Suicide Risk Reduction at Department of Corrections

Family Council, Jan 2026

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Department of Corrections
WASHINGTON STATE

Dr. Espitia

Agenda

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Implementation
- other

What's the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline?

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SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE
988

What's the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline?

On July 16, 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) became the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. 988 became the new, nationwide 3-digit number for people experiencing any type of emotional distress or mental health crisis.

The 988 Lifeline exists to provide people in crisis with free, confidential, compassionate support.

Contact the 988 Lifeline to get support for:

- Thoughts of suicide
- Mental health crises
- Substance use concerns
- Other emotional distress

You can also contact the 988 Lifeline if you're worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

Did you know?

WA DOC I/Is have been able to call 1-800-273 TALK since at least January 2023.

In a search of calls made from 01/01/2023 to 06/17/2025

- First call on record is 06/19/2023
- 1,355 calls were made
- Average of 1.85 calls per day

DOC has added access to dial 988, the three-digit number for 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

NOW, I/Is can dial both 988 & call 1-800-273 TALK

Candy

How can we help individuals/at risk individuals connect better with individuals, family and community while incarcerated to help prevent suicides?

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In late 2023, DOH was approached by staff from DOC and the Office of the Corrections Ombuds (OCO) about making 988 available to people in state prisons. OCO is an independent and impartial office that oversees DOC.

Beginning in Feb 2025 DOC partnered with DOH and have since rolled out 988 access in all facilities

What is 988?

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national hotline offering one-on-one support for mental health, suicide, and substance use-related problems for anyone.

The 988 Lifeline is free for anyone to use to connect with a skilled, compassionate crisis counselor.

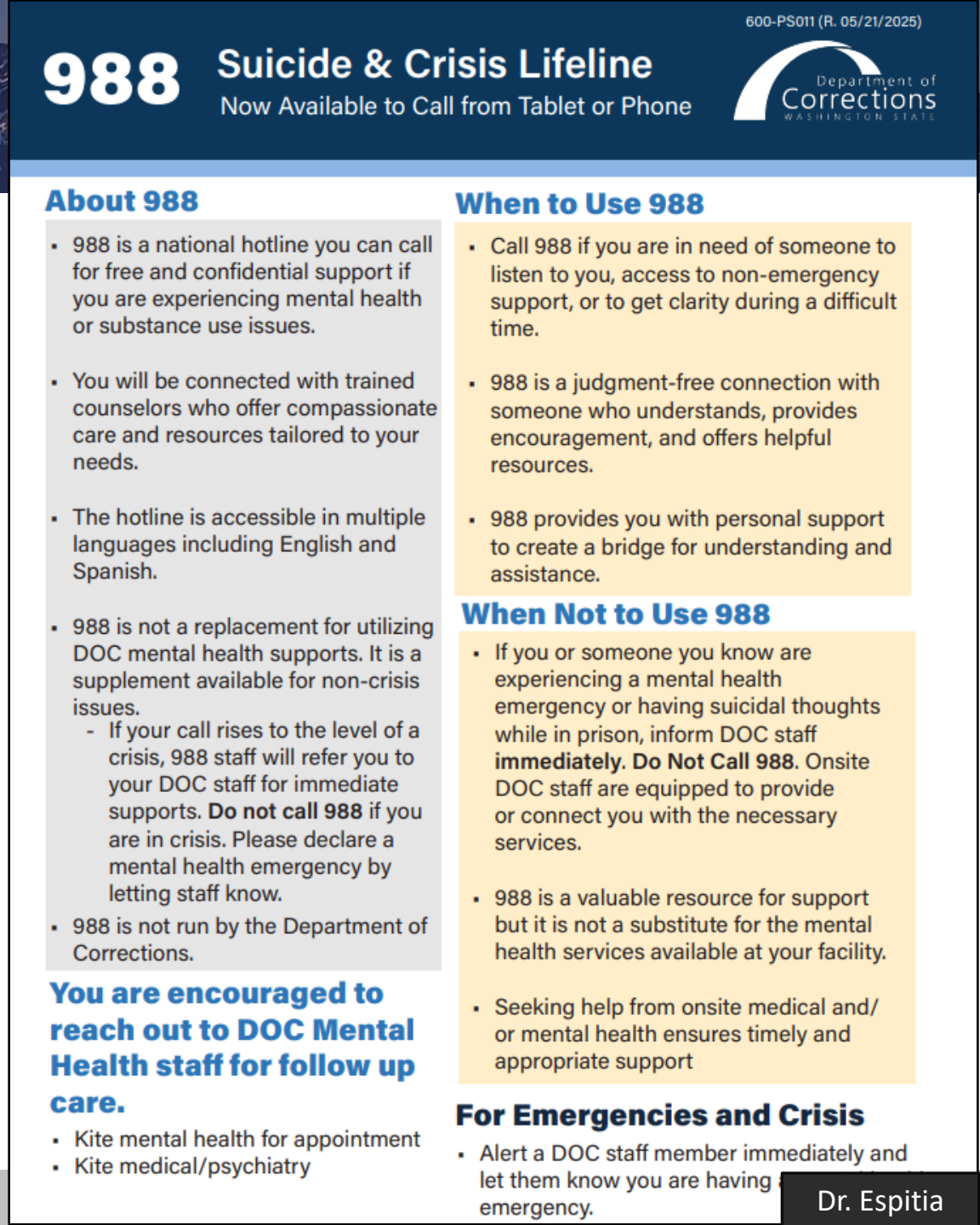
Special helplines are available as well:

- Press 1 for the Veterans Line
- Press 2 for the Spanish Line
- Press 4 for the Native & Strong Line

What has changed?

1. Access to speed dial "988," the three-digit number.
   - The previous 1-800-273-TALK is still and has been active since Jan 2023
2. Promoted availability of resource.
3. Communication & education for I/Is
   - DO use for non-emergency support.
   - DO NOT use when experiencing an emergency or having suicidal thoughts.
4. New DOC & 988 Call Centers process to emulate the community 911 response.
   - Unknown caller in crisis

Suicide & Crisis Hotline Posters



600-PS011 (R. 05/21/2025)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Now Available to Call from Tablet or Phone

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About 988

- 988 is a national hotline you can call for free and confidential support if you are experiencing mental health or substance use issues.
- You will be connected with trained counselors who offer compassionate care and resources tailored to your needs.
- The hotline is accessible in multiple languages including English and Spanish.
- 988 is not a replacement for utilizing DOC mental health supports. It is a supplement available for non-crisis issues.
  - If your call rises to the level of a crisis, 988 staff will refer you to your DOC staff for immediate supports. **Do not call 988** if you are in crisis. Please declare a mental health emergency by letting staff know.
- 988 is not run by the Department of Corrections.

You are encouraged to reach out to DOC Mental Health staff for follow up care.

- Kite mental health for appointment
- Kite medical/psychiatry

When to Use 988

- Call 988 if you are in need of someone to listen to you, access to non-emergency support, or to get clarity during a difficult time.
- 988 is a judgment-free connection with someone who understands, provides encouragement, and offers helpful resources.
- 988 provides you with personal support to create a bridge for understanding and assistance.

When Not to Use 988

- If you or someone you know are experiencing a mental health emergency or having suicidal thoughts while in prison, inform DOC staff **immediately. Do Not Call 988.** Onsite DOC staff are equipped to provide or connect you with the necessary services.
- 988 is a valuable resource for support but it is not a substitute for the mental health services available at your facility.
- Seeking help from onsite medical and/or mental health ensures timely and appropriate support

For Emergencies and Crisis

- Alert a DOC staff member immediately and let them know you are having a emergency.

Dr. Espitia

988 Counselors – Wills and Will nots

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COUNSELORS WILL

- ✓ Support caller and deescalate
- ✓ Use scripts provided by DOC
- ✓ Encourage caller to kite mental health staff
- ✓ Encourage caller to contact DOC staff if in crisis
- ✓If caller is in crisis and needs immediate help, counselors will:
  - ✓ Ask for the caller's name and location
  - ✓ Contact major control
  - ✓ Stay on the phone until help arrives

COUNSELORS WILL NOT

X Require the caller's name

X Forward calls to family or friends

X Tolerate abusive/misuse during calls

Candy

0.70% of 988 community calls have required 911 intervention.

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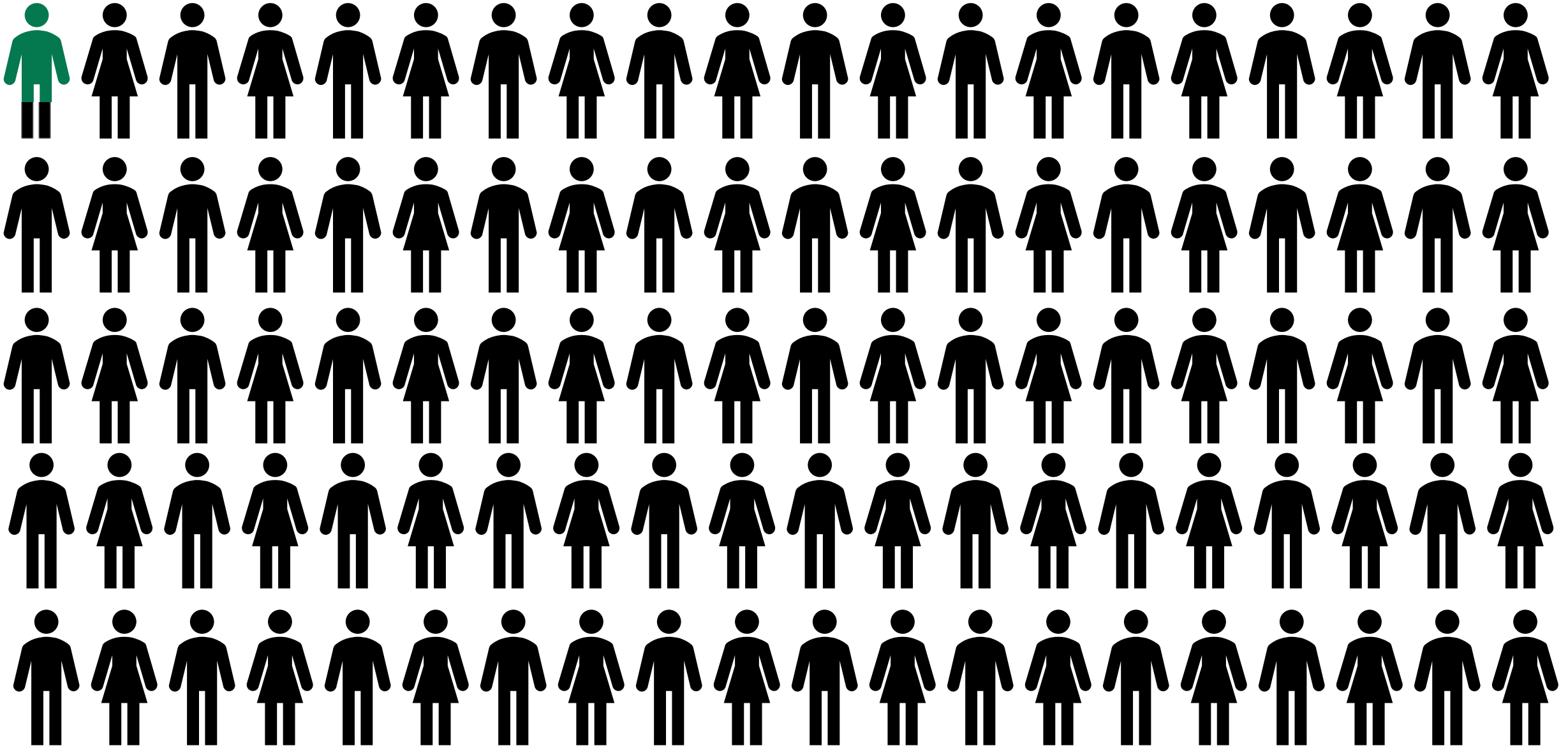
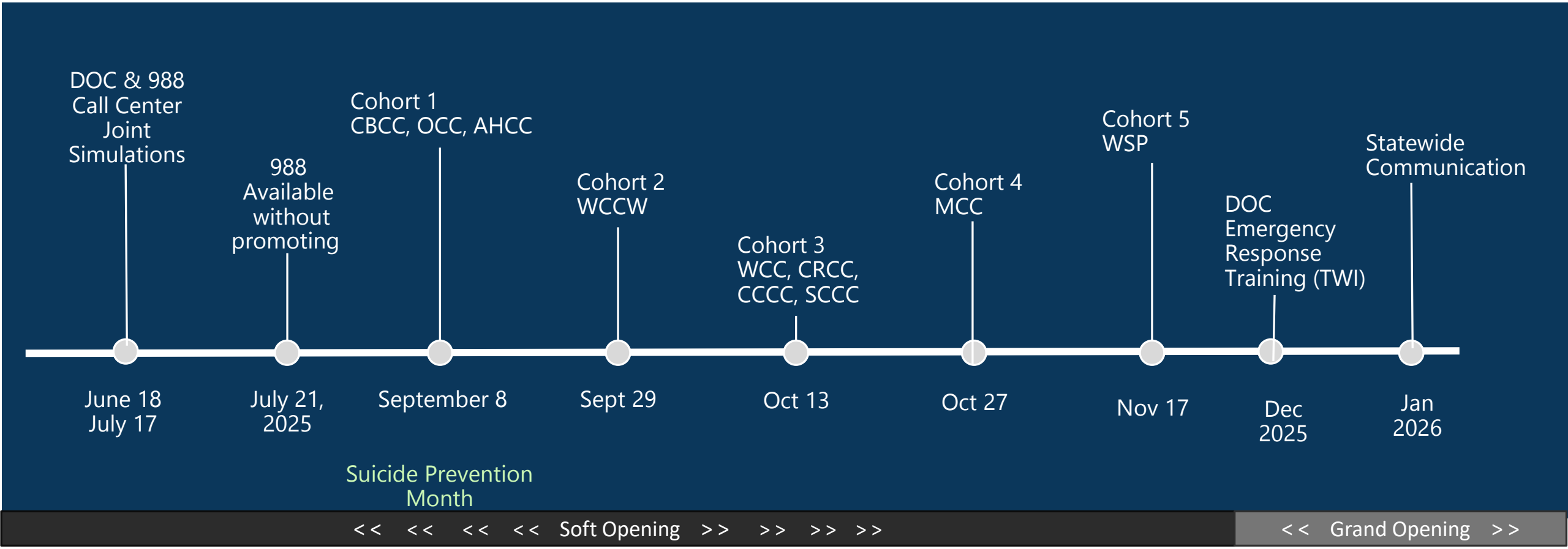


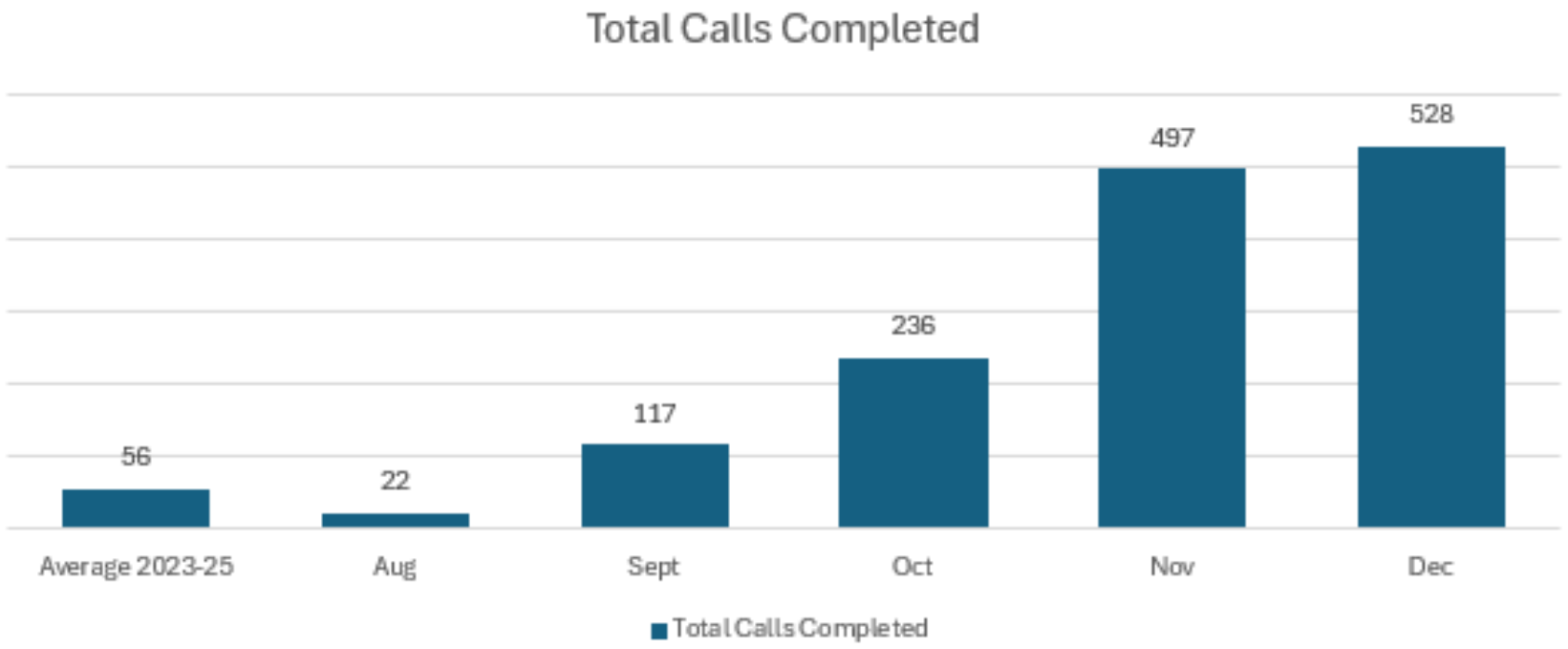
988 Rollout Timeline



1-800-273-TALK (8255) was still available through roll out to DOC I/Is

Ashley

988 Calls Completed



2025 Calls Made
Over 100 unique users systemwide

Are there programs in place for incarcerated to learn coping skills, especially for at risk individuals?

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- Individuals involved in MH services all have a primary therapist
  - Approximately 45% of all individuals are involved in MH
- Residential Treatment Units
- Various programing available

How do we promote purpose/wellbeing/helping others to make a more positive impact?

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- Individual therapy services
  - Empowering individuals
- Jobs
- School
- Peer support

What is the current standard for behavioral health care through DOC?

- Substitute Senate Bill 5833 requires the development of statewide behavioral health standards for correctional facilities, with implementation and auditing standards by July 1, 2027.
- To meet the established bill timeframe, we have been working in close partnership with the Department of Health to meet this goal.
  - 42 standards have now been fully developed and adopted by both agencies.
- In parallel, the workgroup is developing a comprehensive Behavioral Health Standards Manual as an interpretive guideline to support consistent implementation and auditing of the standards.
- If the council would like, we can schedule for the members of the task force to come and present when they are finalized

Dr. RG/Shauna

Questions & Comments

- Raise hand
- Turn on camera when speaking