

988 Coordinating Council

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

9am - 12pm

Meeting Notes

Meeting Materials: Agenda, 988 Metrics Report, 988 Budget, Environmental Scan of 988 Chat and Text Positions, FCC Announcement Georouting, 2 Headquarters news articles

Agenda

9:00 AM Welcome/Updates

9:10 AM Environmental Scan and Discussion of Chat & Text Expansion

10:10 AM FY25 Budget Review and Approval

10:40 AM Break

10:50 AM Other Matters

11:50 AM Next Steps

Attendees

KDADS: Chair Andy Brown (in person); Laura Brake (virtual); Drew Adkins (in person); Taylor Bremer (virtual); Aneliese Apala Flaherty (virtual)

Council Members

In person: Colin Thomasset, Chief Executive Officer at Wheat State Healthcare; Paul Davis, Director of Emergency Services for Johnson County

Online: Patrick Fucik, National Director of State Government Affairs for T-Mobile; Representative Brenda Landwehr; Nick Wood, Associate Director of InterHab; Monica Kurz, Director of Administrative Services at HealthSource; Zack Odell, Chief Executive Officer at S&T Communications; Russ Klumpp, Major/Bureau Chief at Topeka Police Department

KHI: Valentina Blanchard (in person); Shelby Rowell (virtual)

Welcome/Updates

- May meeting minutes were reviewed and approved by the Council.

Environmental Scan and Discussion of Chat & Text

- The environmental scan was reviewed by Council members prior to discussion. 23 positions were included in the scan from around the U.S.
- Discussion/Questions:
 - **Attracting Individuals to Fill Positions in Kansas:** The discussion highlighted the importance of understanding pay rates in other states to set competitive compensation expectations in Kansas. It was noted that competitive salaries within the region are crucial for attracting experienced personnel, while staffing decisions are currently managed internally by centers without standardized state-mandated policies. Information on average reimbursement rates for call center positions is vital for decision-making when receiving bids from providers. Additionally, the volume of chat and text support needed will influence budget allocations for potential contracts or agreements based on pay rates and expected workload.

- **Salary and Job Requirement Trends for 988 Services in Kansas:** The discussion emphasized that over half the states in the environmental scan required a high school degree instead of an associate or bachelor's degree. Understanding current positions, pay rates, and educational requirements in Kansas is essential. There was a focus on validating competencies over formal education levels to ensure appropriate skill sets for the job. The importance of reaching out to high school graduates to explore career paths in mental health and call center positions was also noted.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** KHI to include specific topics for call centers to discuss in July including how many employees are working with a high school degree and the capacity for the center to grow chat and text.
- **Council's Role:** The discussion underscored the need for legislators to understand the 988 system to secure increased future funding. Opportunities for collaboration with the Center of Excellence and exploring credentials for workers below a bachelor's degree were discussed. The involvement of agencies such as KDHE, the Attorney General's Office, DCF, and KDADS is crucial in maintaining the quality of the crisis response system.
- **Impact of Chat and Text Volume on Recruitment:** The discussion revealed that chat and text data are collected statewide and are part of a larger national queue, with upcoming changes at Vibrant potentially affecting the current setup and increasing demand. Consideration was given to whether to recruit centrally or have staff handle both calls and chat/text simultaneously. The need for separate training for chat and text handling was identified, and potential changes in network agreements with Vibrant were discussed, including separating chat/text from calls. Concerns were raised about ensuring that call centers have the capacity to handle increased chat/text volume.
- **Identifying Best Practices and Innovative Approaches:** The discussion focused on job environments, remote work options, and certification processes for crisis workers, highlighting Utah's certification as an example. Updates on training development with MHTTC were shared, indicating the imminent availability of comprehensive, evidence-based modules for statewide access.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** KHI to add MHTTC presentation at a fall/winter Council meeting.
- **Encouraging 988 Metric Standards:** The Council discussed the discrepancies between data from Vibrant and local experiences, highlighting ACD systems as a potential solution to capture metrics accurately. Johnson County's adoption of the Vista phone system was mentioned as a step towards meeting metric demands. The Council decided to use current metrics while considering future statewide data collection systems.

FY25 Budget Review

- There was a consensus to postpone the discussion on additional funding for chat and text services until July to gather more information.
- The Council discussed budget allocation and decision-making in detail. An initial proposal aimed to reduce the headquarters budget by \$620,000 and allocate \$1.5 million for HealthSource Integrated Solutions (HIS). HIS currently is funded by a prior KDADS agreement, but discussion of their increased role in 988 services may require additional funding from the 988 Fund. Concerns about timing and accountability led to a suggestion that budget approval should be contingent on HeadQuarters providing a corrective action plan. Clarification was given that funds are reimbursed based on actual spending and do not roll over, prompting further discussion on the likelihood of spending all allocated funds before the fiscal year's end. Flexibility in funding was

emphasized, with potential further reductions if requirements were not met. The proposal was amended to reduce the headquarters budget by \$720,000 instead.

- **MOTION:** A motion was approved to reduce Headquarters' budget by \$720,000 and add HealthSource Integrated Solutions to the budget with a \$1.5 million allocation.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Andy to look at language regarding reporting when a center pulls out from the queue to the state to ensure there is a clear expectation this is done.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Andy to determine if the 988 Council is able to have a closed session with Headquarters staff/board.

Other Matters

- **988 Report Review:** It was noted that in-state answer rates dropped in March, likely due to increased call volume. Chat and text metrics remained around 70% due to additional staffing. Call demand data showed where calls were directed based on caller selections. No changes were reported in hours of operation or coverage areas, but Wyandot is expected to be added soon. Sedgwick County's answer rate remained stable despite increased call volume, while headquarters and Health Source experienced slight dips. Johnson County showed increased call volume and answer rates, maintaining consistent performance.
- **Wyandot BHN Launch Update:** Wyandot went online after a pause due to the 988 conference in Chicago, receiving their first 988 calls by the morning of the 7th. Initial complications were resolved, and calls are now being handled appropriately, with performance metrics expected in the next report. A discussion followed about gathering reasons for 988 calls to understand mental health service access for legislative purposes. It was suggested to reach out to call centers for this information and possibly include it in future reports. The need for uniformity in defining and reporting data points was also highlighted for accurate interpretation.
- **Headquarters KS Discussion:** Concerns were raised about coverage difficulties due to high 988 call volumes and staffing issues at the primary center. The feasibility of using FY24 funding for HealthSource, which already has a contractual relationship, was discussed. The deadline for action was noted as the 18th. Funding availability and flexibility in FY25 to assist Health Source based on FY24 expenses were considered. It was suggested that an amendment to the current agreement might allow for the reimbursement of June expenses in July. The feasibility of the proposal will be explored further.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Andy to explore whether an amendment to the current HIS contract to add additional funding is possible before the end of the fiscal year.
- **Timeline and Updates on Georouting:** An explanation was provided regarding a new FCC rule that will alter the routing of emergency calls, shifting from using the caller's area code prefix to utilizing geolocation based on the nearest cell tower. This update aims to connect callers to the appropriate local call center. It is scheduled to roll out in September 2024. Despite enhanced 911 systems being capable of providing precise caller locations, the new rule intentionally opts for less precise tower-based location data to protect caller privacy and avoid discouraging callers from utilizing the 988 resources. Questions were asked regarding the implementation and intent of the rule, including whether it deliberately avoids providing specific coordinates and if there are concerns about the impact on call volumes. The deliberate choice to balance accuracy and privacy was confirmed, and acknowledgment was made of uncertainty regarding changes in call volumes.
- **Updates to 988 Capacity Grant Vendor:** An update was provided on the 988-capacity grant, with a no-cost extension granted for one year due to internal hiring delays. This allows spending of remaining funds over the next few months despite the grant period ending in April.

Additionally, a three-year 988-improvement grant was received through SAMHSA, with \$1.8 million allocated for the first year and \$1.7 million for each of the subsequent two years, intended for chat and text expansion. However, progress has slowed due to complications within the call center system. Ongoing discussions for budget plans involve Health Source, Comcare, and Johnson County, while Bert Nash is not yet ready, and Wyandot has opted out of chat and text services until further notice. Future allocations to Wyandot may be considered in the second year of the grant.

- **Update on SAMHSA 988 Messaging:** Updates were provided on 988 messaging, including an upcoming meeting for campaign leads and marketing professionals. Initial plans for a robust national campaign were scaled back to avoid overwhelming call centers. Discussions are ongoing about a smaller national campaign, with specific details pending. There's also an intention to promote specific lines like the Spanish language, VA, and LGBTQ lines nationally since these calls don't go to state call centers.

Next Steps

- The next meeting is scheduled for July 16th from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM and will include presentations from the 988 call centers.

ACTION ITEMS

- KHI to include specific topics for call centers to discuss in July including how many employees are working with a high school degree and the capacity for the center to grow chat and text.
- KHI to add MHTTC presentation at a fall/winter Council meeting.
- Andy to look at language regarding reporting when a center pulls out from the queue to the state to ensure there is a clear expectation this is done.
- Andy to determine if the 988 Council can have a closed session with Headquarters staff/board.
- Andy to explore whether an amendment to the current HIS contract to add additional funding is possible before the end of the fiscal year.