

# Buckelew Programs Reports Significant 47% Increase in Calls to 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline



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**Buckelew Programs** →

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*As National Suicide Prevention Month approaches, Bay Area nonprofit highlights critical role of 988 and ongoing need for accessible mental healthcare*

NOVATO, Calif., Aug. 28, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- Buckelew Programs, a Bay Area nonprofit that operates one of California's 12 call centers within the national **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** network, announced it answered nearly 22,000 calls in fiscal year 2024. This reflects an unprecedented 47% increase in call volume for Buckelew since 988's launch in 2022.

Answering calls from Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake County area codes, Buckelew's call volume growth mirrors state and national trends.

988 is a vital, easy-to-remember number that connects people via phone, text or chat to trained crisis counselors who provide emotional support and connect callers to resources when appropriate. The Lifeline is free, confidential and available 24/7 to anyone experiencing any level of distress.



Buckelew has operated **the region's suicide and crisis hotline** since 2014, as a 10-digit phone number until two years ago. In 2021, Buckelew counselors answered about 12,000 calls. In the first year of 988, they answered 15,000. Between 2021 and 2024, Buckelew experienced an unprecedented 83% jump in calls.

### **Interpreting the growth**

Buckelew Programs CEO Chris Kughn attributed the surge in 988 usage to greater public awareness and the destigmatization of mental health issues. He also noted this trend highlights a critical gap in access to mental health care, especially at a time when there's a shortage of mental health professionals.

"Suicide is a complex public health issue, but it is preventable," said Kughn. "By providing immediate, accessible support through 988, we're giving people the help they need at the moment they need it most. A lot of times it's just about being heard and being seen for who you are."

Buckelew's call center has proven highly effective, with 99% of calls being resolved over the phone without requiring in-person intervention by emergency services.

### **Raising Awareness, new PSA videos**

As September is National Suicide Prevention Month, Buckelew Programs is intensifying its efforts to raise awareness about 988, including releasing **new PSA videos for seniors and youth** and offering training, education, support groups and outreach events.

Despite successes of 988, awareness remains alarmingly low, even as suicide continues to be one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. According to a recent KFF poll, only 18% of U.S. adults are well aware of 988.

"Every time we raise awareness about 988, we're potentially saving a life," said Connie Mann, LMFT, Buckelew's Regional Director of Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention. "It's one less person struggling alone and one more person who has access to care."

### **About Buckelew Programs**

Founded in 1970, Buckelew Programs is North Bay's largest nonprofit provider of comprehensive behavioral health services. Each year, we help thousands who experience mental health and addiction challenges — often those with no other access to care — to lead healthier, more independent lives.



