



Advancing Health Care Policy
for Mental Health and Addiction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2020

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**ABHW Supports the FCC Proposal to Create 9-8-8 as the
New National Suicide Prevention Hotline**

Washington, DC (June 23, 2020) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 200 million people, today responded to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai’s draft rules to establish 9-8-8 as the new, nationwide, 3-digit phone number for Americans in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors.

“ABHW and its member companies commend Chairman Pai and the FCC for their efforts in championing the designation of 9-8-8 as the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. A dedicated, easily recognizable number for suicide prevention will quickly connect those in need with someone who can help, and attenuate the stigma surrounding mental health conditions.

“Public health experts believe suicide is preventable. To that end, a universally recognizable national number of 9-8-8 as a crisis line for mental health and suicide prevention laid out in the proposed rule is a commendable start and ABHW strongly supports this concept.

“As the FCC prepares to vote at its July 16th Open Meeting on final rules to establish 9-8-8 as the new suicide prevention number, it is important to remember that the crisis line must have adequate resources, so that all Americans can have access. There will need to be significant investment after the initial implementation to expand capacity and provide services equally and consistently to mental health crises.”

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[ABHW](#) is the leading health plan association working to improve access and quality of care for mental health and substance use disorders. ABHW’s members include national and regional health plans who care for more than 200 million people. Together we work to reduce stigma and advance federal policy on mental health and addiction care. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, AmeriHealth Caritas, Anthem/Beacon, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Kaiser Permanente, Magellan Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, and Optum.