



The Cutting Edge

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN NJ

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

Carolyn Beauchamp, President and CEO

988 Officially Signed into Law in New Jersey!

MHANJ is happy to announce that Governor Murphy has officially signed **S311/A2036 into law** to establish the 988 line and mobile crisis teams in New Jersey! (Read Full Bills Here: [njleg.S311/njleg.A2036](https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/track/track_bill.asp?bill=000311)).

The law (P.L.2022 c.35) establishes a statewide behavioral health crisis system of care. It enacts two key entities within New Jersey: the 988 line and mobile crisis teams. Together, they will help to fill the gaps that currently exist in our state's system of community crisis care.

Additionally, the Governor has included \$16 million into the FY2023 budget to fund mobile crisis teams throughout the state. This money is in addition to the \$12.8 that Governor Murphy previously included to fund the 988 line and call centers, equaling a grand total of nearly \$29 MILLION to fund community behavioral health crisis care in New Jersey.

This is a major victory for our state, and we would like to thank our fellow advocates for their support of this landmark legislation. However, we would like to remind you that our work is not done.

To build a full continuum of behavioral health crisis care in New Jersey, we must develop and support all components of a comprehensive system of community-based care. The 988 line will provide residents experiencing suicidal or behavioral health crises with **"someone to call"** and mobile crisis response teams will provide **"someone to respond"**. It is critical that we also have resources to provide **"somewhere to go"** when an individual's crisis cannot be immediately resolved within the community.

These resources include Early Intervention Support Services (EISS) in each county, peer-run respites and proposed voluntary crisis stabilization centers. Crisis stabilization centers will be warm hand-off facilities with staff trained to provide on-site crisis de-escalation services, (including voluntary short-term observation and stabilization) and will engage people with follow-up care and connect them to services. In addition, New Jersey's Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services (PESS) are utilized to handle crises involving safety concerns or potentially dangerous situations.

It is critical that all components of New Jersey's community mobile crisis system are fully funded and operational, as a comprehensive system of voluntary behavioral health crisis care in our state will help to keep individuals in the community, out of hospitals and the criminal justice system, and to connect and engage individuals in behavioral health services.

As 988 becomes operational, our remaining job is to enhance our state's existing community-based resources to complete New Jersey's continuum of behavioral health crisis care and connect people to in-person treatment in a timely and effective manner.

The passing of S311/A2036 is a huge step forward for our state, and MHANJ will continue to build upon this success. We ask for your patience and support as the 988 line becomes operational and encourage you to contact our Government Affairs team with any questions/concerns regarding 988 and the system of mobile crisis care in New Jersey.

To learn more about 988 from the perspective of the NJ Department of Human Services, please visit: <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/initiatives/988/index.html>.

The MHANJ is a statewide non-profit organization that strives for children and adults to achieve victory over mental health and substance use disorders.

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