

OPEN MEETING MINUTES

Name of Governmental Body: Wisconsin Lifeline Advisory Group			Attending: Chris Bivins, Tana Koss, Shelly Missall, Jenny Younk, Ashley Williams, Tom Diel, Kari Foss, Kim Propp, Erica Steib, Julianne Dwyer, Caroline Crehan Neumann, Zachary Todd, Angie Moran, Shauna Grossman, True Lor, Brad Munger, Beth Rudy, Brianne Zaborowske
Date: 12/7/2021	Time Started: 1:00 pm	Time Ended: 2:08 pm	
Location: Virtual via ZoomGov			Presiding Officer: Julianne Dwyer
Minutes			

Welcome and Introductions: Julianne Dwyer introduced herself as the Department of Health Services Division of Care and Treatment Services (DHS/DCTS) contract administrator for the Wisconsin Lifeline and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Review and approval of minutes from September 21, 2021: Julianne asked participants if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes. None were offered and the minutes were approved.

988 update: Caroline Crehan Neumann gave the group an update on 988 implementation planning in the state. In accordance with the planning grant DHS received, a draft implementation plan was submitted to Vibrant, the grantor and operator of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL), at the end of September. DHS received comments on the draft from Vibrant and will submit a final plan in January 2022. In the comments, Family Services' Wisconsin Lifeline was recognized as having one of the highest in-state answer rates in the NSPL network.

As part of the planning for messaging and marketing of 988 in the state, DHS has contracted with AFFIRM, a Wisconsin-based marketing firm. The firm will be conducting research on the public's baseline knowledge of topics related to 988, such as crisis response.

The 988 planning coalition will continue to meet in 2022. In addition, there is a 988/911 workgroup that has been meeting to discuss the intersection of the two services and exploring protocols for when a caller needs to be transferred from one service to the other.

Also in advance of the 988 rollout, Caroline and Shelly Missall (Family Services) have been meeting with county programs regarding preferred methods of warm transfers from the Wisconsin Lifeline to county-based crisis lines.

Note: The deadline for telecom carriers to activate 988 is July 16, 2022. And while several have done so already, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) has asked that, until July 2022, all public communications continue to direct people to call the current Lifeline number, 1-800-273-8255.

Opportunity for county staff to comment on experiences with the Wisconsin Lifeline: Zac Todd, DHS Area Administration in the Western Region, noted that they have not received comments. Ashley Williams of Northwest Connections shared that their experience has been similar to that with other referral sources, such as 211 WI.

Presentation of Wisconsin Lifeline data: Shelly Missall of Family Services presented Wisconsin Lifeline call data for 10/1/2020 to 9/30/2021, the first presentation representing a full year's worth of data. During the presentation, the following comments and clarifications were made:

- For the required NSPL questions (“Are you thinking of suicide?” etc.), there was a question about how the WI Lifeline answer percentages compare to a national figures for the general public. Shelly will look into this and report back at the next quarterly meeting.
- There is a new slide that shows data for known frequent callers. This can help explain unusually high call volumes for certain counties.
- There was a question about whether WI Lifeline’s response protocols are different for frequent callers. The protocols are the same, in terms of the level of acuity of any given call. Overall, for frequent callers WI Lifeline follows the national guidelines from Vibrant to never refuse their calls, but also to cap such calls to 40 minutes each.

Wisconsin Lifeline success stories and practice examples: Chris Bivins with Family Services shared with the group the following stories of collaboration and working toward successful outcomes:

An adult female caller with a previous suicide attempt was driving fast on an interstate between Wisconsin and a neighboring state and said that she didn’t want to live anymore. She shared her various diagnoses and stressors, including Covid-related financial issues that had her feeling she couldn’t afford her medications. She stated that hospitalization had not been beneficial to her, and is costly, so she did not want to go inpatient. Wisconsin Lifeline staff worked to assist the caller through extensive collaboration which included law enforcement in both states and the caller’s local crisis program. All the while, the phone counselor was connected with the caller to deescalate the situation. The caller was located by law enforcement and was doing okay. She also got connected to county crisis, and they did a safety plan to avoid hospitalization. Wisconsin Lifeline followed up with the caller the next day (with caller’s consent) to check in and share resources that had a sliding scale for fees. A few days later, the caller was on a waiting list for services, but was doing okay and said she would reach out again if she needed to.

This story takes place over nearly a year’s time and speaks to the benefits of having Wisconsin Lifeline be a consistent, long-term presence in the state. An adult male caller made a first call and hung up quickly after saying he didn’t know what to say. He called back and disclosed thoughts of suicide and a complex mental health history. He said he didn’t feel he could be safe. The caller and phone counselor collaboratively agreed to request a welfare check. There was later another call, as follow-up after his inpatient stay. He expressed gratitude and said the services had saved his life. Then there was no contact for about eight months. But he recently called again, and the phone counselor could bring up the previous history of calls. This helped deescalate the situation and the caller and counselor were able to do a safety plan, and hospitalization was avoided.

The story of the caller who initially hung up generated a question about how Wisconsin Lifeline handles callers who hang up but don’t call back. If the caller hangs up without the phone counselor hearing anything, no follow up is conducted (this is different from how 911 handles hang-ups). If the caller has mentioned anything related to suicide before hanging up, Wisconsin Lifeline conducts follow up. And if the caller has demonstrated distress with words or by sounds, the phone counselor has discretion to request follow up.

Lastly, a caller told a phone counselor that they needed to speak with a supervisor. Chris was anticipating the caller had an issue with the services provided. However, the caller just wanted to know the center’s mailing address so they could send holiday cards to staff and thank them for their assistance.

Agenda items for next meeting on March 1, 2022: No additional items were offered. Group members should feel free to email Julianne Dwyer (julianne.dwyer@dhs.wisconsin.gov) with any suggested agenda items.

Prepared by: Julianne Dwyer on 12/20/2021.

These minutes are in draft form. They will be presented for approval by the governmental body on: 3/1/2022