

Massachusetts Callers in 2018

to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline



In 2018, the Lifeline received
2.5 million
crisis calls from across the United States

53,119
calls were from Massachusetts

Of the 53,119 callers, **9,695 individuals** pressed "1" to be transferred to the Veterans Crisis Line and **654** pressed "2" for Lifeline's Spanish Language Line.

Ideally, the remaining 42,770 calls in 2018 would have been answered by Lifeline call centers in Massachusetts.

Of those, **only 28,704 calls (67%)** were able to be **answered in-state**.

Which meant **14,066 callers in crisis were unable to be answered** by a Massachusetts call center.

Established in 2005

the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is the nation's most recognized suicide and mental health crisis line.

The Lifeline is not one large national call center. Instead, it is a network of 170 independently operated, independently funded local, regional, and state-level call centers. **Currently there are 3 Lifeline-affiliated centers in Massachusetts.** They have the critical expertise and linkages to local resources that callers in crisis deserve.

To participate in the Lifeline network, centers operate to the highest standards of suicide care. They do an incredible job of de-escalating crisis situations, decreasing emotional distress, and reducing suicidality.

In the event local centers are unable to answer, **the Lifeline re-routes calls to backup centers in our network** (both in and out-of-state).

Why is this?
How can I help?



+17%

The number of Lifeline calls that needed answering by Massachusetts call centers increased 17% from 2016 to 2018

The Lifeline is administered through Vibrant Emotional Health and funded by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



In 2019, there are
call centers in

3

Lifeline network
Massachusetts



- 📍 The Samaritans of Fall River/New Bedford (Westport)
- 📍 Call2Talk (Framingham)
- 📍 Samaritans, Inc. (Boston)

Why were only 67% of 2018's Lifeline calls in Massachusetts answered in-state?

Lifeline call centers in Massachusetts set the hours and coverage areas for when and where they will take Lifeline calls. **They do this based on funding and staffing levels.**

Most Lifeline-affiliated call centers in the U.S. (including in Massachusetts) answer calls on other helplines in addition to the Lifeline.

Despite their very best efforts, call volume can strain center capacity and callers may hang up while they wait for the next counselor.

When local call centers are unable to answer, the Lifeline pulls the call back and sends it out of state and into our national backup center sub-network.

When calls are re-routed to centers out-of-state, Massachusetts callers in crisis wait longer, they receive fewer linkages to effective local care, and are more likely to abandon their calls.



Proven effective; needing support

Research shows the Lifeline is an effective, life-saving safety net for those in crisis (Gould et al., 2007, 2013, 2015, 2017; Ramchand et al., 2016). According to a 2018 survey of Lifeline centers, **almost 98% of the crisis calls are de-escalated such that costly, highly-restrictive responses from law enforcement and emergency medical services are not necessary.**

The Lifeline is federally funded to manage the call routing, best practice standards, public messaging, and technical assistance for its network. However, **the funds that sustain our network's centers come from state, county and local sources.** Many centers struggle to find enough funding to operate and grow.

These call centers are key components of Massachusetts' behavioral health systems because they represent an entry point into other levels of coordinated care. They provide critical services for Massachusetts residents at serious risk, especially those with nowhere else to turn.

Massachusetts Lifeline centers
need expanded support.

You can advocate for them.



Please join the cause!

Reach out to your local
centers and decision-makers
in Massachusetts.

Learn more about the Lifeline as well as how to contact your centers in Massachusetts by visiting:
<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/our-network/>