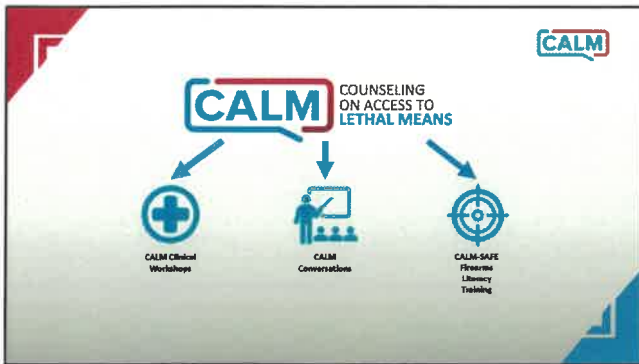


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3

Before We Begin

- Suicide is a sensitive and stressful topic. Practice self-care.
- You will not be asked to “treat” individuals.
- Your role is to recognize, respond, refer, and help in the moment.
- Suicide touches many of us personally; today is about learning how to respond.
 - This training is not designed to help you understand the past; its purpose is to prepare you for future situations.
 - Please refrain from sharing personal experiences or graphic details.
 - Please respect the privacy of others.

4

What CALM Conversations Is and Isn't

What CALM is

- A training for a general audience designed to help participants
 - Recognize when to act.
 - Learn what you can do to help keep friends and family safer and connect them to supportive resources and treatment if needed.
 - Understand that reducing access to lethal means for those at risk is an effective prevention tool (and how to go about it).
- CALM emphasizes safety **REGARDLESS OF PERSONAL VIEWPOINTS!**

What CALM Isn't

- CALM is **NOT** the answer but should be part of all conversations regarding suicide risk.
- CALM is not meant to prepare you to be a crisis counselor.
- CALM is neither anti-gun nor anti-medication.

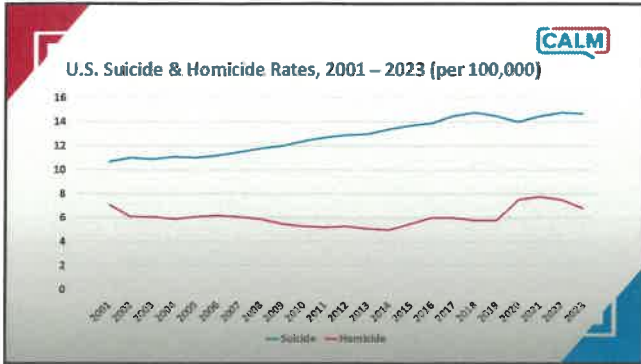
5

A Word on Language

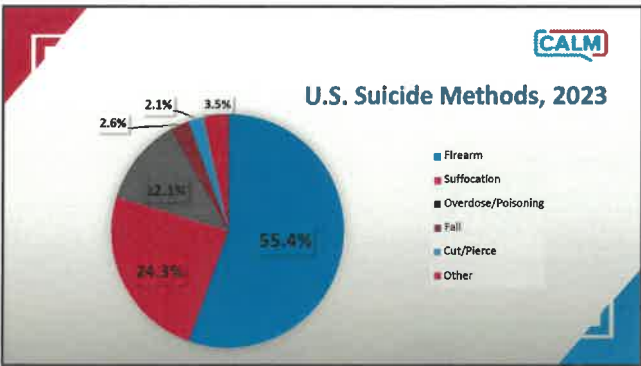
Suicide and firearms are sensitive topics. Try neutral, non-judgmental language. Examples:

- There is a shift away from using the term “committed suicide” and toward using “died by suicide” because suicide is neither a crime nor a moral judgment.
- Some firearm owners see their firearms as “tools” rather than “weapons.”

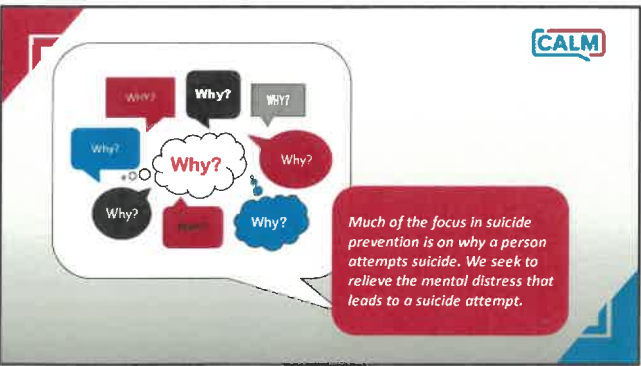
6



7



8



9

CALM

Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

How?

But HOW a person attempts plays a crucial role in whether they live or die as a result of an attempt. CALM covers "how to address the how" through discussing lethal means.

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CALM

Four Reasons Why Means Matter

Suicidal crises are often brief.

1 2
3 4

In one study, nearly half of people who attempted suicide reported *less than ten minutes* passed between their first thinking about attempting and doing it.

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CALM

Four Reasons Why Means Matter


Suicidal crises are often brief.

Some methods, especially guns, are far more lethal than others.

1 2
3 4

Precisely what is valued in guns makes them so deadly in an attempt: their ease of use and high lethality. Unlike most other methods, there's no chance for rescue or change of heart once you start the attempt.

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Four Reasons Why Means Matter


Suicidal crises are often brief.

Some methods, especially guns, are far more lethal than others.

More than 90% of those who attempt and survive do NOT go on to die by suicide.

A life save in the short term is usually a life saved, regardless of how serious the attempt was.

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Four Reasons Why Means Matter

Suicidal crises are often brief.


Some methods, especially guns, are far more lethal than others.

More than 90% of those who attempt and survive do not go on to die by suicide.


Most people who are suicidal are ambivalent.

It's usually more about wanting the pain to stop or to escape an unbearable situation than wanting to be dead.

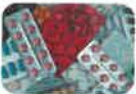
14




Examples of Effective Means Reduction



Constructing bridge barriers where suicides are most frequent




Changing medication packaging to limit quantity



Providing Temporary out-of-home firearm storage

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Why Firearms Are Important 

In 2023, the firearm suicide rate was 8.2 per 100,000—highest since detailed CDC recordkeeping began in 1968.*


- Firearm suicides accounted for 55% of all suicides in the U.S.
- Firearm suicides accounted for the highest proportion of total suicides since 1998.

Data suggests these trends may remain stable or worsen in coming years.

- 2020 – 2022 were the highest 3 years of firearm sales in U.S. on record.**
- 1 in 20 adult Americans purchased a firearm for the first time between March 2020 and March 2022.***
- Handgun ownership is associated with enduring increase in suicide risk.****
- In most cases where firearms were used in a suicide, the firearms were “household” guns.

CDC WONDER, 2021
FBI, 2022
FIREARMS, 2022
GROSSMAN, et al., 2015

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In North Carolina . . . 

2021 suicide rate was 13.9 per 100k.

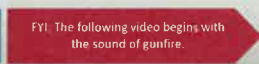
- 63% were firearm suicides.

Suicide rate among ages 15 – 24 increased 18.8% from 2020 – 2021.


- 68% were firearm suicides.

Conversations about suicide prevention must include conversations about safe firearm storage.

- But how do we go about this?

 FYI: The following video begins with the sound of gunfire.

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Why Do Means Matter? 

Note: video begins with gunfire.

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Steps for Helping a Distressed Person

- 1 Recognize warning signs:**
 - Changes in behavior
 - Changes in life circumstances
- 2 Ask about mood and suicide.**
 - Show compassion and care.
 - Build a connection with the person.
- 3 Connect the person to support.**
 - Connect them to professional and personal sources that help them in life.
 - Involve others in preventing suicide and supporting each other (individual and yourself).
- 4 Focus on increasing safety.**
 - It's about safety and judgment regarding firearms, drugs, or cars.
 - Focus on the (hopeful!) temporary nature of both the suicidality and limited access to means.

If someone's life is in immediate danger, call 911.

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1 RECOGNIZE WARNING SIGNS

- Changes in behavior
- Changes in life circumstances

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1 Recognizing Signs of Suicide Risk: What to Look for

NOTE: Clear warning signs are not always present, but there are several common indicators of increased risk.

CHANGES in Behavior	Major Life CHANGES	PLUS Having Easy Access to Lethal Means
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative mood/emotional state • Loss of interest in usual activities • Hopelessness/feeling like a burden • Withdrawal from friends/family/social activities • Sleep problems • Particularly persistent insomnia and/or nightmares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness, loss of someone close, relationship difficulties • Legal trouble, job loss, loss of status • Changes in residence, marital status, health status (chronic illness or pain), etc. • Changes in substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to firearms does not predict suicidal feelings or suicide attempt but does predict death by suicide

NOTE: This is not a checklist as risk is individual. Listen to your gut!




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1 Examples **CALM**

What People May Say . . .		What People May Do . . .	
"I can't take this anymore."	"Nobody cares what happens to me."	Appear agitated	Seem less sociable/ more withdrawn
"People would be better off if I wasn't around."	"Nothing's going to change; I'm going to feel like this forever."	Have difficulty sleeping	Try to obtain means (e.g., stockpiling medications)
"I wish I were already dead."		Trust Your Gut! Exhibit changes in usual behavior	

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1 What Is Helpful or Protective **CALM**

-  Connections to others: family/friends/communities
-  Access to support/care
-  Spirituality/religiousness/purpose
-  Mental and physical health services
-  Healthy coping strategies

YOU!

You can help by showing you care, helping them find support, and reducing access to lethal means.

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1 Keep in Mind **CALM**

- There is not one thing people say or do that signals suicide risk.
- There is no one protective factor that guarantees safety.

When in doubt, ask!
Asking about suicide **does not** increase the risk of suicide.

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1 Case Study: Mike **CALM**




Mike is a 42-year-old maintenance worker. He married his high school sweetheart, Barbara, and the couple has two children. Mike has maintained the same group of friends and has attended the same church since he was a kid; he is a fixture at third base on the church softball team and enjoys deer hunting with his hunting club buddies.

The past year has been tough. He has been getting fewer hours at work, making money even tighter than usual. He has started drinking almost every night over the past two months. He and Barbara are fighting more and, according to her, he is having trouble controlling his anger.

- Is there anything helpful?
- Are there warning signs?

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Case Study: Jason **CALM**



Jason, 16, was suspended from school for fighting. Jason has supportive friends and reaches out to them when he needs help. At home, he and his father argue. Jason says that if his father grounds him, he'll use his rifle to kill himself. When he begins screaming and punching windows, his parents call 911, and he is taken to the ED.

Is there anything helpful?
What are the warning signs?

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2 **CALM**

Steps for Helping a Distressed Person

ASK ABOUT MOOD & SUICIDE

- Show compassion and care.
- Build a connection with the person.

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2 Ask about Suicide **CALM**

- ✓ Show compassion and care.
- ✓ Build a connection with the person.
- ✓ Express your concern for their well-being, and be specific:

"Because of X, Y, Z, I'm worried about you. What's been going on?"

- ✓ Ask as directly as possible:

"Are you thinking about suicide?"

Remember Jason?
Let's practice asking him:

"Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

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2 Ask about Suicide **CALM**

How do we respond to "Yes"?

- ✓ Express appreciation for being open to talking.
- ✓ Emphasize safety.
- ✓ Offer self as a resource.

"I'm worried about you and want to see you get through this difficult time. Can we figure out a plan to help things get better?"

"Thanks for letting me know how bad things have been lately. It sounds really tough. I want to help. Can we talk about some things that might be helpful?"

** You do not need to have the perfect response; just shift to connecting the person with help and keeping them safe!*

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2 Ask about Suicide **CALM**

How do we respond to "No"?


- ✓ Express appreciation for being open to talking.
- ✓ Emphasize safety.
- ✓ Offer self as a resource.

"That's good to hear, but I'm still worried about you. What's been going on?"

"Okay, but if you ever were, I want you to know I care about you and want you to be safe."

** Even if nothing is going on, you can have the CALM Conversation to make the home safer for everyone.*


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3 Steps for Helping a Distressed Person
CONNECT THE PERSON TO SUPPORT

- Support from professional and personal sources can help save a life.
- Involve others in preventing suicide and supporting both the individual and yourself!

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3 Case Study: Mike & Barbara



One night at 3 a.m., after an argument, Barbara woke up and Mike wasn't in bed. She went downstairs and found him sitting in the dark. She noticed the door to the gun safe was open across the room. When she asked him if he was okay, he sobbed, "Please just leave me alone... let me have some peace and quiet!"

- How is Barbara feeling? What do you think she might do next?
- Scared, she called Mike's dad. Hearing the fear in her voice, he said he would come right over.


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3 Options for Additional Support

Don't worry alone; enlist the help of others!

- Informal sources of support
 - Increasing visits with friends and family to reduce isolation
 - Identifying a "go-to" person
 - Creating a list of stress-reducing activities/distractions for difficult times
- Formal sources of support
 - Counseling, medication, spiritual support
 - Good to have local resources handy
 - Call 988!



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3 Having the Conversation about Support CALM

Any additional support you can get them might help to save a life!

- Try to connect the person to appropriate services.

"I know that it can be tough to ask for help, but I'd like to help connect you with some support. I know about some resources around here. What do you think?"

Regardless of their response, try to strengthen connections to existing support:

- Counseling, medication, spiritual support
- Good to have local resources handy—call 988!

"I'd like to see you get help, but I understand if you aren't ready to take that step. What about hanging out with friends and family more often?"

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3 Local Resources CALM

This could be a list of

- Community Mental Health Providers
- Regional and National help lines
- Telehealth providers
- Apps or web pages offering support

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4 Steps for Helping a Distressed Person
FOCUS ON INCREASING SAFETY OF FIREARM & MEDICATION STORAGE CALM

- It's about safety not judgment regarding firearms, drugs, or trust.
- Focus on the (hopefully) temporary nature of both the suicidality and limited access to means.

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4 Case Study: Mike and His Dad Discuss Safety **CALM**



Mike's dad is aware of Mike's recent struggles. He discusses various sources of help and support with Mike. He also asks Mike about ways they can store the firearms and medications to keep Mike and Barbara safer until things turn around.

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4 Reducing Access to Lethal Means May Save a Life **CALM**

- Begin with concern and empathy: "I care about you and want to help you through this."
- Focus on increasing safety—not judgment regarding firearms, drugs, or trust.
- Focus on the (hopefully) temporary nature of both the suicidality and changes in storage practices.
 - Familiarity with firearms or medications may increase rather than decrease risk. People tend to use what they know
- Involve others in preventing suicide and supporting both the individual and yourself!

Calling 988 can help determine next steps for safety and support.

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4 Talk about Access to Lethal Means **CALM**

Express concern for their safety. **Time and distance can REDUCE risk of death**

"There's one more important thing I want to talk about: how can we keep you safe while you're feeling this way?"

"Can we talk about ways to safely store the guns and medications until things get better?"

Explore access to lethal means—guns and medications. **Agree on a plan.**

"Sometimes when people are feeling like this, strong feelings can come on fast. So, it is important that we take steps to keep you safe—especially around guns and medications."

"So, we agree, that in order to keep you safe, we need to..."

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4 Continuum of Safer Storage CALM

- Off-site Storage**
 - Friends or relatives
 - Gun range
 - Self-storage facilities
 - Pawn shops
- In-home Safe Storage**
 - Store firearms locked, unloaded in a safe or lockbox.
 - Consider trigger or cable locks for added time.
 - Secure locking device (keys, combination) with a trusted person.
- Other Options**
 - Remove an essential component to make the gun inoperable.

What have you done in the past: photos, magnet for 988, freeze keys, etc.? Know your state's legal position on firearm transfer.

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4 Self-Defense Firearms & Safe Storage CALM

Self-Defense Firearms
and Safe Storage

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4 What If the Person Is Resistant? CALM

DO

- Emphasize safety: "I just want to see you stay safe."
- Emphasize choice: "If that doesn't work, what steps would you consider?"
- Emphasize temporariness: "Would you consider this just until things get better?"

DO NOT

- Make it an argument: "You have to do this!"
- Make it a trust issue: "You aren't capable of having a gun right now!"
- Escalate or threaten: "Give them up or else!"


"I understand that the guns are valuable and important to you, and it's your choice. But I'm still worried about you. Are there other steps that you would consider to keep you safe?"

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4 Practice **CALM**

Imagine that you are Mike's dad. You suggest that he store his guns outside the home, and he is not open to that idea at all. "There is no way in hell those guns are leaving this house!" he says.

- What are some ways that you can respond?



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4 Securing Medications **CALM**

In addition to Mike and his dad talking about ways to safely secure the guns, Barbara worked on making sure that dangerous medications were stored safely.

What steps could she take to ensure that Mike stayed safe?

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4 Securing Medications **CALM**


To help keep Mike safe, Barbara . . .

- Cleaned out the medicine cabinet and dropped off all their old and unused medications at a pharmacy that offered free disposal services.
- Purchased a cash box from an office supply store to lock up their prescription medications as well as their over-the-counter sleep aids and pain medications, leaving just enough out for the next few days.
- Set a reminder in her phone to replenish the supply every few days.

She took these steps even though Mike never mentioned medication as a possible method of suicide.

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Case Study: Jason's Parents **CALM**




You meet with Jason's parents. When you talk about the option of storing firearms away from home for now, Jason's father says that this is hunting season and "Jason's dramatics are always interfering with the family. I don't want to shortchange my other son by canceling our hunting plans . . ."

He also says, "Jason's all talk. This is just how he manipulates us when he's in trouble."

What are ways to respond?

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Case Study: Ideas **CALM**




In response to, "I don't want to shortchange my other son by canceling our hunting plans" . . .

- **Some Ideas**
 - "I know you care about Jason and want to keep him safe and that hunting is important to you. Let's work on a plan that keeps him safe and works well for your family."
 - "Is there a relative you could store your guns with between hunting trips? If not, this handout lists some local storage options you could consider."
- **Responses to avoid**
 - "We need to choose between your son's safety and hunting."
 - "If you care about Jason, you'll get rid of your guns."
 - "I think you're being unreasonable here."

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Case Study: Ideas **CALM**



In response to, "This is just how he manipulates us when he's in trouble" . . .

Some Ideas

- "Kids do sometimes manipulate us. Unfortunately, they can also act impulsively and irrationally. I'd rather err on the side of caution and take these suicidal feelings seriously."
- "I understand your frustration. On the other hand, it's nearly impossible to know if or when a person will carry through on a suicide threat. But we do know that these violent outbursts and suicidal thoughts put him at higher risk."
- "We can help keep him safe while he learns positive ways to get what he wants."

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4 Securing Medications CALM

- Medications are the most common method of suicide attempt. While overdose attempts are less likely to be fatal, they are the third leading method of suicide death.
- Therefore, it is recommended that access to medications be limited to only what is immediately needed when a person is showing warning signs.

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4 Secure Access to Medications CALM

- **Safely dispose** of out-of-date, unused, and excess medications and over-the-counter remedies.
- **Reduce available quantities** of prescription and over-the-counter meds, especially those for pain and other meds of abuse.
 - Have only what is needed in the short-term on hand.
- Use a **lock box to secure lethal and additional medications.**
- Ask a **pharmacist or poison center** to determine "safe" levels.
- If opioid use/abuse is a problem, obtain NARCAN and learn how to use it along with other lifesaving methods.
- Think about any substance use that can impair judgment, such as alcohol.


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4 Other Methods CALM

- It is difficult to reduce access to everything that could be used.
- If a method is specified, take steps to remove, limit, or disable it (e.g., car keys).
- Focus on other ways of increasing safety—maintaining contact, following up on plan for safety, accessing support.

Reducing access to lethal means is only PART of suicide prevention.

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You don't need to be a superhero to act. Just remember that a few simple steps can save a life:

- 1 Recognize warning signs:**
 - Changes in behavior
 - Changes in life circumstances
- 2 Ask about mood and suicide.**
 - Show compassion and care.
 - Build a connection with the person.
- 3 Connect the person to support.**
 - Support from professional and personal sources can help save a life.
 - Involve others in preventing suicide and supporting both the individual and yourself!
- 4 Focus on increasing safety.**
 - It's about safety not judgment regarding firearms, drugs, or travel.
 - Focus on the (hopeful) temporary nature of both the suicidality and limited access to means.


Finally, remember that you do not need to do this "perfectly." Don't let fear of making a mistake prevent you from acting!

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This video is used with permission from World's Worst Job

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National Resources


- **Suicide Prevention Resource Center**
www.sprc.org
- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**
www.afsp.org
- **Means Matter, Harvard Injury Control Research Center**
www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter
- **Call 988 for assistance 24/7**



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Download the Free App! 

- Simple app to reference information in the future
- App does not collect ANY data from you
- Apple App Store:
- Android- Google Play:



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FACILITATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: JP Jameson, Ph.D.
Email: admin@calmamerica.org



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