

NATIONAL
COUNCIL
for Mental
Wellbeing

Georouting vs. Geolocation and the Next Steps in Strengthening the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

National Council for Mental Wellbeing



Housekeeping

- Please introduce yourself in chat: Name, location, organization
- Engagement is encouraged – please share questions in chat!
- A recording and slides will be emailed to you within 48 hours





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National Council for Mental Wellbeing
988 Georouting Webinar

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How can we ensure 988 interactions get sent near the contact's physical location while protecting their privacy?

Why it matters

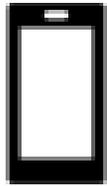
- 1. Community Care**
- 2. Safety**
- 3. Single number to remember**
- 4. Funding**

Geo-routing vs Geo-Location

Geo-routing is a way of directing phone calls locally without including the precise location information in the transferred call data. If used, it would mean that when a person calls the 988 Lifeline, their call would be connected to a crisis center near their physical location. **With geo-routing, the routing and service providers would not receive detailed information about the exact locations of callers.**

Geo-location, or automated location information, would include the precise location in the transferred call data, so that emergency responders could know where to go in case of an emergency.

How Georouting Works



Wireless caller dials 988

Carrier generates cell
site location data

Location data is then
translated to geographic
boundary data

988 uses a destination
code to route to the
nearest contact center

A Work in Progress

- Three major carriers are working with the 988 Lifeline to develop, test, and implement georouting for phone calls.
- Activation will be rolling as carriers are ready to deploy.
- Looking at the first activation(s) before the end of September.
- Smaller carriers indicated interest in seeing where the FCC rule lands
- Georouting for 988 text will be a future phase of work.
- Multiple workstreams: communications, traffic studies, center training



988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Georouting

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Overview

- This presentation will cover:
 - Background on the Commission's efforts to support the 988 Lifeline
 - National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020
 - Geolocation Report to Congress
 - 988 Geolocation Forum
 - 988 Georouting Solutions and the Commission's *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* adopted on April 25, 2024.

Background

- **July 16, 2020:** The Commission adopted a *Report and Order* that designated 988 as the 3-digit dialing number for callers to reach the Lifeline and required providers to implement 988 by July 16, 2022.
- **November 18, 2021:** The Commission adopted a *Second Report and Order* that requires text service providers to support text messages to 988.
- **May 11, 2022:** The Commission issued the 988 Texting Waiver *Order* confirming that providers can route 988 text messages directly to the 3-digit short code rather than the Lifeline's 10-digit number.
- **July 20, 2023:** The Commission adopted a *Report and Order* that requires service providers that have a role in delivering 988 calls to report outages that potentially affect the 988 Lifeline to the Commission's Network Outage Reporting System.

National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020

- On October 17, 2020, Congress enacted the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020.
- The Act designated 988 “as the universal telephone number within the United States for the purpose of the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system operating through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.”
- The Act also required the Commission submit a report “that examines the feasibility and cost of including an automatic dispatchable location that would be conveyed with a 9–8–8 call, regardless of the technological platform used and including with calls from multi-line telephone systems.”

Geolocation Report to Congress

- On April 15, 2021, the Wireline Competition Bureau transmitted a report to Congress examining the feasibility and costs of transmitting geolocation information with 988 calls.
- The Geolocation Report highlighted that transmitting precise location information with calls to the 988 Lifeline presents a variety of technical, legal, and privacy concerns that would require significant investigation and time to resolve.
- The Bureau recommended that various stakeholders convene to discuss the issues in greater depth and collaborate on potential solutions for sending geolocation information with a 988 call.

988 Geolocation Forum

- On May 24, 2022, the Commission, in coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, convened a forum on the challenges and opportunities related to geolocation for calls to the 988 Lifeline.
- Topics of discussion included participants' experiences with and use of geolocation information, potential hurdles to implementation, and possible solutions to these challenges.

Need for Georouting for 988 Calls

- Both the 988 Geolocation Report and Geolocation Forum highlighted a need to improve the routing of wireless calls to the 988 Lifeline.
- The centralized routing system overseen by the Lifeline Administrator and SAMHSA currently routes calls to crisis centers based on the caller's area code.
- Approximately 80% of calls to the 988 Lifeline are placed using wireless phones, and many people have wireless phones with area codes that do not match their physical locations.
 - Ex. If a caller with a 301 area code calls the 988 Lifeline while physically located in Nevada, that call will be routed to a crisis center in Maryland rather than a crisis center in Nevada.
- Mental health and crisis counselors have highlighted the importance of connecting callers to local crisis centers to ensure they have access to:
 - Local public safety and mental health resources,
 - Counselors that may be more knowledgeable about unique community stressors, and other regional, cultural, and economic factors impacting callers in distress.

Georouting for 988

- This can be accomplished through **georouting**, which refers to technical solutions for directing calls based on a geographic location for the origin of the call without transmitting information about the caller's precise location.
 - For instance, some N11 services (211, 511) route calls to call centers based on the location of the cell tower that originated the call rather than the wireless device that dialed the number. That is a georouting solution.
 - Georouting is different than geolocation, which involves the transmission of precise location information with a call (e.g., street address) that can be provided for emergency dispatch.
- **Summer 2023:** SAMHSA, the Lifeline Administrator, and industry partners successfully completed a proof-of-concept trial of a georouting solution for the 988 Lifeline in a lab environment (no live call data used).
- **September 2023:** the Chairwoman and HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use sent letters to AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon, CTIA, Competitive Carriers Association (CCA), and Rural Wireless Association (RWA) urging wireless carriers to take steps to identify and develop a 988 georouting solution.

988 Georouting Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

- On April 25, 2024, the Commission adopted a *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Notice)* proposing a rule that would require wireless carriers to implement one or more georouting solutions for calls to the 988 Lifeline.
- The *Notice* seeks comment on:
 - georouting solutions that could fall within the scope of a georouting mandate.
 - technical specifications and limitations, required routing data and transmission methods, necessary infrastructure and system changes or upgrades, testing requirements, costs and benefits, and timelines for deploying a georouting solution.
 - routing challenges and any potential or needed georouting solutions for non-wireless calls and texts to the 988 Lifeline.
 - the Commission’s authority to adopt rules requiring wireless carriers to implement one or more georouting solutions for calls to the 988 Lifeline.
- Deadlines for public comments: June 28, 2024; reply comments: July 29, 2024

Contacts & Links

July 2020 988 Report and Order

https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-20-100A1_Rcd.pdf

National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2661/text/enr>

April 2021 988 Geolocation Report- National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-371709A1.pdf>

November 2021 Text-to-988 Second Report and Order

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-21-119A1.pdf>

May 2022 988 Geolocation Forum

<https://www.fcc.gov/news-events/events/2022/05/forum-geolocation-988>

July 2023 988 Reliability and Resiliency Report and Order

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-23-57A1.pdf>

April 2024 988 Georouting Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-24-45A1.pdf>

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