

Adam Wasserman:

The 988 and 911 cooperation or partnership, I see as very vital because we're really two distinct parts of the same system, the crisis response system. We both play a different role, but a very key role. And 911 has been taking mental health crisis calls since its inception and will continue to do so because there will always be people that will want to call 911 or people who are seeing incidents happening that may involve a mental health crisis that are going to be calling 911. We really are going to continue to be taking these calls and so we really have to have a system that's interoperable where we can share calls with 988, they can share calls with us, and just making sure that we're working together for the betterment of everyone.

We know that there have been issues and concerns in the public for using 988 for fear of they'll be linked somehow to law enforcement, or that they will be forced into an involuntary hospitalization or things like that, which is not the issue. 988 is not directly linked to law enforcement and the response will fit the situation at hand.

Here in Washington, we're trying to combat those concerns by really getting education about 988 out to the public and what 988 is and what 988 isn't. And we're also working on some information and educational campaigns on when to call 988 and when to call 911, just to help the public understand which number is the appropriate number to call. But in the end, the goal for Washington State is whether you call 988 or 911, you're going to get the correct response. Behind the scenes, 988 and 911 are going to work together to make sure that we're getting the right response to the right person at the right time.