



# California 988–Crisis Policy Advisory Group Quarterly Update

January – March 2024

Diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives from across California continue to actively come together to develop recommendations for a five-year implementation plan centered on 988. This report provides an update for the first quarter of 2024 (between January and March 2024), summarizing the activities, accomplishments, and upcoming strategic focus areas of the California 988–Crisis Policy Advisory Group and Work Groups, convened by the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS). The catalyst for this work was the passage of the Miles Hall Lifeline and Suicide Prevention Act ([AB 988](#)), which seeks to ensure and expand services for Californians experiencing a behavioral health crisis and provides a dedicated funding stream through a telecom fee for 988-related crisis care activity.

Spearheading this work with CalHHS is the [988–Crisis Policy Advisory Group](#), which was formed in the Fall and convened for the first time in December of 2023. This group's role is to advise CalHHS on the development of a five-year implementation plan that will be delivered to the State Legislature no later than December 31, 2024. In developing recommendations for the implementation plan, CalHHS and its partners are committed to ensuring access, coordination, and equity across the full crisis care continuum.

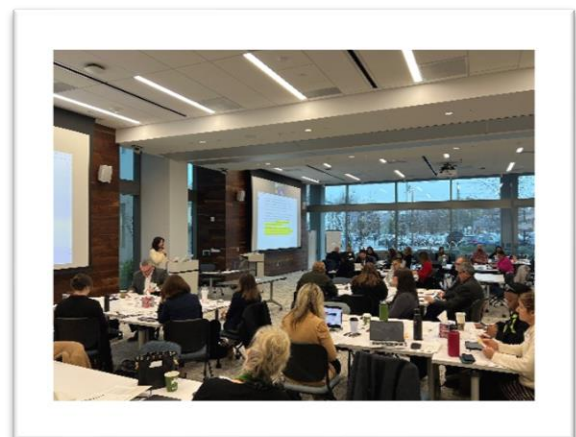


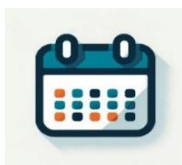
## Convening the 988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group

The composition of the Advisory Group draws together individuals with expertise, experience, and diversity of thought to help develop recommendations for a comprehensive 988 crisis care system. Following the inaugural meeting of the 988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group on December 13, 2023, the group convened again on February 7, 2024.

Stephanie Welch, Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health, CalHHS, and Dr. Anh Thu Bui, Project Director, 988-Crisis Care Continuum, CalHHS, kicked off the proceedings with remarks on the vision forward for the Advisory Group and the work that proceeded it, including the [Behavioral Health Crisis Care Continuum Plan](#). Taun Hall, Executive Director, [The Miles Hall Foundation](#), began the day by sharing the personal story of her son, Miles Hall, which included some of the system failures that contributed to Miles's death. Ms. Hall strongly emphasized the importance of the work that the Advisory Group and the State are doing to create culturally responsive, person-centered alternatives for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

Discussions from the February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting covered challenges and opportunities within the California crisis care continuum and need to focus on issues of access and equity, transparency in the system to build trust within communities, ensure alignment and collaboration with first responders, augment existing services with peers and peer-based services, and work to ensure parity in behavioral health services.





### Upcoming Meetings

Mark your calendar. Policy Advisory Group meetings are all open to the public and will continue through 2024 with the following meeting dates:

- April 24, 2024
- June 26, 2024
- August 14, 2024
- September 18, 2024
- November 20, 2024

### Convening the 988-Crisis Work Groups

CalHHS is convening six Work Groups, each tasked with exploring different required areas of the AB 988 legislation. Three of the Work Groups commenced meetings in January 2024 and each Work Groups has met on three additional occasions between January – March 2024. The Work Group members include a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including representatives from CalHHS offices and departments (e.g., [CDA](#), [CDPH](#), [CDDS](#), [DHCS](#), [DMHC](#), [EMSA](#)), the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), local provider agencies and county representatives, as well as a wide array of advocates, experts, and individuals and family members with lived experience and/or whose lives have been impacted by suicide. Work Group engagement and achievements include:

<b>Work Group</b>	<b>Meeting Dates</b>
#1: Comprehensive Assessment of Behavioral Health Crisis Services	January 30 February 29 March 19

### Key Actions & Discussions

Work Group #1 is tasked with assisting CalHHS in developing a comprehensive

assessment, which is one of the 14 recommendations outlined in AB 988. The assessment is grounded in three questions:

- (1) What are the knowns and unknowns of the state’s existing behavioral health crisis system including service capacity and infrastructure?
- (2) What are the highest priority community needs across the California crisis care continuum?
- (3) What are the most substantial gaps and opportunities for policy and practice across the California crisis care continuum for preventing, responding to, and stabilizing crisis?

Workgroup #1 discussions seek to leverage member expertise and knowledge on key “unknowns” within the system and establishing leads for the project team to pursue. The Work Group has been particularly focused on key facets of the crisis care continuum with respect to the crisis response system and solutions to increase capacity for receiving and stabilizing crises.

<b>Work Group</b>	<b>Meeting Dates</b>
#2: Statewide 988 Standards and Guidance	February 2 February 27 March 20 April 9

*Key Actions & Discussions*

Work Group #2 is focused on crafting recommendation considerations regarding 988 infrastructure, staffing, and training standards that will support 24/7 statewide access to crisis counselors via telephone call, text, and chat. Work Group #2 discussions seek to identify additional California-specific standards and guidance – beyond those established by the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Cooperative Agreement with the National 988 Administrator, and SAMHSA Cooperative Agreements with States— to design a system that supports all Californians.

Early Work Group #2 discussions provided an overview of current 988 Crisis Center operations, including services offered, staffing/supervision structure, trainings, call types and volumes, and current training offerings from Vibrant, the National 988 Administrator. Workgroup #2 discussions have offered potential changes to statewide standards and guidance, input on necessary skills, competencies, and training, proposed progress measures, and possible resources and support needs.

<b>Work Group</b>	<b>Meeting Dates</b>
#3: 988-911 Behavioral Health Crisis Care Continuum Integration	January 31 February 29 March 22 April 12

*Key Actions & Discussions*

Work Group #3 focuses on integration within and outside the behavioral health crisis care continuum. Areas of focus for Work Group #3 include recommendations related to warm hand-offs from 911 and 988 Crisis Centers and recommendations to achieve coordination between 988 and the continuum of behavioral health crisis services. For 911 and 988, the Work Group discussions will complement efforts emerging from the CalOES Technical Advisory Board.

Discussions have centered on policies, protocols, and resources to ensure smooth transitions at key points across the crisis care continuum and have elevated the importance of local coordination – including engagement from community-based organizations (CBOs) – to respond to behavioral health crises in an equitable and timely manner.

The three remaining Work Groups – Communications, Data and Metrics, and Funding and Sustainability – are slated to meet beginning in late Spring, 2024. Information about meetings and membership will be featured on the [988 Crisis Policy Advisory Group landing page](#).



## Your Voice Matters:

Members of the public are encouraged to join future Advisory Group and Work Group meetings and are invited to make a public comment by attending or sending comments to [AB988info@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:AB988info@chhs.ca.gov). Meeting information and recordings are posted to the [988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group landing page](#), along with the list of Advisory Group members, and information relevant to the Work Groups.

## Resource Summary



[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Site](#) and [988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group Site](#)



[CalHHS Behavioral Health Crisis Care Continuum Plan](#), May 2023.



[AB988 Legislation in Legislative Code](#)



[California Office of Emergency Services \(CalOES\) Technical Advisory Board](#)



For more information or to be added to the AB988 Mailing List, please email [AB988Info@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:AB988Info@chhs.ca.gov).

# CalHHS AB 988: Key Project Milestones

