

The following is intended to provide an example of what a crisis contact center's policy could include. Please take into account your crisis contact center's needs and resources as you review the sample provided below for necessary revisions.

ABC Crisis Center Policies and Procedures Familiar Individuals

Purpose:

To provide ABC Crisis Center staff with guidance on identifying, tracking, and supporting familiar individuals to 988 Lifeline. Familiar individuals with large call volumes can overwhelm crisis counselors and make it difficult to perform daily operations. ABC Crisis Center wants to create an environment of empathy, healthy boundaries, and setting appropriate limits with these individuals.

Policy Statement:

This policy is intended to provide crisis counselors with guidance on how to support familiar individuals and when needed; set limits and boundaries with familiar individuals while providing appropriate care, action plans to reduce the number of contacts, and supervisory support for crisis counselors working with familiar individuals.

Procedure:

Training

Training in working with familiar individuals is essential to promote equitable care and support for all individuals while maintaining clinically appropriate boundaries. Training instills confidence in a crisis counselor's ability to support familiar individuals.

1. ABC Crisis Center ensures that all staff are trained on how to support familiar individuals who reach out to the Lifeline. (See [Training Manual pg XXX](#))
 - a. ABC Crisis Center fosters a culture that highlights supporting familiar individuals in a caring and compassionate manner as an essential component of suicide prevention.
 - b. Through circulation of guidance documents, training materials, and regular supervision, ABC Crisis Center staff have developed policies and procedures to support crisis counselors in striking a balance between

empathy, maintaining healthy boundaries, and setting appropriate limits for familiar individuals.

- c. **ABC** Crisis Center provides annual inservice training to support crisis counselors' clinical knowledge surrounding the needs of 988 contacts. These trainings include clinical skill development for understanding and supporting the needs of familiar individuals.
2. **ABC** Crisis Center offers planned individual or group supervision to support crisis counselors.

Expectations for responding to familiar individuals

The Lifeline promotes equitable care for each contact who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

1. For every contact, regardless of familiar contact status, **ABC** Crisis Center crisis counselors must ask required prompt questions.
2. **ABC** Crisis Center will not queue, ban, block, or re-route any contacts from a familiar individual.
3. Crisis counselors will decline requests to transfer callers to specific crisis counselors as it may reinforce frequent contact patterns.

Tracking Familiar Individuals

Tracking familiar individuals promotes an environment where crisis counselors are prepared to handle and identify known familiar individuals.

1. **ABC** Crisis Center will conduct monthly audits of their phone system to identify if familiar individuals are impacting center capacity.
 - a. Crisis counselors are required to alert supervisors if they have concerns surrounding familiar individuals or numbers that appear to be increasing in volume.
 - b. **ABC** Crisis Center will utilize a system to alert crisis counselors when they are speaking with a familiar contact. This may include flagging phone numbers, or flagging certain phrases/unique topics of conversation. These alerts will be used to assist crisis counselors in consistently identifying familiar individuals when they reach out to the Lifeline and responding to these contacts with consistency.
 - c. **ABC** Crisis Center will ensure that care is taken to review 988 and center policies in regards to HIPAA and cyber security best practices.

Establishing an Action Plan

Establishing an action plan allows **ABC** Crisis Center to perform at given capacity, engage in boundary setting for contacts, and allows for supervisory consultation regarding familiar individuals.

1. If a familiar contact's frequency of calls begins to impact **ABC** Crisis Center's answering capacity, **ABC** Crisis Center will establish an action plan to support this contact and reduce the number of contacts to a manageable level.

- a. Prior to instituting an action plan or limits, [ABC](#) Crisis Center will make a reasonable effort to connect with the individual, acknowledge the pattern of contacts, and communicate appropriate use of the Lifeline to provide the familiar contact with time to self-correct the behavior. Supervisor will verify the identity of the person prior to discussion of Lifeline contact.
- b. Prior to instituting any action plan, [ABC](#) Crisis Center will make all reasonable efforts to relay the information and incoming limits to the individual.
 - i. If the phone number is accessible, a supervisor will contact a familiar individual to address the pattern of calls directly. The supervisor will advise the individual of any limits being set and the reason they are being put into place.
- c. Crisis counselors are trained to explore appropriateness of a Crisis Response Plan as a first line of intervention for contacts that are occurring rapidly in a short period of time ([See training Providing Crisis Response Plans for Familiar Individuals](#)).
- d. When setting limits with familiar individuals, [ABC](#) Crisis Center will use best clinical judgment surrounding the number of calls and time limits that are put in place. Limits should be for the benefit of the individual and be developed in collaboration with the familiar individual whenever possible.
- e. [ABC](#) Crisis Center will disseminate information to all crisis counselors about familiar contact action plans; when a contact is received that has a familiar contact action plan, crisis counselors will be notified on the right hand portion of their screen.
- f. When appropriate, [ABC](#) Crisis Center will offer to engage in care coordination with familiar contact's outpatient providers to promote the individual's wellbeing and identify appropriate services to meet their needs.
- g. A Supervisory team member will update familiar contact action plan information on a regular basis. Updates will be sent to center staff to ensure all crisis counselors maintain an awareness of the individual, their needs, and consistently enforce any limits that are in place.
- h. [ABC](#) Crisis Center ensures they are following legal guidelines for making contact with outside providers, by obtaining and documenting consent, and sharing protected health information. ([See HIPAA and PHI Guidance Document](#))
- i. At a minimum, familiar contact action plans/interventions will be re-evaluated on a quarterly basis to determine appropriateness of continued intervention.

Seeking Clinical Consultation

Consultation from Vibrant's Clinical Best Practices team is a resource available to troubleshoot/collaborate on problems related to familiar callers.

- a. [ABC](#) Crisis Center supervisory staff will reach out to Vibrant's Clinical Best Practices team or to collaborate when the center is encountering difficulties developing interventions and action plans for familiar individuals.

- b. [ABC](#) Crisis Center supervisory staff will reach out to Vibrant's Clinical Best Practices team to collaborate when established action plans/limits are not working, to explore options for reducing familiar contact volume.

Glossary:

Familiar Contact: An individual who contacts 988 Lifeline on a regular/frequent basis.

Crisis response plan: If the individual is not struggling with suicide, [ABC](#) Crisis Center may choose to collaborate to develop a crisis response plan. This can include concrete steps the individual can take before contacting the Lifeline with a specified length of time to work through the plan before reaching out, such as 30 minutes of engagement in distraction/coping skills or contacting another support person first. Collaborate on the plan with the individual, provide it to crisis counselors, and coach them to ask the individual if they have been able to work through their plan, while providing support and helping to address any barriers. If not, let the individual know they can reach back out to the Lifeline if they are still struggling once they have worked through their plan for the time agreed upon

Example of a Crisis Response Plan: Prior to reaching out to the Lifeline, Jane Doe will journal for 10 minutes, take a walk around her neighborhood, and will reach out to her sister on the phone to see if she is free to talk.

Action Plan/Intervention: Developed by [ABC](#) Crisis Center in collaboration with the familiar contact to support the individual in utilizing the Lifeline in an appropriate manner. Action plans may involve limits surrounding the number of contacts or the length of contact time an individual has each day when reaching out to the Lifeline. Action plans may involve coordination of care with the individual's outside providers, or the connection of an individual to outpatient services.

Reference:

[Guidance for Supporting Familiar Individuals](#): Guidance document which reviews identifying and responding to familiar individuals, clinical best practices for interventions to respond to the unique needs of this population, and support for crisis counselors around setting and communicating limits and boundaries.