

## Lifeline Crisis Chat & Text

### Two Conversations at a Time

#### Overall Philosophy

The 988 Lifeline **does not** require crisis counselors to take two conversations at a time. However, our system is set up to pass a second conversation along if a crisis counselor's status is set to accept new interactions. It is up to each center and each crisis counselor to decide **each time** whether a second conversation fits their workflow and overall wellbeing. While taking a second conversation may be helpful at times to meet center needs, *it is important to maintain a high quality of care for each individual who is seeking support*. This can be difficult when managing two conversations at once.

#### Reasons to take a second conversation

1. **More downtime.** Chat and text-based conversations have lulls that phone conversations don't. This often means a crisis counselor is sitting, waiting on the next message from the visitor. So there may be space for a second conversation.
2. **Bigger impact.** Crisis counselors who feel able to equally balance two conversations at a time can reach more people during their shift, which can be rewarding.
3. **Alleviates staffing issues.** If a crisis counselor is able to take two conversations at a time, it can help centers that are experiencing obstacles to staffing.

#### When not to take a second conversation

1. **High-risk conversations.** When a crisis counselor has a high-risk conversation, their attention should be focused on that person. If a counselor already has two conversations and one conversation becomes an imminent risk situation, a crisis counselor should notify their supervisor and seek extra support.
2. **Rapid-responding visitors.** When a conversation is moving quickly because of the visitor's speed of response, it's best to stick to one conversation.

3. **New crisis counselor.** New crisis counselors should be given adequate time to settle in before taking two conversations. This can look different for each individual crisis counselor. Crisis counselors should be well prepared and trained before attempting to take a second conversation. It is important to note that an individual crisis counselor may *never* be at a point where they are comfortable managing two conversations at once and that is perfectly okay.
4. **Individual crisis counselor wellbeing.** A crisis counselor may feel able to take more than one conversation some days but not others. Or maybe they need to pare down to one during the last hour of a shift because of fatigue. *That's normal!* Crisis counselors should know they have permission to adjust their conversation load throughout *each* shift. This helps to protect their own wellbeing and to protect the high quality standards a visitor deserves.

### **How to transition to two conversations at a time**

1. **New crisis counselors should take one chat at a time.** This may also include crisis counselors who are experienced with chat and text-based conversations but are starting on a new chat and text platform. Crisis counselors should feel comfortable and confident in balancing the two conversations both clinically and technologically.
2. **After adequate training,** based on crisis counselor experience and supervisor judgment, a crisis counselor may try to take a second conversation. Even experienced counselors may want to start the shift with one at a time before transitioning to two conversations.
3. **Stagger picking up conversations.** Allow time to discover how a conversation will go (safety level, speed to respond, etc.) before picking up a new one.
4. Encourage crisis counselors to **allow both conversations to end** before picking up a new one so they have time to debrief and for self care.
5. **Debrief as needed** after both conversations have wrapped up. This can be independent debriefing or can include a supervisor.

### **Summary**

988 Lifeline quality of care and crisis counselor wellbeing are the top priority. Two conversations at once should only be done if it feels manageable, productive, and safe for both parties involved.