

As a Field Advocate for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), I urge the FCC to support the implementation of an N11 dialing code for a suicide prevention crisis hotline system. I strongly encourage the FCC to consider utilizing "611" as the new dialing code. Though select telecom providers use this number for repair and sale services, "611" is the most realistic N11 number available. We hope that any inconveniences in the designation of "611" for the purposes of a national suicide prevention hotline number would be outweighed by the benefits of expanding national access to life saving crisis resources. The designation of this simple, easy-to-remember hotline number would significantly increase public knowledge and public access to suicide prevention services. Access to these resources can provide significant decreases in hopelessness, intent to die, and psychological pain. Any future three digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention crisis hotline number must be a N11 number, ideally "611." This new crisis hotline number needs to be as ubiquitous as the 911 emergency response number. Anything less would not put mental health crises and suicidal distress in parity with physical emergencies and would squander the amazing opportunity to eliminate the stigma surrounding suicide and prioritize mental health that we currently have before us. I also urge the FCC to recommend "increased public education and awareness" and "improved infrastructure and operations" to ensure that a potential N11 national suicide prevention crisis hotline system can properly perform its responsibilities, especially taking into consideration the increase in call volume that a N11 number would assume. Today, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States. It is a national public health crisis that has been worsening every year. Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data confirms that national suicide mortality rates have increased over 30% in the last twenty years, with over 47,000 Americans dying by suicide in 2017 alone. The National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act has enormous potential to create a meaningful impact on the United States' suicide crisis. I thank the FCC for their commitment to address this important issue.