

Media Release General Health Information – August 25th

988 and #BeThe1To

Mental health issues are widespread and have a profound impact on individuals, families, and communities. In the 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment, both Rowan County Public Health and Novant Health Rowan Medical System selected mental health as a priority health concern among Rowan County Residents. This selection of priority health needs aligned perfectly with the launch of the new National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

The designation of 988 as a dedicated mental health crisis helpline creates a simple, easily memorable three-digit number that anyone in the United States can call during moments of emotional distress. This accessibility removes potential barriers to seeking help and encourages individuals to reach out for assistance when needed.

After just over one year since the transition, the new hotline has seen a significant increase in contacts. Not only can this hotline provide support for individuals in times of crisis and uncertainty, but it provides a tailored approach.

Key Features of 988:

- **Easy to Remember:** The 988 helpline is designed to be straightforward and easy to remember, making it easier for individuals in distress to seek help promptly.
- **Swift Response:** Trained mental health professionals are available around the clock to provide immediate assistance to callers, ensuring that no one must face a crisis alone.
- **Confidential Support:** Confidentiality is paramount. Callers can freely discuss their concerns and emotions in a safe and judgment-free environment.
- **Comprehensive Assistance:** Whether someone is dealing with anxiety, depression, loneliness, or any other mental health challenge, the 988 helpline is here to offer guidance, resources, and a listening ear.
- **Connection to Local Resources:** The 988 helplines will also connect callers with local mental health services and professionals to provide ongoing support beyond the initial crisis intervention.

Supporting Mental Health Together:

"#BeThe1To" is a campaign slogan and hashtag used by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in the United States. The campaign aims to raise awareness about suicide prevention and encourage individuals to act if they suspect someone might be struggling with suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges. The slogan suggests that each person can be the one to make a difference by reaching out, offering support, and helping those in need.

The campaign emphasizes five action steps that individuals can take to help prevent suicide:

- **Ask:** Ask the person directly if they are thinking about suicide. This shows that you care and are willing to listen without judgment.

- **Keep Them Safe:** If the person is in immediate danger, help them get to a safe place and remove any means of self-harm.
- **Be There:** Offer your support by being present, actively listening, and showing empathy. Sometimes, just being there can make a significant difference.
- **Help Them Connect:** Encourage the person to reach out to professional help, such as a mental health counselor, therapist, or doctor. Offer to help them find resources and make appointments if needed.
- **Follow Up:** Continue to check in on the person after your initial conversation. Let them know that you care and are there to support them over time.

The launch of 988 and #BeThe1To represents a significant step forward in destigmatizing mental health issues and promoting open conversations. It reinforces the idea that talking about and seeking help for mental health challenges is a sign of strength, not weakness. By providing dedicated resources for individuals in crisis, we aim to reduce the barriers to getting help and saving lives.

Rowan County Public Health encourages everyone to spread the word about the new 988 helpline and to practice the five steps of #BeThe1To, ensuring that friends, family members, and colleagues are aware of support systems and valuable resources. Together, we can create a supportive environment where mental health is prioritized, and individuals can access the assistance they need.

If you or someone you know is in a crisis, please remember the number 988. Help is just a call away.

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