

# Extending a Lifeline: Making 988 Possible



## When experiencing a mental health crisis, two minutes is too long to wait to talk to a counselor.

In situations like these, every second matters. That's why Vibrant Emotional Health and WestCX made it a priority to make the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline more accessible and faster to respond. Now, help seekers—individuals reaching out for support—can be connected to a counselor in less than 30 seconds, and there are more ways to connect than ever before.

### The Challenge

In collaboration with the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Vibrant helped establish The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) in 2005. Over the next ten years, calls to the Lifeline grew and Vibrant worked to scale the resource. In 2015, Vibrant partnered with WestCX to introduce a call routing solution for the NSPL, to help manage an ever-increasing volume of crisis calls and enhance crisis support accessibility.

Over the years, Vibrant and WestCX made continuous improvements to expand the NSPL. None was more monumental than in 2020, when they successfully lobbied Congress to designate 988 as the universal telephone number for the purpose of suicide prevention and other mental health crisis response services.

It was a major win, but the work wasn't over. To make the biggest impact, the solution needed to support the following capabilities:

- ✓ Accept calls, texts, chats and video.
- ✓ Route to county-specific resources from anywhere in the United States.
- ✓ Create a single path for contacting multiple mental health crisis lines.
- ✓ Enable a brand-new abbreviated dialing code.
- ✓ Complete it all within a federally mandated timeline.

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CTO, Vibrant Emotional Health

### Case Study:

Maintain and enhance access to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.



#### Organization Type:

Healthcare, Mental Health  
Crisis Care



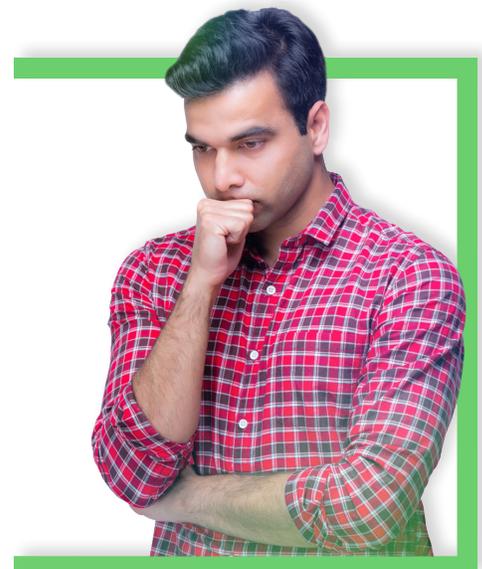
#### Size:

Supports about 2.5 million  
people each year



#### Relationship:

WestCX partnership  
since 2015



Together, Vibrant and WestCX recognized the challenge ahead and embarked on this mission to transform crisis care accessibility.

“WestCX is just a trusted partner for me,” says Grant Riewe, CTO of Vibrant. “There are very few partners that I can say are there when I need them, 24/7, 365 and are willing to get in the boat with me to revolutionize how telephony works in the United States for the purpose of providing people better access to crisis mental health care.”

This direct communication keeps the support system strong and responsive, making sure help-seekers get the care they need when it matters most.

## The Solution

WestCX implemented an intelligent routing system with features tailored to Vibrant’s unique needs:

- **Call Mapping:** Routing help seekers to resources in their specific county, ensuring localized support across 5,000+ U.S. counties.
- **Customized Menus:** Options for help seekers to select specialized services (including the Veteran Crisis Line, Spanish-language support, LGBTQIA Youth Support Line), including region-specific services (e.g. Native and Strong Lifeline).
- **Traffic and News Monitoring:** 24/7 alerts of potential spikes, ensuring counselors are ready when needed most.

Given the critical nature of crisis support, the reliability and response of WestCX’ tools and team are paramount. Vibrant’s ability to reach WestCX at any time is critical to maintaining the integrity and immediacy of the Lifeline. Swift and reliable connections can be life-changing in critical moments.

“As you might imagine, in my business, when something goes wrong, I need to reach someone right then, and I’ve never failed to reach the WestCX person that I’ve needed to reach when I needed to reach them to restore a critical service,” The CTO said.

## The Results

By 2022, 988 was available everywhere in the United States. The impact for the service—now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline—has been nothing short of transformative:

- ✓ **Over 10 million contacts handled in the first two years.**
- ✓ **Connection times slashed from over 2 minutes to under a minute, often under 30 seconds – an improvement of up to 400%.**
- ✓ **Expanded access across multiple channels: calls, chats, texts, and video.**

These results have been driven by the creation of new access pathways, integrating more crisis centers into their network than any other organization. WestCX complements this mission by providing the technologies that help Vibrant expand access to care.

“The things that we have been involved in over the past 10 years have been phenomenal. The things we are doing this year are unbelievable,” Riewe said. “This is a partnership because of the shared mission we have to get more people the access to mental crisis health care they need in the moment they need it.”



In a world where mental health challenges are on the rise, Vibrant and WestCX have proven that technology, when applied with compassion and expertise, can literally save lives. These last two years have seen more expansion in access to care than ever before. This partnership shows that with the right tools and commitment, we can create a future where help is never more than seconds away.

