

Connecting Occupational Therapy & 988

Starting on July 16, 2022, calling or texting 988 can help save a life. The 3-digit code supports suicide prevention and the mental health crisis with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Occupational therapy practitioners can use their skills, training, and expertise to address mental health in our communities.

Every person. Every age. Every condition.

Occupational therapy has a unique opportunity to reach a wider community by addressing mental health issues, no matter the age, condition, or context.

The time is now to connect occupational therapy & mental health!

988 Critical Pillars & Occupational Therapy Connection Let's break it down for you!

7 Critical Pillars of 988: Crisis Response Continuum of Care

Occupational Therapy Connection: How Can We Get Involved?

Pillar 1

Early Identification and Prevention.
Crisis begins earlier than our system has been set up to acknowledge and continues long after an emergency is resolved.

Act Early Using Core Values.

Draw on our core values and beliefs in occupation. We are skilled in identifying those who are emotionally struggling. We can focus on early intervention to make an impact in people's lives through our knowledge and expertise.

Pillar 2

Emergency and Crisis Response.
Shift the crisis response away from law enforcement and the criminal justice system and to our public health, medical, and mental health systems.

Think Globally. Act Locally!

Address the population's mental health needs in every practice setting. 1 in 4 adults experience a mental health issue, 1 in 6 young people experience a major depressive episode, and 1 in 20 people live with a serious mental illness (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Mental health affects everyone and we have a duty to react on a local level!

Pillar 3

Equity and Inclusion.
Establish a commitment to equity for underserved communities and inclusion of those with lived experience.

Community Focused.

Create a community focused approach that welcomes, understands, and encourages people to share lived experiences. Focus on occupations that support wellness and mental health promotion.

Pillar 4

Integration and Partnership.
Integrate partnerships with law enforcement, courts, medical/mental health systems, and the public-at-large.

Collaboration and Exploration.

Make an impact in underserved areas by capitalizing on the training and perspectives of all practitioners. Your input is needed to change the stigma surrounding mental health and implement our approach to care. Integrating occupational therapy in health and legal systems benefits the community through our holistic person-centered practices.

Pillar 5

Fair and Equivalent Coverage.
Enforce parity to prevent individuals from escalating to crisis and prevent those re-entering the community after stabilization from repeated emergency-only treatment.

A Seat at the Table.

Influence policy and continue knocking at the big doors to pass behavioral health workforce and mental health initiatives. Channel interest and make the connection with occupational therapy training and mental health focused roles.

Pillar 6

Standards for Care.
Improve the quality of treatment at all stages of the continuum of care and invest in infrastructure through evidence-based structures and practices that remove barriers to standards of care.

Occupational Therapy Value in Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Transition occupational therapy research to bigger context of mental health research for people to see value in our services. We can apply our care and treatment approach to mental health in all practice settings.

Pillar 7

Workforce Capacity.
Cultivate and train workforce and provide resources that meet individuals' needs.

Small Steps Make a Big Impact!

Meet mental health needs by cultivating our training and workforce to fill in the gaps. Knowing the signs during assessment and treatment, recognizing early identification, and providing resources for intervention can all contribute to better mental health for the community.



We have a responsibility to our community!

Addressing mental health is part of the job as an occupational therapy practitioner.

Through an inclusive approach that promotes overall physical and mental health well-being, local communities can benefit from occupational therapy's presence in mental health conversations, preventions, and standards of care.

Read more on [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) and the [Comprehensive Crisis Response System](#).