

Questions & Answers

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
1.	<p>Can our organization apply for multiple tiers? If we want to commit to answering 8,000 calls, can we choose 6,000 plus two times 1,000?</p>	<p><i>No. You may select only one level/tier. Choose the level/tier that most closely matches the anticipated capacity for your center based on your current <u>Lifeline</u> call volume plus the expected increase in volume during the first year after 988 launches.</i></p>		
2.	<p>Is the money awarded for each year of the two years or once for the entire two years?</p>	<p><i>The dollar amounts listed in the RLI are annual amounts. The same amount would be available for each of the two years of the award. DMHAS will provide a prorated monthly amount. If funding is available, one-time costs will be paid at the beginning of the contract period.</i></p>		
3.	<p>How is the award paid? Is this a billing / reimbursement award?</p>	<p><i>DMHAS will provide a prorated monthly amount. Agencies will need to submit quarterly reports (Report of Expenditures/ROE) on a form provided by DMHAS.</i></p>		
4.	<p>Is there the opportunity to get an increased award for answering for additional counties aside from the ability to increase call volume?</p>	<p><i>No. Basic funding is determined by tier (commitment to handle 1,000; 6,000; or 40,000 calls). There is no increase for adding counties.</i></p>		
5.	<p>To clarify: we should break out one-time costs at the bottom of Column 2 regardless of whether we are new awardees or currently have contracts?</p>	<p><i>Yes. All applicants should show one-time costs (if any) at the bottom of Column 2.</i></p>		
6.	<p>Regarding consent: will there be a procedure established (i.e., keeping a record of consent; who keeps those records and how; if we are develop an internal procedure will we be expected to report and how long do we keep the records if not in iCarol)? A review of the draft of the iCarol Unified Contact Record did not show where consent would be asked.</p>	<p><i>There will be a 988 system-wide procedure for managing consent information.</i></p>		
7.	<p>The follow-up attempts vs contacts: are they one in the same? Does attempts mean “unsuccessful tries” and contacts mean some actually spoke with the caller? Are the two follow-up contacts just “tries” or successful conversations?</p>	<p><i>The “Follow-Up” requirements were provided months ago by Vibrant. Our interpretation of attempts vs. contacts is this: “Individuals who have consented to follow-up should receive a minimum of 2 follow-up contacts.” A minimum of 3 attempts should be made at various times during the day to</i></p>		

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
		<i>accomplish the first contact and these attempts must be documented. If none of these attempts are successful, the agency will have completed the required tasks for the first contact. A similar process would be required for the second contact.</i>		
8.	Is the timeframe to answer the minimum number of calls for our request (6,000) the calendar year 2022 or is it the 12 months starting 6/15 or some other date in 2022?	<i>The start date for call data will be July 1, 2022</i>		
9.	New crisis call staff must be hired and onboarded by 6/15. Does this mean that ALL the staff we anticipate needing for capacity building must be hired and onboarded by 6/15/22 or can we plan a more considered roll out, i.e. hiring a smaller team by 6/15, then hiring, training and onboarding additional staff later this year and into 2023?	<i>The goal of this funding is to onboard staff as quickly as possible so that New Jersey 988 centers are able to answer at least 90% of New Jersey calls to 988. The sooner staff are hired, the more successful the state will be in meeting this goal. Although ALL staff may not be hired by 6-15-22, the strongest applications will move quickly to recruit, hire, train and onboard staff.</i>		
10.	If a new hire is onboarded before 6/15/22 and quits during the 2 year period can that person be replaced?	<i>Yes.</i>		
11.	What exactly can the funds be used for beyond hiring staff to answer crisis calls? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Additional phones, computers, desks, space, etc. b. Upgrading from broadband to fiber optic for more reliable phone service (fewer dropped calls with fiber, better quality service) c. Hiring additional supervisory staff d. Hiring additional training staff e. Hiring staff to make follow-up calls 	<p><i>DMHAS will not provide specific items for which funds can be used as agencies may have different needs. The RLI states: "Requests for items to improve an agency's response structure will be considered if they are specific to the provision of 988 services." Examples shared at the Bidders meeting included computers, phones, phone line installation and licenses.</i></p> <p><i>If there is a need that can be shown to "improve an agency's response structure... specific to the provision of 988 services" then it can be included as part of the overall budget or as a one-time expense (if applicable). According to the RLI: "The review committee may invite an applicant for interview and/or review any programmatic or fiscal documents in the possession of DMHAS. The applicant is advised that the contract award may be conditional upon final contract and budget negotiation."</i></p>		

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12.	If hiring additional supervisory and/or training staff is acceptable, do they also need to be hired and onboarded by 6/15/22 or can they be brought on later in the grant period?	<i>Although ALL staff may not be hired by 6-15-22, the strongest applications will move quickly to recruit, hire, train and onboard staff.</i>		
13.	What is the timeline for release of the funds?	<i>The goal is to move quickly so that agencies can hire and on-board staff as soon as possible. Funds will be released once all required contract and documents are signed by the agency and DMHAS. Details of this process will be reviewed with agencies once awards are made.</i>		
14.	We will need to provide info on how we spent the funds. How often and how specific will this information be? For example, will we need to provide payroll records, purchase receipts, etc.? Will a format be provided?	<i>Funds spent for this grant will need to be reported quarterly on the budget template (Report of Expenditure/ROE) provided by DMHAS. Agencies will be offered assistance in completing this information by the assigned DMHAS Contract Administrator. Receipts and records of expenditures must be maintained by the agency and made available for DMHAS if requested. An attestation form provided by DMHAS must be signed and accompany the quarterly expenditure reports.</i>		
15.	In addition to budget reporting will we be required to submit other reports (answer rate information, dropped calls, etc.)? Is there a time frame for this reporting? Will there be a specific reporting format provided?	<i>There will be additional reporting on a monthly basis. The minimum information required was shared at the 1-11-22 meeting of the Lifeline centers.</i>		
16.	What happens if we fall short of the target number of calls answered?	<i>DMHAS staff will work with agency staff to develop strategies for improving answer rates.</i>		
17.	Are Follow Up calls included in the target or is there an additional expectation/target for Follow Up calls?	<i>Follow Up calls are not included in the commitment number. They are required but they are in addition to the target number.</i>		
18.	Will we be required to provide data/results on our Follow Up program? If so, what information will be included in these reports? How often?	<i>Yes, monthly reports will be expected. Specific data requirements are in development.</i>		

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19.	Under the Follow Up requirements in the RLI it says we must “coordinate care with other providers and increase connection to needed services.” Please explain what this means and what, if any, kind of reporting we will need to do. We do not see this language in the Lifeline follow up document which we used to create our program.	<i>The goal of Follow Up is to ensure that the person in crisis has stabilized since the initial contact and is connected to community resources. This language refers to facilitating linkage with community resources when necessary. Information about this component of Follow Up will be recorded in the data management platform and may need to be included in the regular monthly Follow Up data reports.</i>		
20.	We currently have a Board member who is doing paid part-time work on the lines (our bylaws allow for this). Will that not be ok moving forward?	<i>DMHAS is prohibited from funding agencies that have Board members who are also paid employees. Board members can volunteer to provide agency services.</i>		
21.	What is the formula to calculate FTEs?	<i>Calculate Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) based on the number of hours a full-time employee works for your agency (e.g. 35, 37.5 or 40 hours/week). For example, if your agency uses a 35 hour/week schedule, someone working 17.5 hours/week would be considered half-time or 0.5 FTEs.</i>		
22.	Can a Lifeline Center apply for two or more programs (calls, chats, texts, Spanish) with different levels of required Call/Chat/Text/Spanish Volume Capacity?	<i>No. Your application is based on your commitment to answer calls at a particular level (1,000; 6,000; or 40,000). Commitment to providing other services triggers a 2% increase on top of the Basic funding on the tier/level you’ve chosen.</i>		
23.	Is a separate grant required for two or more programs, such as calls and texts?	<i>No. You are applying to answer calls at a particular level (1,000; 6,000; or 40,000). Chats and texts are additional services.</i>		
24.	Are the "up to" budget amounts set by the centers? i.e.: If a center responds to a minimum of 1,000 calls/year, is the full \$87,500 available?	<i>Agencies should submit a budget that builds their center’s capacity to answer calls from 988. Each agency may request a maximum of the “up to” amount in the level/tier to which they commit (1,000; 6,000; or 40,000).</i>		
25.	If a one-time cost is spent in the first year, will the second year contract offer the same amount of money for additional "one-time costs" as may be determined during the second year?	<i>No. One-time costs are for initial expenditures only and will be considered if funds are available.</i>		

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26.	Is a general agency share allowable, such as 10% for the support of the agency?	<i>Section G of the budget template provides a place for agencies to list General and Administrative (G&A) costs. There is no set percentage established for G&A.</i>		
27.	Q: As call/chat/text volume increases, can we move to a higher tier, thereby increasing our funding?	<i>No. Each agency should select a level/tier based on current call volume plus expansion supported by this funding.</i>		
28.	Do we need to answer a certain number of calls before accepting chat and text responsibilities or are all three interchangeable?	<i>An agency can choose to handle chats and/or texts <u>in addition to calls</u>.</i>		
29.	Can we apply for chats and texts only without doing calls?	<i>No. Increasing the call answer rate of each center and the State as a whole is the primary focus of this funding. Therefore, any agency applying for these funds must have as its primary goal increasing center capacity to handle calls made to 988.</i>		
30.	If we don't do any calls but do 40,000 chats & texts, can we apply for \$1,092,420?	<i>No. Increasing the call answer rate of each center and the State as a whole is the primary focus of this funding. Therefore, any agency applying for these funds must have as its primary goal increasing center capacity to handle calls made to 988.</i>		
31.	If we apply for chats and texts only, do those Call volume requirements also apply to chats and texts?	<i>Increasing the call answer rate of each center and the State as a whole is the primary focus of this funding. Therefore, any agency applying for these funds must have as its primary goal increasing center capacity to handle calls made to 988.</i>		
32.	Our organization already handles Lifeline calls from New Jersey. Are the minimum numbers (1000, 6000, or 40,000) <u>in addition to the Lifeline calls that our organization already take</u> or are the values simply a <u>total number</u> that we commit to handle going forward.	<i>These numbers are not in addition to current volume. They are total numbers inclusive of existing <u>Lifeline call volume plus expected increase in volume once 988 launches</u>.</i>		
33.	Does our organization even qualify for the 1000 or 6000 per year options since we already handle more than 6000 Lifeline calls each year? Would we be committing to 1000 or 6000 additional calls beyond our current	<i>You should only select one level/tier. Choose the level/tier that matches your anticipated capacity and ignore the other options.</i>		

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
	average?			
34.	Is there any mechanism in place to cap a maximum number of calls that each center can receive? Are there any financial considerations to support call volume beyond a certain threshold?	<p><i>There is no cap or maximum number of calls for each center. Call volume is influenced by the number of hours a center is "open" to receive Lifeline/988 calls and the number/activity level of the counties it covers. It is expected that call volume will increase proportionally for all centers once 988 is launched.</i></p> <p><i>For this funding opportunity, there is no plan to offer additional funding for call volume above a certain threshold.</i></p>		
35.	Will the State dictate the hours of operation for all centers or will each organization be able to choose when they are able to receive calls?	<p><i>For this funding opportunity, each agency will determine its own hours of operation.</i></p>		
36.	In the RLI, the term "respond" is used at several points – does respond mean "received an incoming call" or "answered an incoming call"?	<p><i>"Respond" means to answer an incoming call."</i></p>		
37.	In the RLI, the term "respond" is used at several points – does respond only pertain to incoming calls or would the act of making an outgoing call also be considered "a response" and therefore could be counted to the commitment total?	<p><i>"Respond" means to answer an incoming call. Therefore, making outgoing calls would not be considered a response.</i></p>		
38.	Are there any specific startup costs that will be granted?	<p><i>As all five NJ Lifeline centers are already operational, no "start-up costs" are factored into this funding opportunity. However, one-time costs will be considered if funding is available. Please include those at the bottom of the proposed budget (column 2 – grey section).</i></p>		
39.	What is the maximum number of calls expected per year for each option? For the highest option (40,000 per year) is there any type of call volume ceiling that has been	<p><i>DMHAS has been advised to expect a 30-50% increase in <u>Lifeline</u> call volume over the next few years. Therefore, we anticipate a significant increase in call volume in year one but do not have a definitive call</i></p>		

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	established?	<i>expectation. Therefore, there is not a call volume ceiling that has been established. The goal is to answer 90% of calls coming into New Jersey.</i>		
40.	Regarding the 90% answer goal, is each center graded on this metric separately or are all the NJ centers graded collectively by the State?	<i>The 90% answer rate goal is a statewide expectation from Vibrant. However, the target for each center is also 90%. Toward this end, DMHAS staff will work with agency staff to develop strategies for improving answer rates.</i>		
41.	How will calls be distributed between each of the centers? Will calls be distributed evenly? Geographically?	<i>Calls will be distributed by Vibrant based on the county coverage commitment of each call center.</i>		
42.	When an organization reaches its commitment of calls for the year, will Lifeline be able to ensure that the center does not receive any additional calls.	<i>No. There is no cap or maximum number of calls for each center. DMHAS does not have a definitive call volume ceiling nor will the Lifeline/988 system stop sending calls to a center once a particular call volume is reached.</i>		
43.	Do potential centers have to agree to be available 24/7/365 or will they be permitted to specify when they will be available to handle their allotment of calls?	<i>For this funding opportunity, each agency will determine its own hours of operation.</i>		
44.	Are there any additional incentives for agreeing to receive calls overnights or on weekends?	<i>No.</i>		
45.	Is there any specific penalty for not meeting the 90% in a given month or in a given quarter?	<i>No. DMHAS staff will work with agency staff to develop strategies for improving answer rates.</i>		
46.	It appears that the amount per call is higher when you take less calls. Is that correct?	<i>Calculations for this funding opportunity were not made on a "per call" basis. DMHAS recognizes there are certain fixed/overhead costs incurred by any agency regardless of the number of calls answered. This was factored into the basic budget totals so that there is a differential</i>		

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
		<i>that results if a "per call" assessment is made.</i>		
47.	The funding section of the RLI indicates that the funding is for a 2-year period (24 months); however, the projected required call volume capacity is stated per year (12-month period). So, is it correct to say that if you indicate you will respond to a minimum of 1,000 calls per year, you are stating that you will respond to a minimum of 2,000 call per year with a basic budget up to \$87,500 for 2 years (\$43,750 per year)?	<i>The calls per year and the funding shown on the graph are both <u>annual</u> figures. If an agency commits to 1,000 calls per year they can request up to \$87,500 per year for the basic budget. In short, this level/tier commitment would be for 1,000 calls each year with funding up to \$87,500 each year (for 2 years).</i>		
48.	Just confirming that the funding should be designed to have a goal of answering 90% of the calls coming through 988. Is there an established window of time to answer?	<i>Correct. The funding should be budgeted with the goal of expanding the current capacity of the center to reach the goal of answering 90% of the calls received. There is not a window of time to answer calls established through this funding opportunity. The expectation is that the time to answer would remain the same as it is now.</i>		
49.	Will all 988 calls count toward this number as our new capacity level or are we building off our past performance as a base? We ask this question because the overall number of currently answered calls based on your 2020 number of 55,000 with the projected 50% increase comes out to a capacity of 82,500 calls. The math indicates that the state needs to create an additional capacity of 27,500, and that does not seem connect to the call project totals in the tiers. Trying to be clear with the overall picture.	<i>These numbers are not in addition to current volume. They are total numbers inclusive of existing <u>Lifeline</u> call volume plus expected increase in volume once 988 launches.</i>		
50.	Is there data available for the number of calls coming into each county for the last two years? This is needed to be able to project a new 988 capacity more accurately.	<i>If this information is available, it would come from Vibrant. As a Lifeline member center, an agency could request this from them.</i>		

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
51.	Do we apply for just one of the 3 tiers? For example, if we feel we can handle 7,000 to 10,000 calls, what would we do? What would be the basis for approaching a funding request? Would we just add on additional tier 1's?	<i>You may only select one level/tier. Choose the level/tier that most closely matches your anticipated capacity. These numbers are not in addition to current volume. They are total numbers inclusive of existing <u>Lifeline</u> call volume plus expected increase in volume once 988 launches.</i>		
52.	Does DMHAS project a significant 988 staff leadership role about required involvement with external planning, community engagement, training efforts for the overall 988 project? We ask this question to ensure we address the full impact of 988 on staff responsibilities externally and us to our call center operations.	<i>At this time, DMHAS is not asking agencies to plan on extensive roles or time beyond the work of the call/contact center (i.e. responding to 988 calls plus chats and/or texts if that commitment is made in addition).</i>		
53.	Will this be a separate contract for 988 services, or will it be integrated into our consolidated contract with DMHAS? This would have an impact on overall GA and non-GA related costs.	<i>For those agencies currently contracted with DMHAS, funding would be added to the current contract through a Budget Modification.</i>		
54.	If this is integrated into our consolidated contract with DMHAS, is it a clustered program?	<i>Yes, for agencies currently contracted with DMHAS it will be a clustered program. These funds cannot be used of any other purpose.</i>		
55.	Is there a standard G&A rate? Or would we use a rate consistent with DMHAS contracts?	<i>There is not a standard G&A rate. However, the G&A costs must be reasonable. Contracted agencies could use a rate consistent with other contracts.</i>		