Whereas, Suicide is the 12th leading cause of death in the United States (2020), and is a public health issue for individuals and for the communities they live in;¹ and

Whereas, While older adults comprise just 12% of the population, they make up approximately 18% of all suicide deaths;² and

Whereas, Among people who attempt suicide, one in four seniors will succeed, compared to 1 in 200 youths;³ and

Whereas, The new mental health line, known as the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, was launched nationally on July 1, 2022; and

Whereas, The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through its Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, has awarded nearly $105 million in grant funding, provided by the American Rescue Plan, to 54 states and territories in advance of the transition of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline;⁴ and

Whereas, With States having varying degrees of operational readiness, the success of 988 now is important to get activated; and

Whereas, The 988 number currently does not designate priority by age group; and

Whereas, Seniors who are homebound may lack the social connections they need and call centers are expected to be appropriately funded and staffed with properly trained operators to handle suicide risk; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association, with other interested organizations, develop model legislation for use by states who wish to pursue funding for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (Directive to Take Action); and be it further

RESOLVED, That our AMA advocate that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) prioritize education and outreach activities for use of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline to those who are at highest risk for suicide completion with a special emphasis on those over age 65. (Directive to Take Action)

Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

Received: 09/29/22
REFERENCES:

2. American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. (2022, September). Suicide and the Elderly. Suicide in the Elderly (aamft.org)

RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Awareness Campaign for 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline D-345.974
Our AMA will: (1) utilize their existing communications channels to educate the physician community and the public on the new 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline program; (2) work with the Federation and other stakeholders to advocate for adequate federal and state funding for the 9-8-8 system; and (3) collaborate with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the 9-8-8 partner community to strengthen suicide prevention and mental health crisis services.
Citation: Res. 423, A-22