



This infographic accompanies the "988 in Every State" webinar series held in April of 2024. View the 3-part webinar series [on-demand recordings here](#).

Certified Peer Specialists in the World of 988

Upon the implementation of 988, the roles of CPSs have changed in many different ways. CPSs play a variety important roles across the crisis care continuum. There are specialists responsible for answering the 988 calls, showing up for those calling 988, and giving those in crisis a place to go.

The three-part *988 in Every State* webinar series highlighted CPSs lived experiences and roles in implementing 988. The series was led by the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network's Director of Communications, Chris Johnson. Below are a the featured panelists who attended each webinar and their respective organizations.

Carly Byrd Director of Peer Support

Joy Quarles Support Services Team for City of Atlanta

Dawn Peel Director of Crisis Coordination

Ruth Naomi Escamilla Peer Mentor

Jean Oshefsky Peer Supporter

Mahogany Elis Crisis Coordinator with DBHDD

Katherine Casselle Georgia Collaborative ASO

Toni Jackson Director of Community Response at PAD

Kelly Blanton Director of Respite Centers



GEORGIA
MENTAL
HEALTH
CONSUMER
NETWORK



The Georgia
Collaborative ASO



POLICING
ALTERNATIVES
& DIVERSION
INITIATIVE



D·B·H·D·D

Georgia
Department of
Behavioral Health
& Developmental
Disabilities



Georgia Crisis
& Access Line
1-800-715-4225
mygal.com



The Role of a CPS in Crisis Services

Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) work from the perspective of their lived experience to help build environments conducive to recovery.

Who Answers the Call?

Peer Support

- CPSs provide technical support for their community for those who do not satisfy the criteria for a crisis. They multitask throughout their workdays by answering and returning calls, leaving voicemails, and providing resources.
- On average, peer supporters may answer anywhere between 35-50 calls in a 24-hour period. Some slow days may only consist of 7 calls, while others may have 23 calls in one workday.
- Upon the implementation of 988, there has been an increase in call volume during the late night/early morning hours. There has also been an increase in out of state calls.
- The main thing peer supporters appreciate about their job is making connections with their community. Being able to provide support for their members made them appreciate their work.
- Being a peer supporter can be a difficult job, so it is imperative that they practice self-care. They often remind themselves to give grace and take time to breathe; that they are doing their absolute best, and not everything falls on them. Practicing mindfulness activities like journaling and meditation helps ground peer supporters after their long hours supporting their communities.



Crisis Coordination

- Crisis coordinators oversee the implementation of 988. They guide the strategic planning of the lifeline with internal and external partners.
- Everyday was different for crisis coordinators. They have to be prepared for anything, including emails and calls.
- The call center receives about 700-800 calls a day, including calls regarding crisis, air traffic control, and referral systems.
- Since 988 has been implemented, there have been an increase in calls for crisis coordinators.
- A day in the life of crisis coordinators can be stressful and grueling. Taking time off and doing things in their personal life that makes them happy keeps crisis coordinators grounded. Practicing self-care provides them the headspace to assist their callers on a daily basis.

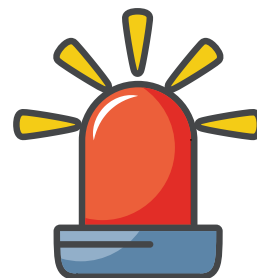
Support Services Team

- Support services receive a variety of calls throughout their work day, including 911 calls that were transferred to them. They deal with many different situations, from mental health to homelessness, with the assistance of the Policing and Alternative Diversions Initiatives. If someone needs to be transferred to 988 or needs help from something they can be arrested for, support services provides assistance.
- Support services receive about 1200-1500 calls a month. Their 8 agents each receive anywhere from 10-15 calls per day.
- Upon the implementation of 988, support services has received fewer calls.
- Support services workers are encouraged to take time off to collect themselves and practice self-care. Providing support can lead to burnout and compassion fatigue, so self-care is an important aspect of their work.



Georgia Collaborative Administrative Services Organization (ASO)

- The ASO works closely with the Georgia Crisis & Access Line (GCAL) and assists them with the growing impact of 988. They work closely GCAL to assess the constant calls they receive and work with the teams sent out from 988 calls. They receive about 20-23,000 calls a month, 5-6,000 of those calls from 988. Those with ASO work to assess the calls they receive to see if they need law enforcement. They make sure to follow-up on the crisis calls and track the law enforcement en route to the peers in need.



Who Shows Up?

Front Line Workers

- Peer mentors take on the role of being the connection for peers. They are focused on post-crisis success for their peers. Their main goal is to help peers transition from hospitals to their community. They work with about 40 peers on average, making sure to put forth empathy and understanding with each peer.
- The Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative (PAD) community response team manages the responders that go out into the community. A day in the life of the response team differs as they are responsible for harm reduction resources, supplies, and ensuring the responding teams are organized. The response team receives about 35-40 calls a week, with 4-5 pertaining to just law enforcement diversions.

Crisis Coordinator

- Crisis coordinators with the DBHDD oversee the crisis system. They make sure crisis units have what they need and are getting the resources they need to support peers in need. They also track the implementation and progress of 988. Crisis coordinators do everything from analyzing data to reviewing marketing plans, even so much as making on-sight psychiatric visits and meeting at other regional offices.

Respite Center Workforce

- Peers at the respite centers use their personal stories and backgrounds to offer support for those in crisis. A respite center is not for those in need to receive hospitalization and medical treatment. Rather, it is an active recovery environment led by Certified Peer Specialists who use wellness activities and other resources to provide emotional support for those in need.



Most Effective Training Materials for CPSs

As per the CPSs featured in the 988 series, they found that some of the most effective tools from their training included effective listening modules, as it helped them properly support their peers without passing judgement. Listed below are more helpful training materials noted by CPSs:

- The Art of Effective Listening modules
- Tools provided in CPS training
- Learning to listen without judgement or bias
- Being vulnerable enough to listen
- Stages of Change Module
- Readiness Ruler Module
- Motivational Interviewing Module
- Using self-disclosure effectively
- Documentation



To learn more about training to become a CPS, click the [link](#).

Challenges in the Workforce

Across the Southeast, state mental health agencies recognize the important work of CPSs. Work is being done to address challenges that CPSs face and to better support and develop the CPS workforce. Supporting peers in crisis is not a simple task, and the featured CPSs noted some of those gaps that make the role challenging. If you are considering a role as a CPS in Crisis Services, do note these difficulties below:

Challenges

- One major challenge as a CPS is the engagement piece of talking to people. It is sometimes difficult to navigate how to talk to peers in crisis, especially meeting them where they are. As individuals who have also gone through crises and recovery, it may be easy to share your journey as a way to connect with peers. However, it is important to remember it is **their** journey, not yours as a CPS. Some peers in crisis may be at various areas in their journey, and it can be tough to help them navigate that without oversharing your own journey.
- Another difficulty when working as a CPS is getting peers to share their stories and open up to you. It is important to connect with peers so you give them the space to confide in you. However, some peers may not be at that stage in their journey, so it is important to remain patient and calm as you help them through their crises.



Next Steps

Though being a CPS can be a strenuous job, it can also be very rewarding. It is a positive field that benefits those in crisis. However, there is a shortage of staff within the crisis field, and mental health in general. If you are interested in becoming a CPS, visit the link below to engage in the next steps to help those in crisis.



Next Steps

1. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. (2022). 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. 988lifeline.org. <https://988lifeline.org/>
2. Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative. (n.d.). Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative. <https://www.atlantapad.org/>
3. Georgia Collaborative. (n.d.). Retrieved May 20, 2024, from <https://www.georgiacollaborative.com/>
4. Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) | Georgia Collaborative. (n.d.). <https://www.georgiacollaborative.com/providers/georgia-crisis-and-access-line-gcal/>
5. Peer Support Wellness & Respite Centers. (n.d.). GMHCN. Retrieved May 20, 2024, from <https://www.gmhcn.org/peer-support-wellness-respite>
6. Warmlines. (n.d.). Warmlines.org. <https://warmlines.org/>
7. CPS Training Schedule. (n.d.). GMHCN. Retrieved June 28, 2024, from <https://www.gmhcn.org/cps-training-schedule>
8. CPS. (n.d.). GMHCN. Retrieved June 28, 2024, from <https://www.gmhcn.org/certified-peer-specialist>

