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A new mental health hotline is coming. What could it look like for Deaf and hard of hearing Granite Staters?

New Hampshire Public Radio | By [Alli Fam](#)

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9-8-8



- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Suicidal thoughts or feelings



9-1-1

- Medical Rescue
- Police
- Fire



2-1-1

- Information
- Social and community supports

*Image Presented During Monday Evening Listening Session
/N.H. Department Of Health And Human Services*

A graphic presented during the 9-8-8 listening session, illustrating the purpose of different three digit numbers - 9-1-1, 2-1-1, and the future 9-8-8 line.

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A small group Deaf and hard of hearing Granite Staters participated in an hour-long listening session this week to offer feedback on the rollout of the three-digit mental health hotline coming to New Hampshire this summer.

Starting in July 2022, Granite Staters will reach the National Suicide Prevention Hotline by dialing the three digit number 9-8-8. For calls that require in person support, mobile crisis units, staffed with behavioral health professionals will respond. In preparation for the summer launch, these teams have already been rolling out across the state, in tandem with [a new statewide phone number](#), 1-833-710-6477.

“We want to talk more about the system and how they [Deaf and hard of hearing people] can get support at their own home without being hospitalized,” said DT Bruno, a member of the 988 planning commission who is Deaf. Bruno, who is also a clinician in Nashua, led the Monday evening call.

Currently, Deaf and hard of hearing people calling the statewide number can use a [relay service](#), said Bruno.

On the call, staff at the New Hampshire Division of Behavioral Health outlined services and technology they are considering for those responding to calls in-person that involve residents who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Those ideas included having mobile crisis staff carry a tablet with video access to a remote interpreter when responding to an in-person call.

Some participants, including Kristy Stellato, the vice president for New Hampshire Association of the Deaf, flagged the importance of mental health crisis training for remote interpreters.

Jenny O’Higgins, senior policy analyst with New Hampshire’s Division of Behavioral Health, agrees with Stellato.

“That’s something we’re looking at,” she said. “To have interpreters of all different languages have some behavioral health training.”

She said finding those interpreters could be tricky, although the state is exploring work with interpreters outside of New Hampshire for remote services.

Stellato said she wasn't sure a one-hour feedback session was enough time, but she felt like participants brought forward valuable points for stakeholders.

O'Higgins said there will be more opportunities for participation, and to share feedback. She said there may also be another in-person event in Concord.

[Gaby Lozada](#) contributed reporting to this story.