

To whom it may concern,

My name is India and I am a counseling supervisor at a crisis center in Iowa that answers the Lifeline. Although I am in support of utilizing a 3-digit number for the Lifeline, I am not in support of repurposing 211 for the use of mental health and suicide crises. I believe that a new number, or a number that is not as commonly used, should be utilized.

As a crisis center that answers call from all over the state many of the callers that we work with, both repeat and new, are knowledgeable about what services 211 offers. We encourage our callers to contact 211 in order to reach specialists with knowledge about what social services may be available to them. Our crisis center used to answer 211 but due to the high call volume of non-crisis calls our staff was not able to provide timely and effective counseling to individuals who needed it. If the Lifeline were to utilize 211 as their 3-digit number I foresee an increase in call volume for all crisis centers and anticipate they would struggle to keep up and provide appropriate services.

I stand firmly behind the concerns that SAMHSA identified. I believe that it would impact the efficiency and speed of individuals in crisis reaching a properly trained crisis counselor. One of the more important aspects of utilizing a 3-digit number is to improve the rate of response, which would be hindered if 211 were repurposed. It would require additional triaging that most call centers are not prepared, or staffed, to handle. 211 is also associated with information and referrals, not crises. The Lifeline has created a reputation of being fast, efficient, and specifically for individuals experiencing a crisis. Utilizing 211 could create confusion for the public about whether it is for referrals or for mental health crises. I have concerns about how utilizing 211 would impact Lifeline's positive reputation. I am also concerned about the callers that we serve and how rate-of-response is crucial in the efforts to prevent suicide.

I believe that the Lifeline can further increase its reputation positively by using a 3-digit number that is specifically for the Lifeline and therefore increase the scope of individuals we are able to support through a possible suicidal crisis. The Lifeline has such a strong impact that musicians have created songs specifically including the Lifeline's dedicated number. Using a number that already has another purpose feels like a step backwards in the progression and growth of the Lifeline. Everyone knows what 211 is, just as everyone knows what 911 is, so I hope that the Lifeline will have a distinct number that everyone will be able to identify as a crisis line, no matter where they are.

Thank you,

India Hawkins
Counseling Supervisor
Foundation 2 Crisis Center
1540 Second Avenue SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403
319-362-2174
ihawkins@foundation2.org
www.foundation2.org