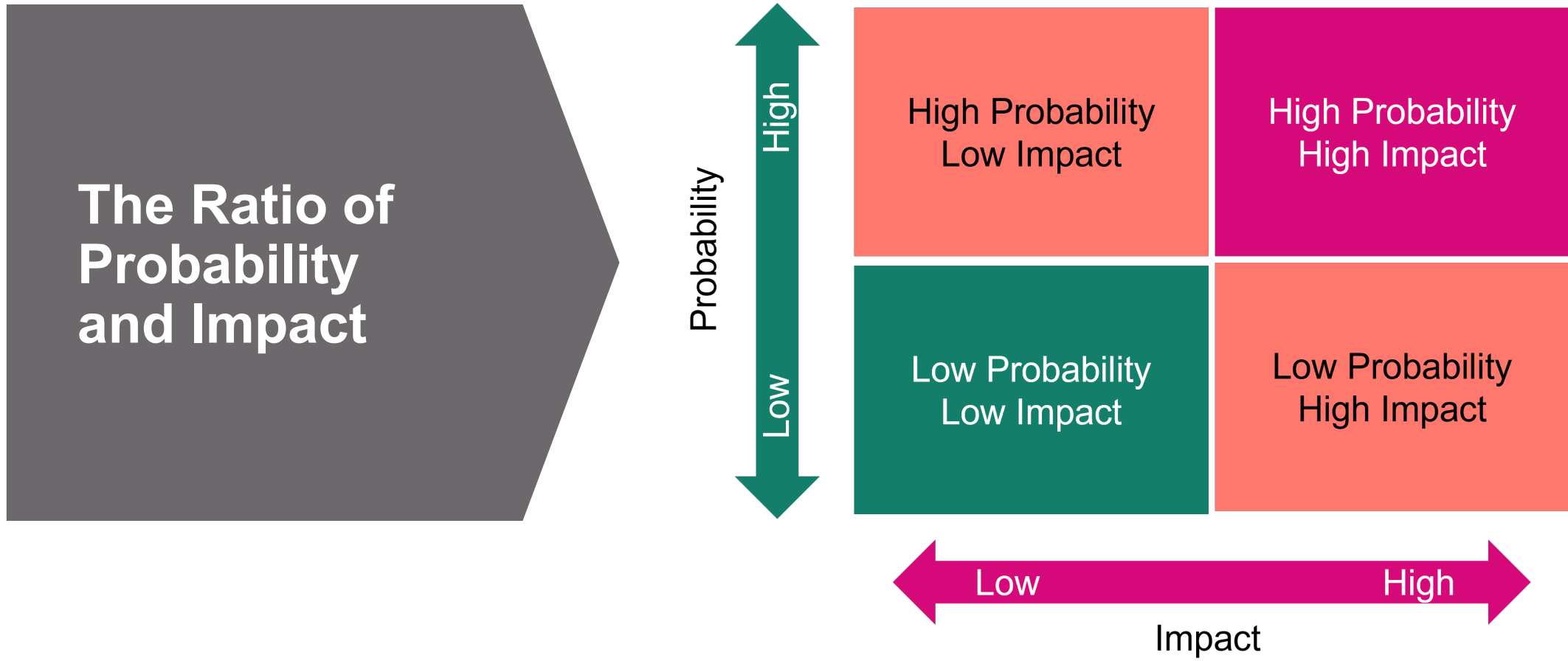
## How Confident Are You That You Know (7)

What ethics guidelines govern instances when a behavioral health professional includes a *collateral* (e.g., client's family member, acquaintance) in crisis contacts.

# How Confident Are You That You Know (8)

Emerging ethical standards related to professionals' use of artificial intelligence (AI) to provide assistance to individuals experiencing a crisis, generate documentation, and train other professionals?

# Risk Management



# Core Knowledge

**Ethical Dilemmas:** Making difficult choices involving conflicting ethical duties.

**Ethical Decision-Making:** Managing ethical dilemmas.

**Ethics Risk Management:** Making ethical decisions in a way that protects individuals and prevents ethics complaints and lawsuits.

# Potential Ethics Risks

**Ethical Mistakes:** Inadvertent errors.

**Deliberate Ethical Decisions:** Difficult choices among conflicting ethical duties.

**Ethical Misconduct:** Clear violation of ethical standards.

## Standard of Care: *The Concept*

“What a ***reasonable*** and ***prudent*** professional, with the same or similar training, should have done under the same or similar circumstances.”





## Standard of Care: *Ethically Complex Cases*

“In ethically complex cases, when reasonable and prudent practitioners do not agree on a course of action, what a reasonable and prudent professional, with the same or similar training, should have done under the same or similar circumstances.”

# Standards of Care (3)

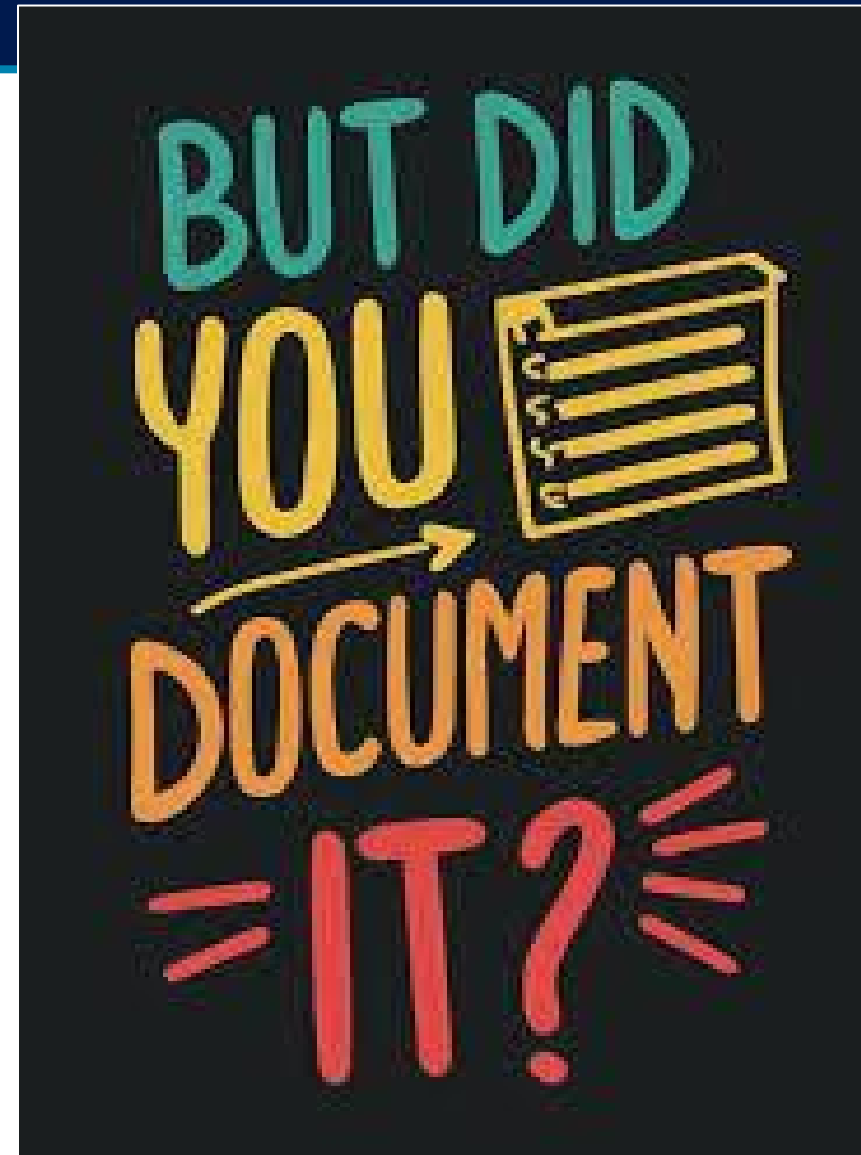
## Standards of Care: Substantive and Procedural

*Substantive* standard of care

*Procedural* standard of care (see Reamer, 2023)

1. Consult colleagues and supervisors
2. Review relevant ethical standards
3. Review national practice standards
4. Review relevant laws (statutes, regulations, case law)
  - Federal
    - HIPAA
    - Title 42 CFR Part 2
    - No Surprises Act
    - FERPA
    - Veterans Administration and military regulations
    - Case law
  - State
    - Confidentiality
    - Mandatory reporting
    - Minors' right to consent
    - HIV
    - Reporting unethical conduct
    - Licensing regulations
    - Case law
5. Agency policies
6. Review relevant literature
7. Obtain legal consultation, when necessary
8. Consult ethics committee, if available
9. Notify malpractice insurer (if applicable)
10. Document decision-making steps

**The  
Attorney  
Mantra**



# Types of Laws

Regulatory Law (executive branch)

Statutory Law (legislative branch)

Case Law (judicial branch)

**Constitutional Law**

# Professional Negligence

A duty exists

Dereliction or breach of the duty

Damage or injury

Causal connection between the breach of the duty and the damage or injury (proximate cause or “cause in fact”)

# Forms of Negligence

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**Misfeasance:** Commission of a proper act in a wrongful or injurious manner or the improper performance of an act that might have been performed lawfully.

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**Malfeasance:** Commission of a wrongful or unlawful act.

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**Nonfeasance:** The failure to perform an act that is part of one's responsibility.

# Duty (and Privilege) to Protect

Threat of violence

Foreseeable threat

Imminent threat

Identifiable potential victim

# Supervision

- Key concepts: *Respondeat Superior* and vicarious liability
- Key elements:
  - Content of supervision
  - Frequency of supervision
  - Duration of supervision
  - Boundaries between supervisor and supervisee
- Documentation

# Ethical Decision- Making (1)

- Identify ethical issues: Conflicting values and duties.
- Identify individuals, groups, organizations likely to be affected by decision.
- Tentatively identify all possible courses of action and participants involved in each, along with possible benefits and risks.

# Ethical Decision- Making (2)

Examine reasons for and against each possible course of action, considering:

- Ethical theories, principles, guidelines
- Codes of ethics
- Legal principles
- Behavioral health practice theory and principle
- Personal values
- Agency policies, regulations

# Ethical Decision- Making (3)

- Consult with colleagues and appropriate experts (e.g., agency staff, supervisors, administrators, attorneys, ethics experts)
- Make decision and document decision-making process
- Monitor, evaluate, and document decisions

# This Presentation Draws On

- Reamer, Frederic G., *Artificial Intelligence in the Behavioral Health Professions: Ethical and Risk Management Issues*. Washington, DC: NASW Press, 2025.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *Risk Management in the Behavioral Health Professions: A Practical Guide to Preventing Malpractice and Licensing-Board Complaints*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2023.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *Risk Management in Social Work: Preventing Professional Malpractice, Liability, and Disciplinary Action*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *Ethics and Risk Management in Online and Distance Behavioral Health*. San Diego: Cognella Academic Publishing, 2021.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *Moral Distress and Injury in Human Services: Cases, Causes, and Strategies for Prevention*. Washington, DC: NASW Press, 2021.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *The Social Work Ethics Casebook: Cases and Commentary* (rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press, 2024.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *Ethical Standards in Social Work: A Review of the NASW Code of Ethics* (rev. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press, 2023.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *Boundary Issues and Dual Relationships in the Human Services* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *Social Work Values and Ethics* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Columbia University Press, 2024.
- Frederic G. Reamer, *The Social Work Ethics Audit: A Risk-management Tool*. Washington, DC: NASW Press, 2001.

# Thank You

**Frederic G. Reamer PhD, LCSW**

Professor

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The logo for Rhode Island College is a large, dark red circle containing the text "RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines: "RHODE", "ISLAND", and "COLLEGE".

R H O D E  
I S L A N D  
C O L L E G E

# We Value Your Feedback!

Please take a minute to complete the evaluation poll on your screen.



# Upcoming Webinars

## Boundaries in Crisis Work

April 16, 2026

2:00 pm ET



[Upcoming Events,](#)  
[988 CSR-TTAC](#)

# Certificate of Attendance

[Request Form: Event Attendance Certificate](#)



# 988 CRISIS SYSTEMS RESPONSE

TRAINING &  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE  
CENTER

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## Thank You!

Office hours for the Evidence-Based Practices workstream will begin momentarily.

This project is supported by SAMHSA, the agency within HHS that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. The CSR-TTAC works in conjunction with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 dialing code to be operated through the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. SAMHSA sees 988 as a first step towards a transformed crisis care system in America. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of SAMHSA nor the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

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