



**California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)
988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group Meeting 7
Meeting Summary
November 20, 2024 | 10:00AM-3:00 PM PST (Hybrid Meeting)**

Attendees

POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING PARTICIPANTS (In-Person):

- Amanda Levy, Deputy Director for Health Policy and Stakeholder Relations, California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC)
- Ashley Mills, Assistant Deputy Director, Community Wellness, California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- Chad Costello, Executive Director, California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies (CASRA)
- Elizabeth Basnett, Director, California Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA)
- Erika Cristo, Assistant Deputy Director, California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
- Jana Lord, Chief Operating Officer, Sycamores
- Jessica Sodhi, 988 System Director, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- Kenna Chic, Former President of Project Lighthouse, California Health Care Foundation
- Kirsten Barlow, Vice President, Policy, California Hospital Association (CHA)
- Lan Nguyen, Division Manager, Crisis and Suicide Services, County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Services Department
- Le Ondra Clark Harvey (via delegate: Courtnie Thomas), Chief Executive Director, California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA)

- Lei Portugal Calloway, Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist, Peer Team Lead, AOT/CARE Court, Telecare Corporation
- Michelle Cabrera, Executive Director, County Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA)
- Phebe Bell, Behavioral Health Director, Nevada County
- Rayshell Chambers, Commission Member, Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC)
- Ryan Banks, CEO, Turning Point of Central Valley, Inc.
- Stephanie Welch, Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health, California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)

POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING PARTICIPANTS (Virtual):

- Brenda Grealish, Executive Officer, Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health (CCJBH)
- Doug Subers, Director of Governmental Affairs, California Professional Firefighters
- Jeff Hebert, 911 Communications Coordinator, San Diego Sheriff's 911
- Kirsten Barlow, Vice President, Policy, California Hospital Association (CHA)
- Michael Tabak, Lieutenant, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office
- Nancy Bargmann (via delegate: Lauren Libero), Director, California Department of Developmental Services
- Robb Layne, Executive Director, California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executive, Inc (CAADPE)
- Rhyann Miller, Behavioral Health Deputy Director Integrated Programs, Riverside County
- Robert Smith, Chairman, Pala Band of Mission Indians
- Roberto Herrera (via delegate: Sean Johnson), Deputy Secretary, Veterans Services Division, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)
- Shari Sinwelski, Vice President of Crisis Care, Didi Hirsch
- Sohil Sud, Director, Children & Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)
- Susan DeMarois, Director, California Department of Aging (CDA)
- Tara Gamboa-Eastman, Director of Government Affairs, Steinberg Institute

POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING PARTICIPANTS (Absent):

- Anete Millers, Director of Regulatory Affairs, California Association of Health Plans (CAHP)
- Chris Stoner-Mertz, CEO, California Alliance of Child and Family Services
- Jennifer Oliphant, Hope for Tomorrow Program Director, Two Feathers Native American Family Services
- Jessica Cruz, Chief Executive Officer, National Alliance on Mental Illness – California
- John Boyd, Vice President Behavioral Health and Wellness, Kaiser Permanente, NCAL
- Kasey Sufredini, Interim CEO, The Trevor Project
- Keris Jän Myrick, Vice President of Partnerships, Inseparable (Mental Health Advocacy and Programs)
- Lee Ann Magoski, Director of Emergency Communications, Monterey County
- Melissa Lawton, Chief Program Officer, Seneca Family of Agencies
- Miguel Serricchio, Executive Vice President, LSQ Funding Group
- Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, Assembly Member (AD- 16)/Author of AB 988
- Stephen Sparling, California Youth Crisis Line Program Manager, California Coalition for Youth
- Taun Hall, Executive Director, The Miles Hall Foundation

Meeting Summary

WELCOME

Jamie Strausz-Clark, Consultant, convened the meeting and reviewed Zoom feature functionalities and expectations for participants and public observers. She thanked the 988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group (PAG) members and members of the public for joining. Ms. Strausz-Clark provided an overview of the meeting objectives and agenda. She also encouraged members of the public to sign up for the public comment period.

CalHHS OPENING REMARKS

Stephanie Welch, Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health, California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS), provided context for the PAG and the Five-Year Implementation Plan (the Plan). She spoke to the Plan's focus on the interaction between responding to crisis and crisis prevention and how the Plan builds on ongoing efforts by the state to build a comprehensive crisis care continuum for all Californians. She also congratulated the group on their successful efforts in building an implementation plan.

MISSION MOMENT

Christina Irizarry, Health Program Manager, Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services spoke about her county's [Community Wellness Response Team \(CWRT\)](#) and its dispatch process, which includes three components: lifeline (WellSpace 988 suicide and crisis lifeline), dispatch (CWRT), and the response team. She described the operational workflow, including the use of Behavioral Health Link (BHL) software to submit mobile response referrals. She then answered PAG members' questions about dispatchers' responsibilities, Sacramento's Community Support Team (CST), data gathering, geo-routing and privacy, and collaboration with peers.

MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE CHAIRMAN SMITH

The Honorable Chairman Robert Smith, Pala Band of Mission Indians gave a presentation on the need for 988. He noted that 988 services that meet the cultural and spiritual needs of Native Americans are critical for the those experiencing behavioral health crises. He encouraged PAG members to imagine a system where 988 responders embraced Native American traditional approaches and healing, and indicated that establishing a 988-

crisis service that does so is the shared desire of Native American communities.

REPORT OUT AND DISCUSSION: WHAT'S NEXT

Dr. Anh Thu Bui, Project Director, 988-Crisis Care Continuum, CalHHS, overviewed the state governance structure section of the Plan to be released November 26, 2024, including the roles of the different state entities involved in implementation. She then spoke about some specific CalHHS priorities and responsibilities within the implementation phase, including posting an annual progress update, coordinating and supporting the collaboration between entities to figure out how to find mobile crisis teams accessed through 988, and building a public-facing dashboard.

Ashley Mills, Interim Deputy Director for Community Wellness, California Department of Public Health (CDPH), spoke about the department's role in implementation of the Plan, which includes leading the public awareness and communications efforts around 988 as well as supporting efforts to collect and analyze public health data and surveillance related to 988. She also noted the department's continued role in statewide suicide and overdose prevention and population-based prevention. She spoke about next steps, including coordinating 988 messaging into new and existing public health strategies, highlighting CDPH's most recent campaign, "[Never a Bother](#)".

Amanda Levy, Deputy Director for Health Policy and Stakeholder Relations, California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), spoke about the department's work to ensure commercial plans are reimbursing for mobile crisis services as directed in legislation. DMHC's instructions to the plans will restate the law and ensure they submit compliance filings, including reimbursement of crisis services without prior authorization. DMHC is uploading a toolkit to their site with a list of eligible billing codes and a list of eligible providers. In the coming months, DMHC will work directly with stakeholders to identify potential issues with plan practices.

Elizabeth Basnett, Director, California Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA), spoke to EMSA's charge to ensure a high-quality EMS system that provides quality care for patients. She described the process of creating and moving electronic care records, the 400,000 electronic care records received a year related primarily to behavioral health crises, the coordination efforts between Cal OES and EMSA, community paramedicine and triage alternate destination, and efforts to preserve and protect the current healthcare workforce.

Erika Cristo, Assistant Deputy Director for Behavioral Health, Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), described the department's year 1 priorities, starting with the provision of administrative support for California 988 Crisis Centers. She spoke to the support DHCS receives from a contracted administrator, Advocates for Human Potential (AHP), which contracts directly with the twelve 988 Crisis Centers, working with them to establish budgets, respond to budget requests, monitor compliance, and training and technical assistance.

Dr. Jessica Sodhi, 988 System Director, Cal OES, spoke on the agency's role in verifying interoperability between and across 9-1-1 and 988 and the imperative to support the development of the technical infrastructure needed to handle incoming calls and contacts and coordinate the transfer of calls between 9-1-1/988 and behavioral health services. She described Cal OES' focus on routing 988 contacts safety anywhere in California, which it seeks to achieve through the creation of a 988 handling system within the 988-crisis system. System implementation will include training, developed with feedback from CalHHS, DHCS, and the 988 Crisis Centers.

FUNDING

Dr. Anh Thu Bui shifted the conversation to funding, describing how AB 988 established the 988 State Suicide and Behavioral Health Crisis Services Fund for calendar years 2023 and 2024.

Dr. Jessica Sodhi overviewed California statutes and FCC guidance relevant to the 988 State Suicide and Behavioral Health Crisis Services Fund, the authorized use of 988 surcharge funds, and requirements for entities requesting funding, including the specific information requested of the 988 Crisis Centers. She described the process by which the fee must be calculated for 2025 and beyond.

Ivan Bhardwaj, Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Policy Division, DHCS, discussed two upcoming milestones relevant to funding: the January governor's budget, which includes a proposal on programs and how they're funded, and the budget enactment in July. He spoke to the challenges of budget estimates for 988 Crisis Centers given that it is a new services for the state to oversee, the importance of not over-estimating the budget, the budget change proposal process, the Administrative Entity contracting process, the distribution of AB 988 funds, and the allocation for 988 Crisis Centers.

The ensuing conversation with PAG members covered topics related to

the proposed state governance structure for AB 988 Implementation as well as funding. Discussion themes included:

- Questions related to the designation process, including how funding and geography influence the designation process.
- Comments related to mobile crisis, including the need for mobile crisis to be compliant with new Medicaid mobile crisis benefit criteria, and the different implications of mobile crisis dispatch requests that go through 988 versus those made to 988.
- Comments related to the importance of looking at the larger fiscal picture, leveraging other funding streams wherever possible, and building on other parts of the crisis continuum.
- Related to funding, one member noted that the budgets for the 988 Crisis Centers do not adequately account for the rise in call volume.
- Multiple PAG members stressed the importance of continuing to convene as a body quarterly or semi-annually to support monitoring of the recommendations included in the Plan.

Report-Out on Five-Year Implementation Plan

Nick Williams, Associate Principal, Health Management Associates, oriented the group to the Plan's organizing framework before highlighting new sections included in the draft Plan (i.e., the Executive Summary and the section of the proposed state governance structure). He noted that the Chartbook has been updated with information on community leads and services across the continuum. He then shared how PAG input from the September 2024 meeting was integrated into the latest version of the draft Plan.

Betsy Uhrman, Associate Principal, Health Management Associates, provided a summary of input received through the initial public comment period, which extended from November 4-14, 2024. In addition to sharing comments related to specific goals and cross-cutting recommendations, she also highlighted comments that touched on multiple plan goals, including: requests to add implementation partners to a given activity, questions of how the state will operationalize certain implementation activities, requests for modifications to the proposed timeline, and requests for more information of how the Plan will advance efforts to minimize unnecessary law enforcement.

Jamie Strausz-Clark led a discussion on what the organizations and networks PAG members represent can do to help implement the recommendations. PAG members talked about the need to advocate for more resources for safety net policies like 988, how they can outreach to system

partners to increase local coordination and collaboration, and how they can help raise visibility and understanding of the Plan amongst their networks. On this final point, CalHHS suggested that they would develop template materials to support PAG member outreach and education efforts related to the Plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Strausz-Clark shared instructions for how to make public comment and said that comments can also be submitted at any time via email at AB988Info@chhs.ca.gov. There were two public comments.

Briana Tucker

Thank you so much. Good afternoon, members of the Advisory Group and everyone in attendance today. My name is Briana Tucker, STRTP Continuous Quality Improvement Advisor for the Catalyst Center, and I'm speaking on behalf of California Alliance of Child and Family Services. We deeply appreciate the work behind the implementation of the 5-year plan, and are excited about the potential. That said, we wanted to ensure the plan actually meets the needs of children, youth and families, especially marginalized communities, like youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth. First, we wanted to talk about public awareness. We know kids, teens and young adults communicate differently, and the plan needs to reflect that. Age specific strategies are key, whether that's using social media platforms teens already love, or also communicating to kids about 988 in schools. Clear messaging is also critical so youth understand when and how to call 988, and what they can expect. Second, privacy and technology: youth value privacy and when they don't have their own devices, a youth-friendly app that ensures their anonymity can make a big difference. When kids trust a system, they're more likely to reach out when they need help. Third, response quality: youth crises are different from adult crises, and 988 counselors need specialized training and emphasis on developmental psychology and crisis intervention to address them. This is especially true of marginalized youth who often face punitive responses instead of care. Having specialized training would allow counselors to restore agency and provide compassionate support. And finally, equity and funding, cultural competence is essential to ensuring truly equitable care. We also need dedicated funding to sustain youth-focused crisis services across prevention, intervention, and after-care. With these adjustments, 988 can truly become a formidable resource for young people, so I thank you for your time and consideration of these recommendations,

and that concludes my input. Thank you.

Lauren Finke

I'm Lauren Finke, I'm senior director of policy at the Kennedy Forum. We were proud co-sponsors of both SB 855 and AB 988 which are both relevant to my comments today, and good to see a lot of people that I've already chatted with, especially in the sub-group for financing which is what my comments will be focused on today. We also did some written comments that I would still defer to, but these are more specific to what I've heard in the room today. Really excited about the potential for fully funding and sustaining the 988-Crisis system; I know it's a super long-term effort that includes all of us. Just a few things: it was referred to today that really want to make sure that coverage at a minimum is equal to Medi-Cal services – absolutely would echo that. You made comments ostensibly about what that looks like to bring those services up to what Medi-Cal is, and I would just point to AB 988, also pointed to SB 855's definition of medical necessity, which says that all mental health and substance use disorder services that are made as necessary should be covered, and we're still fighting for that at the Kennedy Forum so would really encourage this group in the final recommendations to think about what the department of managed health care and department of health care services HHS can do to work together to make sure that whatever needs to be done, fees, schedules, I heard toolkit for mobile crisis teams, love that, would encourage rule-making that mirrors CDIs rule-making to be included. Loved the eligible providers, eligible codes, so just really encourage working together on what those things look like in the commercial context given the larger rights that Californians have via SB 855, not just what's in AB 988. And then would just point to some of the shepherding of cases and denials that are happening that I think there's a large opportunity for this group to really work on together.

NEVER A BOTHER CAMPAIGN

Ashley Mills presented the "Never a Bother" campaign video featuring influencer Megan Thee Stallion, and shared statistics about the broad reach the videos achieved on social media in the first five days of their posting. She emphasized that the messaging for this campaign was co-authored by children and youth across the state, particularly those belonging to groups disproportionately at risk. She emphasized the importance of co-creation with those with lived experience and populations of focus to increase the

effectiveness of outreach campaigns.

MEETING CONCLUSION

The project team shared that materials for this meeting would be uploaded to the CalHHS website on the 988-Policy Advisory Group webpage. The team added that there will be a final public comment period on the next iteration of the draft AB 988 Five-Year Implementation Plan from November 26 to December 10, 2024.

MEETING CHAT

11:04:01 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

Here is a link to the Policy Advisory Group webpage:

<https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/committees/988-crisis-policy-advisory-group/>

11:09:02 From Jamie Strausz-Clark (she/her) to Everyone:

From Dr. Sohil Sud, PAG member: 500+ certified wellness coaches to date!

www.cawellnesscoach.org

11:11:44 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

CalHHS Crisis Care Continuum Plan

https://www.chhs.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CalHHS_Behavioral-Health-Crisis-Care-Continuum-Plan.pdf

11:14:08 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

All slides from today will be shared on the CalHHS 988 website in the next week, along with a recording.

<https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/committees/988-crisis-policy-advisory-group/>

11:16:24 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

AB 988

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=2.&title=5.&part=1.&chapter=1.&article=6.3

AB 118 As Amended

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB118&showamends=false

11:45:12 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

<https://dhs.saccounty.gov/BHS/Pages/CWRT/Community-Wellness-Response-Team.aspx>

11:53:26 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

988 geo-routing was piloted for two of three major U.S. carriers (T-Mobile and Verizon) on September 17, 2024; an FCC ruling on October 17, 2024, mandated all carriers to implement geo-routing. The current phase is focused on voice calls to 988 for all three major carriers with future phases establishing geo-routing for smaller carriers and text. FCC Adopts Rules Requiring Georouting for All Wireless Calls to 988

12:23:25 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

DMHC Behavioral Health Resources:

<https://www.dmhc.ca.gov/HealthCareinCalifornia/GettheBestCare/BehavioralHealthCare.aspx#:~:text=Consumer%20Fact%20Sheet%20and%20Press,stat e%20behavioral%20health%20care%20laws.>

12:34:46 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

Technical Advisory Board Webpage

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/office-of-the-director/operations/logistics-management/public-safety-communications/ca-9-1-1-emergency-communications-branch/ca-9-8-8-information/>

12:49:11 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

Surcharge Links

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cd-tfa.ca.gov%2Ftaxes-and-fees%2Fspecial-taxes-and-fees-tax-rates%2F%23emcsurcharge&data=05%7C02%7CAnhThu.Bui%40CHHS.CA.GOV%7C59924df36b9a44f45ca308dd03899d56%7C95762673f4ed4bb6ac42439d725bf5e8%7C0%7C0%7C638670611755593731%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eUlhcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIslAIoiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoitWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YIG2WRWOTWbaOw>

[JRKdUTt5NCUfcYP2WWGvN4MKgxakE%3D&reserved=0](https://www.chhs.ca.gov/leginfo/legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=2.&title=5.&part=1.&chapter=1.&article=6.3)

12:49:50 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

These are the referenced codes: • Gov Code § 53123.1 – 53123.6

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=2.&title=5.&part=1.&chapter=1.&article=6.3

• Revenue and Tax Code § 41001–41176

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayexpandedbranch.xhtml?tocCode=RTC&division=2.&title=&part=20.&chapter=&article=

• Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and 988 Fees

<https://www.fcc.gov/988-fee-reports-and-reporting>

14:36:30 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

Five-Year Implementation Plan

<https://www.chhs.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Draft-AB-988-Five-Year-Implementation-Plan-Public-Comment-11.04.24.pdf>

Draft Engagement Report

https://www.chhs.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/988_Community_Engagement_Report_10.22.24.pdf

AB988 Chart Book

<https://www.chhs.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/AB988-Chart-Book-110524-DRAFT.pdf>

15:01:08 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

AB988 Email

AB988Info@chhs.ca.gov

15:02:39 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

Policy Advisory Group Webpage

<https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/committees/988-crisis-policy-advisory-group/>

15:03:07 From Nicholas Williams to Everyone:

AB988 Email

AB988Info@chhs.ca.gov