



## Behavioral Health Response

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December 7, 2018

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket 18-336  
Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to you on behalf of Behavioral Health Response (BHR) to implore you to designate a 3-digit code as a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline. Research has repeatedly shown that areas that have access to crisis services have fewer suicides, unnecessary law enforcement calls and unnecessary hospitalizations. Research has also shown that callers to the Suicide Lifeline report reduced distress and reduction in suicide thoughts. Crisis lines work.

BHR is a St. Louis based behavioral health organization that specializes in crisis intervention, suicide prevention and 24/7 behavioral health access via mobile outreach and telehealth services. We are on the front lines everyday helping the community and first responders. A 3-digit access point to crisis services would increase accessibility and reduce the prejudice and discrimination barrier that many face when contemplating suicide or struggling with a mental health concern. Crisis workers are the first responders of the mental health system, and we need to match the needs of our community with the service providers who are available to assist them. Calling for a mental health or suicide crisis should be as simple as calling 911 for a law enforcement need, and we need to divert unnecessary 911 calls to appropriate crisis services. This is a win-win for our nation.

Finally, it has come to my attention that 211 providers are against this plan and are requesting more money for 211 to provide behavioral health services. I can assure you, crisis lines like BHR are who 211 calls when they have a crisis. We have the training, passion and care coordination systems already in place to handle these crisis calls. 211 is an amazing service but is not the right access point for persons experiencing a mental health crisis. Police, EMTs and agencies working with people in crisis don't call 211, they call the crisis line. Just like you don't call 211 when you have a burglar in your home, you call 911.

Our suicide rate is going up. The need for services is going up. We have a mental health crisis in our nation and the time is now to do something about this. Please help us address this growing problem and approve the 3-digit code for Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bart Andrews", is written over a horizontal line.

Bart Andrews  
VP Telehealth and Home/Community Services  
Behavioral Health Response

12/7/18

date