



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## With new 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline now active, Addabbo hopes veterans in need take advantage of the service

SENATOR JOSEPH P. ADDABBO, JR. July 19, 2022

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Over the weekend the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline changed its telephone number to the easy-to-remember three-digit number 988, and New York State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. wants to alert his constituents — especially the veteran population — of this important change.

The change was officially made on Saturday, July 16, with 988 taking over for the former 1-800-273-8255 number. New Yorkers who are contemplating suicide, or experiencing other mental health or addiction issues, can now call, text, or chat this new 988 number. However, residents facing an immediate life-threatening emergency situation should still call 911.

“Our mental health is critically important and we must care for our mind the same as we do our body,” Addabbo said. “This new 988 crisis hotline will give residents an easier number to remember if they are facing a mental health crisis or contemplating suicide. New York State has already earmarked additional money — along with federal funds — to help these crisis call centers across the state.”

The number of New Yorkers who used the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has increased over recent years, and the COVID-19 pandemic caused those numbers to increase even further. COVID and the resulting lockdowns, business closures, job loss and economic downturn on top of the day-to-day stress of living had a negative effect on New Yorkers' mental health.

Addabbo pointed out that one group of individuals that has historically struggled with mental health and suicide is the veteran population. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, an average of 17.2 veteran committed suicide per day in 2019. Addabbo, a member of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee, has made it his priority to address this issue and wants to highlight this fact to make veterans aware of this new number.

"The veteran population faces a higher rate of suicide than the general public, and over 17 veterans per day succumb to their mental health crisis and commit suicide. We need to work together to lower these tragic numbers," said Addabbo, a co-sponsor of the initial "988" Senate bill. "These men and women put their lives on the line each day to protect us and our way of life. To see so many brave soldiers not being able to handle life outside of the service that they end up taking their own lives is heartbreaking. It is my hope that with greater outreach, and an easier number to call or text, we can lower the number of veteran suicides and save thousands of lives. We have already set aside money to help make these crisis call centers a 24/7 service, and I would like to see a veterans peer-to-peer component added to the service to allow veterans the chance to speak with other service members who can relate to some of their unique problems and help them with their struggles."