



Public Service Commission

NEWS RELEASE

March 17, 2021

For Immediate Release, Contact:

Randy Christmann, (701) 328-4091

Julie Fedorchak, (701) 391-1140

Brian Kroshus, (701) 471-7965

PSC Completes Important Step Toward Implementation of 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) has preserved 7-digit dialing in the state while completing an important step towards the implementation of 988 as the national suicide prevention hotline number. Through collaboration between the PSC and telecommunications companies, the 988 prefix is no longer being used in any North Dakota phone numbers – ensuring a smooth transition for that number to be used as a suicide prevention hotline number.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued an order in July 2020 requiring the three-digit number of 988 be activated nationwide as a suicide prevention hotline. The FCC's order requires that any area code utilizing the 988 prefix must transition to 10-digit dialing for that entire area code. In North Dakota, that would have meant the entire state would have to dial "701" before dialing any phone number. This includes land lines and cell phones, even when making local calls.

After investigating, the PSC found that the 988 prefix was being used in only 33 North Dakota phone numbers between three different telecommunications providers. PSC staff worked with those companies and was able to transition all 33 of the numbers to a different prefix, clearing North Dakota from the list required to transition to 10-digit dialing.

"We know North Dakotans value the convenience of 7-digit dialing and we exerted extensive efforts to preserve it," said Commissioner Randy Christmann, who holds the telecommunications portfolio. "I am thankful for our great staff and for the cooperation of the companies and customers who made it possible."

All telecommunication carriers, and Voice over IP service providers, will be required to implement the new number nationwide by July 16, 2022, but carriers may activate the number at any point between now and that deadline. A caller dialing 988 will be automatically routed to 800-273-8255 (TALK), which is the national suicide prevention lifeline. The lifeline consists of a network of approximately 170 crisis centers around the country.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, auctioneers, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

###

Find us on Twitter: twitter.com/ndpsc or [@NDPSC](https://twitter.com/NDPSC)