



## Suicide Prevention Advocacy Day: Legislative Priorities March 2022

**988 Implementation & Crisis Response:** The federal *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020* designated "988" as "the universal telephone number for reaching a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system operating through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline" (currently 1-800-273-8255). After the law's passage in October 2020, states had to immediately begin preparing for the nationwide launch date for the Lifeline's transition to the easy-to-remember 988 number (July 16, 2022). Colorado was at the forefront of this effort, becoming one of the first states nationwide to enact 988 legislation addressing the continuum of suicide and mental health crisis care. This continuum includes:

- **Someone to talk to** (24/7 crisis call centers)
- **Someone to respond** (mobile crisis response teams)
- **Somewhere to go** (crisis receiving and stabilization centers).

**We sincerely thank the General Assembly for enacting [SB21-154](#) and for taking immediate action to sustainably fund our state's 988 crisis-response system.** As a result of the General Assembly's support, the 988-crisis response system in Colorado will be better equipped to serve more residents in a suicide or mental health crisis, reducing our reliance on law enforcement/EMS response and better meeting community crisis needs.

**We now ask the General Assembly to:**

- **Support HB22-1214 (Reps. Young & Pelton; Sen. Kolker), Behavioral Health Crisis Response System**, which would require crisis system facilities and programs, including crisis walk-in centers and mobile crisis programs, to meet minimum standards to provide mental health and substance use disorder services. The bill clarifies that crisis system facilities and programs must provide behavioral health services to individuals experiencing a substance use disorder crisis, and that mobile crisis programs and crisis walk-in centers must provide crisis services to any individual, including youth of any age.

HB22-1214 addresses existing gaps in our current crisis response system. Crisis response centers need to address the mental health concerns of children in distress, and this bill makes it clear that children need to be served when they access a crisis response center. Similarly, crisis response centers often turn people with substance use disorders away from services, and this bill makes it clear that centers must accept individuals with substance use conditions and provide them with services.

**Student Mental Health:** Colorado children and teens are continuing to experience significant stressors and disruptions related to the pandemic. Rates of psychological distress among youth, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions, have increased, as have the number of young people visiting the emergency department for mental health emergencies and suspected suicide attempts. Even pre-pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people. This is why three leading pediatric health groups recently declared a [National Emergency in Child and Adolescent Mental Health](#).

Schools have a role to play in addressing and supporting student mental health; initiatives that reduce stigma around mental health and create more transparency with students and parents reinforce the notion that it is a sign of strength to seek help and increase the likelihood that students will connect with the services they need. We therefore ask the General Assembly to:

- **Support HB22-1052 (Reps. McLachlan & McKean; Sens. Priola & Moreno), Promoting Crisis Services to Students**, which would require public schools to print on all student ID cards the contact information for Colorado crisis services. Schools that do not provide ID cards would be required to display outreach materials from Colorado crisis services. While not included in the bill, we also encourage the General Assembly to consider extending this requirement to include private schools as well, as about 10% of Colorado students attend private schools.

The bill would also require Colorado crisis services to notify schools that it can provide outreach materials explaining the services provided and how to engage those services, and to provide said materials upon request.

- **Support HB22-1243 (Reps. Exum, Van Winkle; Sen. Kolker), School Security and School Behavioral Health Services Funding**, which would expand on last year's HB21-1258 that established a temporary program (now called "[I Matter](#)") to facilitate access to mental health and substance use disorder services for youth by reimbursing providers for up to three behavioral health sessions. As of January of this year, the "I Matter" program has provided more than 1,300 therapy sessions and over 3,000 "I Matter" appointments have been scheduled, helping to provide a free avenue for more youth to find behavioral health supports. Continuing the "I Matter" program through 2024 is included in HB22-1243; this bill would also appropriate \$2M from the mental health cash fund to the department of education for the behavioral health care professional matching grant program.

*For more information, please contact Heather Phipps at [cospaday@gmail.com](mailto:cospaday@gmail.com).*