



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

12/10/2018

Re: Docket 18-336 - Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018;
and docket 92-105 – The Use of N11 codes and other abbreviated dialing arrangements

Dear Commissioners:

Samaritans, Inc., based in Boston, MA, has been providing Crisis Helpline Services for over 40 years. We are submitting these comments on the Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, currently under review by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on potentially implementing an N11 code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL), as well as for general mental health support for callers.

Samaritans is the largest service provider in MA, and we have close to 100,000 contacts annually with those who are in despair. We are an active participant in the NSPL network, and also promote the statewide helpline in MA. Our Chief Development Officer, Ron White, serves on the standards and training committee at NSPL, and is also the Treasurer of the National Association of Crisis Organization Directors (NASCOD). In addition Samaritans' crisis center is accredited by CONTACT USA.

Our team is thrilled about the potential to better serve the public with a 3-digit N11 code. It would provide ease of access and improve awareness of the critical service provided by NSPL crisis centers across the country. It will better help all of us to provide national recognition for those seeking help for behavioral health and suicidal crisis. It will help raise this critical need to a level of acceptance similar to the need for accidental injuries, fires or other emergency situations that people confront on a daily basis. It will put mental health on a par with physical health and wellness!

The training and coaching that is required to be an NSPL center, and the emotional support that is provided in a non-judgmental environment is a critical aspect of our work. We offer a listening ear to those in need, and support them during their most anxious moments and during their battles with depression. It is crucial that we continue to provide direct service to our callers, and to keep the "Improvement Act" fully committed to suicide prevention.

We are aware that the commission has received several suggestions to adopt the 211 code for the 3-digit access to crisis intervention. We think that this is very short-sighted, and completely inconsistent with the intent of Congress to specifically address suicide prevention! The service provided by the 211 system is very valuable as a source of information and referral, but it is distinctly different than providing compassionate service in the moment of need, without delays or complexities involved with sorting out the reason for a call to the 211 line. The expertise of crisis centers in the NSPL Lifeline network and NASCOD must be leveraged in this effort, and not diluted by trying to blend a suicide prevention hotline with an existing program that already has its own identity.

Please know that Samaritans, and our NSPL partners are committed to working with the FCC, to make the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, a leap forward in our life-saving work. Please make sure that you leverage the professionals that have the unique skills that are required to best serve those who are struggling with suicidality, and help lift the cover off the efforts to keep suicide in the shadows.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Mongeau', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Stephen Mongeau
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