

Maine Public Utilities Commission

Report Pursuant to Public Law 2023, chapter 186 Public Safety Answering Point Oversight and Staffing



Submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on
Energy, Utilities and Technology

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Prepared by



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Executive Summary

The Maine Public Utilities Commission's Emergency Services Communication Bureau (ESCB) is responsible for the implementation and management of the State's Next Generation 9-1-1 system (NG9-1-1), which includes 9-1-1 call answering equipment, training and 9-1-1 services for all 25 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in the state.

During the First Special Session of the 131st Legislature, Public Law 2023, chapter 186 (Act)¹ was enacted and does the following:

1. It requires a PSAP to provide the ESCB notice at least one year prior to discontinuing service to a municipality, unless the Bureau authorizes a shorter period for notification;
2. It authorizes the ESCB to establish an additional PSAP on a determination that an additional PSAP is necessary to ensure public safety and access to E-9-1-1 services; and
3. It requires the ESCB to conduct a study assessing whether PSAPs can be more efficiently managed to ensure stability of the system.

The Act specifically requires the study on the oversight of PSAPs to include the following:

1. The use of incentives or subsidies provided from the E-9-1-1 surcharge set out in Title 25 M.R.S. §2927 that are tied to performance metrics for PSAP services in order to stabilize the relationships between PSAPs and municipalities;
2. The current level of state oversight of PSAPs and whether this level is sufficient to ensure the efficient management of PSAPs;
3. The effectiveness of making the Maine Department of Public Safety (DPS) the default entity responsible for providing E-9-1-1 services when there is a change in a PSAP's service area; and
4. The challenges faced by PSAPs with hiring and retaining employees and what methods could be employed to assist PSAPs with staffing obstacles.

Lastly, the Act requires that the ESCB report the results of the study, along with any recommended legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology (Committee). The Committee may report out related legislation to the 131st Legislature in 2024.

Two surveys were developed and distributed as part of the study and served as the primary source of data and information for this report--a PSAP or agency focused survey and an anonymous telecommunicator survey.

Twenty-two PSAPs returned surveys during the data collection period. Surveys were followed by either an on-site visit and interview conducted with the responding PSAP or a virtual meeting and interview with the PSAP relative to their survey responses.

The anonymous telecommunicator survey was made available to all of Maine's telecommunicators. Of the approximately 400 telecommunicators in Maine, 122 returned surveys. The data collected helps inform the underlying causes of concern for the overall stability of the 9-1-1 system in Maine.

¹ [LD 1828, An Act Regarding Enhanced 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points.](#)

Additionally, an extensive review was conducted of relevant federal and state 9-1-1 statutes as well as the rules promulgated by the ESCB. Any comparisons to other state statutes, rules or operations are for illustrative purposes only.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

A summary of findings and recommendations are as follows:

- There is a PSAP staffing shortage challenging the overall stability of the 9-1-1 system in Maine (see Section 2.4).
 - Only 6 of the 22 PSAPs (27%) are fully staffed, 8 PSAPs (36%) have vacancy rates ranging from 6% to 30%, and 8 PSAPs (36%) have vacancy rates ranging from 42% to 57%.
 - The PSAP staffing shortage is **critical** in parts of the state based on data collected from both the PSAP and the telecommunicator surveys.
 - The staffing shortage is causing instability in the overall 9-1-1 system in Maine and is cause for concern in both the short and long term.
- The PSAP staffing shortages have many causes and the impacts are different across the State (see Section 2.4).
 - Uncoordinated efforts to address PSAP staffing shortages have, so far, resulted in cannibalization of skilled, trained resources between PSAPs and are negatively impacting individual PSAPs and overall system stability.
- Current statutes limit financial assistance the ESCB can provide to PSAPs (see Section 2.1).
 - The ESCB provides assistance for the 9-1-1 system up to the point of dispatch, including PSAP and dispatch training. However, some aspects of PSAP operations are not specifically addressed in the current statutes such as computer aided dispatch, PSAP personnel costs or radio communications.
- Continued and additional financial support to PSAPs from the ESCB in the form of grants, statewide service contracts and investments in staff training, recruiting and retention may be necessary to ensure overall 9-1-1 system stability due to the identified staffing shortages across the state (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2).
- Determining the appropriateness, as well as the viability of DPS being the PSAP of last resort requires further consideration (see Section 2.3).
 - This review found that the ESCB has no insight or authority over the operational aspects of DPS in relation to providing default PSAP services to jurisdictions unable to contract with an existing PSAP for 9-1-1 services.
 - The question of what it would take for DPS to serve in this role is still unknown and needs more investigation.
- The current level of oversight, governance and authority between state agencies and local jurisdictions is effective in stable times, but can be limiting in uncertain times, either way, it assumes stability from all sides (see Section 2.2).
- Administrative rules and or legislative changes should be considered that address specific challenges to system stability both now and in the future and to ensure proper authority and accountability at all levels (see Sections 2.1 and 2.3).
- There are immediate actions as well as planned actions identified in this report that should assist in both the near- and long-term stability of the Maine 9-1-1 system (see Section 3).

Immediate Considerations include:

- Additional support from the ESCB would require additional resources at the ESCB. Consider an increase in ESCB staffing to provide additional support to PSAP operations and current and recommended ESCB programs (see Appendix D for draft legislation).
- Consider creating a PSAP Staffing Crisis Stakeholder Group whose purpose is to develop a coordinated 9-1-1 staffing and recruiting effort across the State on behalf of all PSAPs(see Appendix D for draft legislation).
- Consider expanding, with additional resources, existing training programs and continuing education opportunities offered or sponsored by the ESCB in support of telecommunicators, supervisors and managers.
- Consider a statewide 9-1-1 call Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) contract with a vendor to augment PSAP QA/QC responsibilities and reduce staff time constraints at the local level (see Appendix D for draft legislation).
- Consider conducting a 9-1-1/Public Safety cost study to determine the full costs of providing 9-1-1 services in Maine.
 - Require public safety answering point and dispatch center to provide the ESCB with the costs they incur from providing 9-1-1 service (see Appendix D for draft legislation).
 - Inclusive of all levels of government.
 - Use the information to make informed decisions on 9-1-1 funding eligibility, funding levels and long- term fiscal health of the 9-1-1 program.

Items For Further Consideration

- Consider expanding the current PSAP grant program beyond dispatch consolidation and use it to ensure system stability for one-time PSAP needs such as CAD integration, interoperability, or special circumstances.
- Consider revising 9-1-1 specific statutory references, definitions, and language to clarify the roles of the ESCB, DPS and local jurisdictions providing PSAP services as part of the 9-1-1 system.
- Consider supporting telecommunicator reclassification at the state and federal levels. Reclassification of telecommunicators as professionals and first responders would give 9-1-1 professionals the respect they deserve, as well as greater equity in benefits such as mental health support and the ability to apply for government grants.
 - Reclassification also would also aid research into the mental and physical impacts of 9-1-1 jobs.
 - To its credit, Maine has taken some steps towards this effort through special retirement plan benefits and recognition of mental stress within the workers compensation system.² Other ways to provide equity in wages and benefits with others in the first responder community should be considered.

² MRS Title 5, §18453. Special Retirement Benefits and MRS Title 39-A, §201. Entitlement to Compensation and Services Generally.

Section 1: Study Methodology

An array of tools were employed to gain an understanding of perspectives and challenges related to PSAP oversight and management. An online survey was developed capturing diverse perspectives and insights from many stakeholders involved in management of and staffing at Maines' PSAPs. There were 22 PSAP surveys collected out of 25 distributed; for a 92% completion rate.

There were 122 telecommunicator surveys completed, nearly 30% of all estimated telecommunicators in Maine. Beyond the virtual data gathering methodology, in person site visits were conducted, allowing for a firsthand understanding of the operational dynamics, challenges and successes at the local level. The team also attended a 9-1-1 Advisory Council meeting in December 2023 and briefed the members on the preliminary findings of the study, as well as sought their input.

Additionally, extensive research has delved into existing documentation, statutes, regulations, and reports. This effort provided a robust foundation to triangulate and validate the information gleaned from all of the methodologies used. This approach ensured a comprehensive and well-rounded dataset, vital for our thorough assessment and subsequent recommendations for improving the 9-1-1 system stability, operational efficiency, and improved staffing of the 9-1-1 system in Maine.

Onsite visits were conducted at 13 PSAPs. The primary objective of these visits was to assess and review survey responses, gaining insights into the challenges, successes, issues, and overall stability of the local 9-1-1 programs. The visits aimed to gather firsthand information on the operational aspects of the emergency response systems, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of what is working effectively, what needs improvement, and any notable issues faced by the PSAPs.

Subsequent to the onsite visits, virtual follow-ups were initiated with the remaining 12 PSAPs. The findings were compiled in order to formulate the key recommendations that follow in subsequent sections of this report. These recommendations are aimed at improving the overall stability, efficiency, and effectiveness of the 9-1-1 program contributing to a more robust emergency response infrastructure.

1.1 Method of Review, Benchmarking and Comparative Analysis

Maine's statutes and regulations governing 9-1-1, Maine's Constitutional principles and application of home rule principles, federal law and regulation governing 9-1-1, FCC 14th Annual Report to Congress on 9-1-1 and the FCC Report and Order on 9-1-1 Fee Diversion were reviewed. Comparisons of the foregoing offer illustrations and data supporting recommendations to improve governance of Maine's 9-1-1 system. Statistics are drawn from states' annual reports to the FCC and the FCC's 14th Annual Report to Congress on 9-1-1.

Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered on staffing, training, health and wellness, recruitment, retention, and overall success. Comparative analysis of PSAP management and performance against industry standards and best practices aids in setting the foundation for existing practices and pinpointing areas necessitating attention or enhancement.

Section 2: Discussion, Findings and Recommendations

This section of the report provides analysis and discussion of the four questions posed by the Act. Each question is followed by specific discussion, findings, and recommendations. For reference the four questions to be answered are:

1. The use of incentives or subsidies provided from the E-9-1-1 surcharge set out in 25 M.R.S. §2927 that are tied to performance metrics for PSAP services in order to stabilize the relationships between PSAPs and municipalities;
2. The current level of state oversight of PSAPs and whether this level is sufficient to ensure the efficient management of PSAPs;
3. The effectiveness of making the Maine Department of Public Safety (DPS) the default entity responsible for providing E-9-1-1 services when there is a change in a PSAP's service area; and
4. The challenges faced by PSAPs with hiring and retaining employees and what methods could be employed to assist PSAPs with staffing obstacles.

Introduction/Background

The ESCB is responsible for the implementation and management of the State's Next Generation 9-1-1 system (NG9-1-1), which delivers 9-1-1 calls to PSAPs for call answering and dispatch of first responders. The NG9-1-1 system is funded by the E9-1-1 surcharge which is assessed on all wireline, wireless (prepaid and postpaid) and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service.

The ESCB administers a contract for NG9-1-1 Services that provides for a single system that serves every jurisdiction and tribal organization in the State. The contract includes all network and database services, 9-1-1 call handling equipment at each of the municipal, state or county PSAPs, and 24 x 7 support and maintenance. There is no funding that flows through to the PSAPs or to municipalities, counties, or state agencies for other purposes.

The ESCB is also responsible for a three-week in-person call-taker/dispatcher training academy. The coursework includes the Emergency Telecommunicator Course, Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Protocols, Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD) Protocols and NG9-1-1 Equipment and Policy Certification. Higher level quality assurance classes and in-service trainings are also provided. In addition, the ESCB hosts continuing education classes such as the 9-1-1 Supervisor Course and the Center Manager Course, and often sponsors additional classes through various organizations. Continuing education requirements needed for EMD or EFD are supported by an online curriculum that all PSAP staff have access to. Last year, the ESCB added five additional NG9-1-1 Equipment training courses to its regular quarterly offerings due to PSAP training demands.

Currently the legal relationship between the ESCB and the PSAP jurisdictions is limited to the funding and rulemaking necessary to implement 9-1-1 services. Having a PSAP is voluntary but having 9-1-1 services is not. State statute requires that each municipality that does not have a PSAP contract with an entity that does have a PSAP for receiving 9-1-1 calls and, as appropriate, directly dispatching emergency services or, through transfer or relay routing, passing 9-1-1 calls

to public/private safety agencies that dispatch emergency services³.

If a municipality without a PSAP does not enter into such an agreement, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) shall serve as the PSAP for that municipality and the municipality shall pay DPS for the provision of those services⁴. This method of allowing municipalities choice in PSAP services with DPS acting as a backstop has worked well until recently when staffing challenges felt by many PSAPs across the state, as well as DPS, resulted in an inability to take on additional work.

In January of 2023, Somerset County Regional Communications Center (RCC) notified 17 towns in Kennebec County that as of July 1, 2023, they would no longer serve as their PSAP. Seven towns secured PSAP services from Androscoggin RCC. The other nine communities were unable to find a willing partner and DPS, suffering from staffing shortages of its own, was unable to fulfill its role as the default PSAP. The only viable solution was to add a PSAP to serve these towns, Waterville, but emergency legislation was needed to do so.

2.1 Would the Use of Incentives or Subsidies Stabilize Relationships between PSAPs and Municipalities?

Would the use of incentives or subsidies that are tied to performance metrics for PSAP services provided from the E-9-1-1 surcharge set out in the 25 M.R.S. §2927 be sufficient to stabilize the relationships between PSAPs and municipalities?

Currently incentives and subsidies provided from the E9-1-1 surcharge are limited in addressing the current challenges faced by PSAPs, including DPS PSAPs, in Maine.

Incentives administered by the ESCB are presently limited to grants for dispatch center consolidation into a PSAP.⁵ Current Rules governing the grant program do provide a sound foundation. Focusing the program and funding toward consolidation of dispatch centers into extant PSAPs is like programs in other states.

While not mandating consolidation of dispatch centers or PSAPs, as some states have done, Maine's program provides incentives to local governments to dissolve dispatch centers. Two grants have been awarded during the past five (5) years. Amending the statute that authorizes grants for dispatch consolidation to allow for PSAP consolidation may achieve further consolidations enhancing stability of the entire 9-1-1 system and services to citizens.

Modifications to the grant legislation may also allow for additional capabilities to enhance the 9-1-1 systems for each PSAP. For example, interoperability focuses on adoption and implementation of technological changes available to enhance delivery of 9-1-1 and response services. Grants would not be recommended for recurring costs, i.e., out years maintenance and

³ [25 M.R.S. §2923-A.](#)

⁴ [25 M.R.S. §2923-A](#), [25 M.R.S. § 1535.](#)

⁵ [25 M.R.S. §2927\(3-D\)](#) and [Chap. 4 of the ESCB's Rules.](#)

operation. Such costs may be considered later in conjunction with a cost study as recommended in section 2.2 below.

Examples of states that have some type of grant program are as follows:

- Iowa offers grants up to \$200,000 for costs of physical consolidation, Idaho offers grants to consolidate PSAPs;
- Illinois offers grants for PSAP consolidation and NG9-1-1;
- Massachusetts grants may be used for NG9-1-1 and development of regional PSAPs;
- Pennsylvania allocates 15% of fee receipts to grants for statewide interconnectivity of 9-1-1 systems;
- North Carolina awards grants to individual PSAPs for 9-1-1 system enhancement and funds statewide projects benefitting all PSAPs; and
- Several states have generalized grant programs to provide support to PSAPs/local governments (Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, South Dakota).

Amending the statute related to 9-1-1 funding may provide the ESCB with flexibility to establish by rule a grant program for PSAPs. The stability of PSAPs with their respective governing authority is addressed in section 2.4. Stability in the context of 9-1-1 expenditures must be considered by utilizing detailed costs funded by the ESCB and by local governments.

The information below provides comparisons to illustrate other states' actions and are not recommendations for change nor criticisms of Maine's laws. The ESCB's discretion in funding emerging communications technologies (25 M.R.S. § 2927(3)) may be sufficiently broad to encompass technological changes needed by PSAPs to comply with NG9-1-1 implementation. It is recommended that this statutory language be considered for modification to align with the FCC's recent regulation changes.

The FCC identifies eligible expenses in 47 CFR 9.23(b), and ineligible expenses in 47 CFR 9.23(c)⁶. States may petition the FCC for a ruling on eligibility under the Safe Harbor provisions as explained in the [FCC's Report and Order on 9-1-1 Fee Diversion](#).

In the FCC's Fourteenth Annual Collection of Information on State Collection and Use of 911 Fees⁷, forty-seven (47) reporting jurisdictions permit use of 9-1-1 fee receipts to fund CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) and 38 permit use for salaries. Forty-Five (45) states consider CAD hardware / software as part of eligible costs for integration / interoperability with public safety radio. ⁸Maine is not among these states.

This difference represents one aspect of technological changes in 9-1-1 services that local governments must fund when state-level 9-1-1 fees are not available. For example, Colorado noted that the majority of PSAP funding is provided through local governments' taxes or fees. Colorado noted that this likely results in uneven funding and therefore differences in services to citizens and uneven operations in the PSAPs. New Hampshire, a two PSAP state, provides CAD

⁶ 47 CFR §9.23 Designation of acceptable obligations or expenditures for the purposes of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 Division FF, Title IX, section 902c(1)(c).

⁷ [Fourteenth Annual Collection of Information on State Collection and Use of 911 Fees](#).

⁸ [Fourteenth Annual Collection of Information on State Collection and Use of 911 Fees, Table 9](#)

or an option to interface with CAD to its dispatch only centers. Vermont stated that the 9-1-1 fund does support costs for integration and interoperability of 9-1-1 systems and radio systems.

Many states include statements in their reports indicating that the state board/authority lacks specific 9-1-1 cost information from local governments (e.g., Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Nebraska, New Jersey, Wisconsin) because such is maintained at the local government level and not reported to the state. Maine's recent FCC reports echo this point as noted below. Most states, however, present percentages of expense support, e.g., state funding, local funding (county/municipality) and grant funding (federal/state). Estimates range from 100% state to 100% local funding, illustrating only that a wide variance is reported. Eighteen (18) States reported > 50% state funding. Twenty-Two (22) States reported > 50% local funding. Reporting and the balance of funding appear likely to change for 2022 and subsequent yearly reports based on legislative changes, (e.g., Colorado, Michigan, Nebraska, Oregon, Texas, Virginia)⁹.

The national average cost per capita of 9-1-1 is \$22.91. Maine's reported cost per capita is \$5.59. Other states at similar per capita costs include Minnesota \$5.78, New Mexico \$6.30, Puerto Rico \$5.29, Rhode Island \$6.02 and Vermont \$6.92. New Mexico and Vermont, like Maine, do not fund CAD as part of the normal 9-1-1 revenue distribution to PSAPs or by direct state agency expenditure.

Maine's 9-1-1 surcharge is \$.35 per line or number per month, and \$.35 per retail transaction for prepaid wireless service. 25 M.R.S. §§2927(1-E) and 2927(1-F) The national average wireline 9-1-1 fee is \$1.03 per line per month; the average wireless 9-1-1 fee is \$1.05 per line per month; the average prepaid wireless percentage of retail transaction 9-1-1 fee is 3.04%; the average prepaid wireless flat 9-1-1 fee per transaction is \$0.94; and the average VoIP service 9-1-1 fee is \$1.03 per line per month.¹⁰

The ESCB does not have clear statutory authority to require that local governments report all 9-1-1 related expenses and therefore did not report local government funding for 9-1-1 to the FCC. Having such data, however, would allow Maine to gain insight into the total cost associated with 9-1-1 operations regardless of whether those costs are paid from the 9-1-1 surcharge or from local government funds.

2.1. Recommendations:

1. The ESCB might consider legislative changes along with expanded rulemaking authority to implement collection of 9-1-1 related costs borne by local governments such that resulting information may provide a fuller context of the total costs of 9-1-1 in the state. A clear identification of what the surcharge pays for and what local governments pay for would be beneficial in fully understanding the scope and scale of the total cost of 9-1-1 in Maine. This is more commonly done through administrative rulemaking than by legislation. Guidance for rulemaking and legislative changes expanding fee eligibility can be found in [47 CFR 9.23](#).
2. Modify the current statute and rule permitting commitment of additional funds for grants and modify the scope of grants to facilitate interoperability within the scope of 47 CFR

⁹ Ibid, Table 5.

¹⁰ Ibid, page 20.

9.23(b)(5) or integration within the scope of 47 CFR 9.23(b)(4), as well as consolidation of PSAPs into another PSAP. It is expected that substantive changes to the statute authorizing grants will necessitate increasing the ESCB's staff.

- Provide incentives by modifying the currently authorized grant program wherein incentives focus on increasing funding to PSAPs for CAD changes related to 9-1-1 integration or interoperability with other PSAPs. These would be one-time costs and the specifics could be determined by rule adoption process. If ongoing, there should be no guarantee that any grant will be awarded. If time limited, then for a period of time or until completion of a goal.
- It is recommended that a grant program include grant applications and review, matching funding from local government applicants, fiscal review and assurance that funds are expended as agreed, a grant contract between the ESCB and the awarded grantee, delivery of grant funds as reimbursements to awarded grantees, and similar typical grant program characteristics found across governmental grants.

2.2 Review of PSAP Oversight by the State

What is the current level of state oversight of PSAPs and is this level sufficient to ensure the efficient management of PSAPs?

The ESCB's oversight of PSAPs is limited. PSAPs, and their governing political subdivisions, are not required to provide financial data to the ESCB. The lack of such information limits state level oversight, and specifically limits the ESCB's ability to plan for future expenditures that may be necessary for stabilizing 9-1-1 services across the State. PSAPs may or may not be managed efficiently at this time. Survey data and analysis in Section 2.4 address this question. Efficient management also relates to organizational governance.

Maine laws and regulations

Maine's Constitutional provisions regarding home rule and the statutory authority of municipalities in Title 30-A relating to PSAP operations illustrate opportunities as well as limitations for enhancing the stability and uniformity of statewide 9-1-1 services.

Municipalities are required to contract with an entity for PSAP services if the municipality does not provide such services¹¹.

The Department of Public Safety serves as the state's default PSAP or PSAP of last resort through the Bureau of Consolidated Emergency Communications (DPS).

This conundrum is addressed by and through interlocal agreements (ILA) as authorized in [30-A M.R.S. c. 115](#). Such ILAs do not receive review or approval by the ESCB.

¹¹ [25 M.R.S. §2923-B](#).

However, [30-A M.R.S. § 2205](#) requires review by a state officer when the subject of the ILA “deals with provision of services or facilities with regard to which an officer or agency of the State has constitutional or statutory powers of control.” 25 M.R.S. §2923-B, as recently modified by the Act, requires notice to the ESCB by a PSAP prior to discontinuing service. The impact of this change is too recent to evaluate impacts on local government PSAP management and DPS’ statutory role as Maine’s default PSAP.

The ESCB has rulemaking authority directly impacting PSAP and dispatch center operations in addition to authority to allocate funds from the 9-1-1 surcharge: hence it has sufficient powers to meet Title 30-A M.R.S. § 2205 and review ILAs.

2.2. Recommendations:

1. That the ESCB initiate efforts to collect accurate information from local governments regarding 9-1-1 costs and funding, as well as how such funds are generated. Having such will facilitate a better illustration of the total cost of 9-1-1 in Maine. In turn, that information will aid in determining whether eligible expense categories should be modified, whether the 9-1-1 fee should be modified, and reasons for other modifications, if any.

2.3 Effectiveness of DPS as Default PSAP

Analyze the effectiveness of making the Maine Department of Public Safety (DPS) the default entity responsible for providing E-9-1-1 services when there is a change in a PSAP’s service area;

The effectiveness of DPS’ designation as Maine’s default PSAP or PSAP of last resort is understood to balance the authority of the State and local governments, and particularly in alignment with Maine’s Constitutional provisions for home rule. Recent events have demonstrated that DPS cannot expand its capacity or operations with immediacy. Staffing is discussed in section 2.4 and affects DPS PSAPs as well.

Local governments may choose to contract with DPS or another PSAP for services. By statute, DPS has authority to provide call taking and dispatch services.¹² These statute(s) do not clearly define call taking or dispatch and must rely upon the definitions in [25 M.R.S. § 2921](#). The scope, or definition, of “provide or provision” is not clear from the current statutes. However, pragmatic details likely control the nature of such inquiries among local governments and when inquiries are made to DPS.

The preamble of the Act implies certain concerns and perhaps legislative conclusions regarding 9-1-1 system governance. The preamble of [P.L. 2007 ch. 622](#) identifies DPS, as the default PSAP operator. This is also provided in [25 M.R.S. § 2923-A](#). Exigencies noted in the Act infer a need to have greater insight into how PSAP services are provided across the State including

¹² 25 M.R.S. §§1531-1534.

DPS' functions as the default PSAP. DPS operates three (3) PSAPs. Comparisons among PSAPs are illustrated in Section 2.4, Figures 2, 3, and 5 below.

The graphs do not demonstrate significant differences between DPS PSAPs and other PSAPs. DPS' capacity to provide PSAP services and the associated costs of such for additional PSAPs or local governments is unknown. This aspect of Maine's 9-1-1 system may be better evaluated through a detailed cost study to address concerns in the Act.

In 2022 PSAP annual call volumes ranged from 6,655 to 69,578: that is .75 to 8 calls per hour. Given normative staffing metrics (e.g., sufficient staff to answer multiple calls and answering calls within ten (10) seconds), it appears likely that these pragmatic details heavily influence state oversight of PSAPs and DPS serving as the default PSAP.

DPS PSAPs are experiencing the same staffing challenges as described in other sections of this report and it is affecting operations in similar ways. DPS also recruits from the same labor pools as other local PSAPs. There needs to be further consideration done to evaluate the viability of DPS Maine's default PSAP or PSAP of last resort and what DPS would need to effectively serve in this capacity.

2.3. Recommendations:

1. Recommend review of statutes relating to 9-1-1 services and initiating technical changes or corrections to ensure accuracy of intent, and that no conflicts exist between the ESCB's former location in the DPS and its location in the Public Utilities Commission.
2. DPS' capacity to provide PSAP services and the associated costs of such for additional PSAPs or local governments is unknown and needs more in-depth analysis.
 - This aspect of Maine's 9-1-1 system may be better evaluated through a detailed cost study.
3. Further consideration of the viability of DPS serving as the default PSAP and what is needed for them to effectively fill this role.

2.4. PSAP Staffing and Retention Challenges

The challenges faced by PSAPs with hiring and retaining employees and what methods could be employed to assist PSAPs with staffing obstacles.

9-1-1 systems nationwide face many challenges in recruitment and retention, which impact their ability to provide a consistent level of service during all operational periods. The State of Maine has an advanced system and unique nuances, such as population distribution, seasonal transient population spikes, and a limited labor pool, which have created more pronounced symptoms.

The core challenges identified within Maine that will be addressed in this section are:

1. **Rising Emergency Call Volumes with Unchanging Staff Levels** - escalating call volume combined with stagnant or reduced staffing numbers.

2. **Wage and Benefits Competition Undermines Staff Retention** – Increasing local wage and benefits competition on employee turnover and retention.
3. **Challenges in Recruiting Amid Limited Local Talent Pools** - Difficulties in recruiting for public safety roles due to a limited local talent pool.
4. **Training and Professional Development: A Key Priority** - A fundamental requirement for enhancing service quality and employee satisfaction.
5. **Mental Health Concerns Escalate in the 9-1-1 Community** - Increasing stress levels and declining mental health among the 9-1-1 community.

To better understand the challenges at the grassroots level, a multifaceted information-gathering effort was undertaken, including a PSAP management survey, an anonymous telecommunicator survey, in-person and virtual interviews, and legislative research. The dashboard below represents the overall results of our efforts.

Telecommunicator Survey

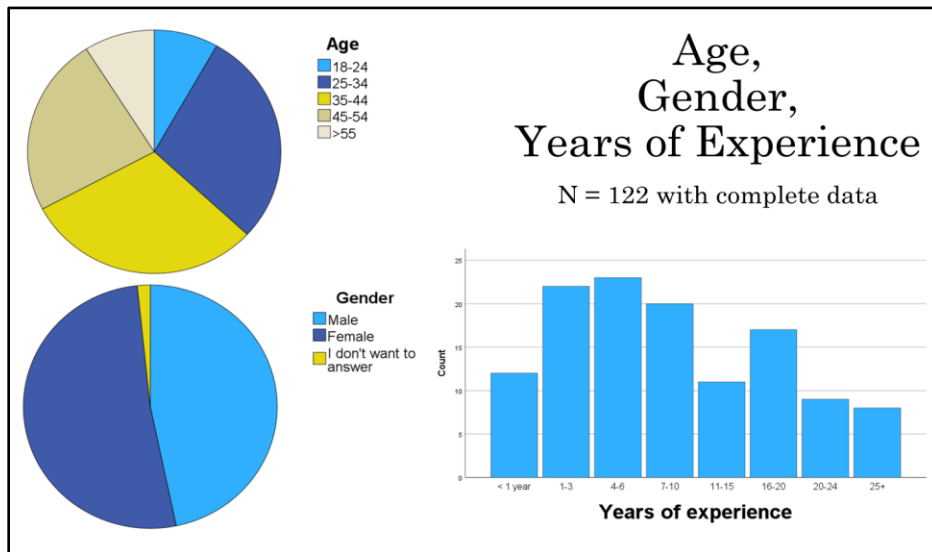


Figure 1 - Telecommunicator Survey Demographics

A total of 122 telecommunicators completed the survey. All respondents were active telecommunicators at a PSAP in Maine, and 96.7% of respondents were working full-time as telecommunicators. A total of 27.9% of respondents are currently in the role of supervisor or manager, while 53.3% are performing in the role of a trainer. Those trained as a Certified Training Officer (CTO)/trainer were assigned a mean of two trainees and supported an average of three additional trainees in the past year.

The sample was distributed normally across ages, with 8.2% between the ages of 18 and 24, 28.7% between the ages of 25 and 34, 30.3% between the ages of 35 and 44, 23.8% between the ages of 45 and 54, and 9.0% over the age of 55. A total of 27.9% had three years of experience or less, 35.3% had 4-10 years of experience, 22.9% had 11-20 years of experience, and 14.0% had more than 20 years of experience.

Rising Call Volumes with Unchanging Staffing Levels

PSAP call volumes and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) incident counts are good metrics to measure the workload of a PSAP. Answering a 9-1-1 call can generate one or more CAD incidents. A CAD system is an essential technology tool used by 9-1-1 and public safety agencies. Telecommunicators use CAD systems to prioritize and record incidents, identify the status and location of responders in the field, and dispatch responders efficiently. It facilitates a dynamic interaction between field units and telecommunicators as an incident is logged and additional information is entered.

CAD systems are the common tool used for managing a response to 9-1-1 calls, but their utility extends far beyond this, including a diverse range of incident initiation points, highlighting the system's flexibility and comprehensiveness in addressing public safety needs. CAD incidents can originate from various sources, not just 9-1-1 calls. These include complaints received over business lines, walk-in complaints, teletypes from the secure National Crime Information Center

(NCIC) network, requests from field units (either in person or over the radio), or at the direction of a supervisor.

PSAP call volumes can vary greatly depending on the size and population of the jurisdiction served, as well as the time of day, day of the week, and season of the year, which is seen wildly in Maine, with transient populations peaking during specific periods. **Generally, urban areas tend to have higher call volumes than rural areas, but during peak season, visitors spread across Maine, and in May-August of 2021, accounted for a population increase to 10.1 million.**

Total call volumes by PSAP are displayed in the chart below. Notably, Maine saw an increase of 13.5% in 9-1-1 calls between 2020 and 2023, going from 568.6k to 645.5k. Telecommunicators also answer non-emergency calls that account for an additional 2.2M calls annually.

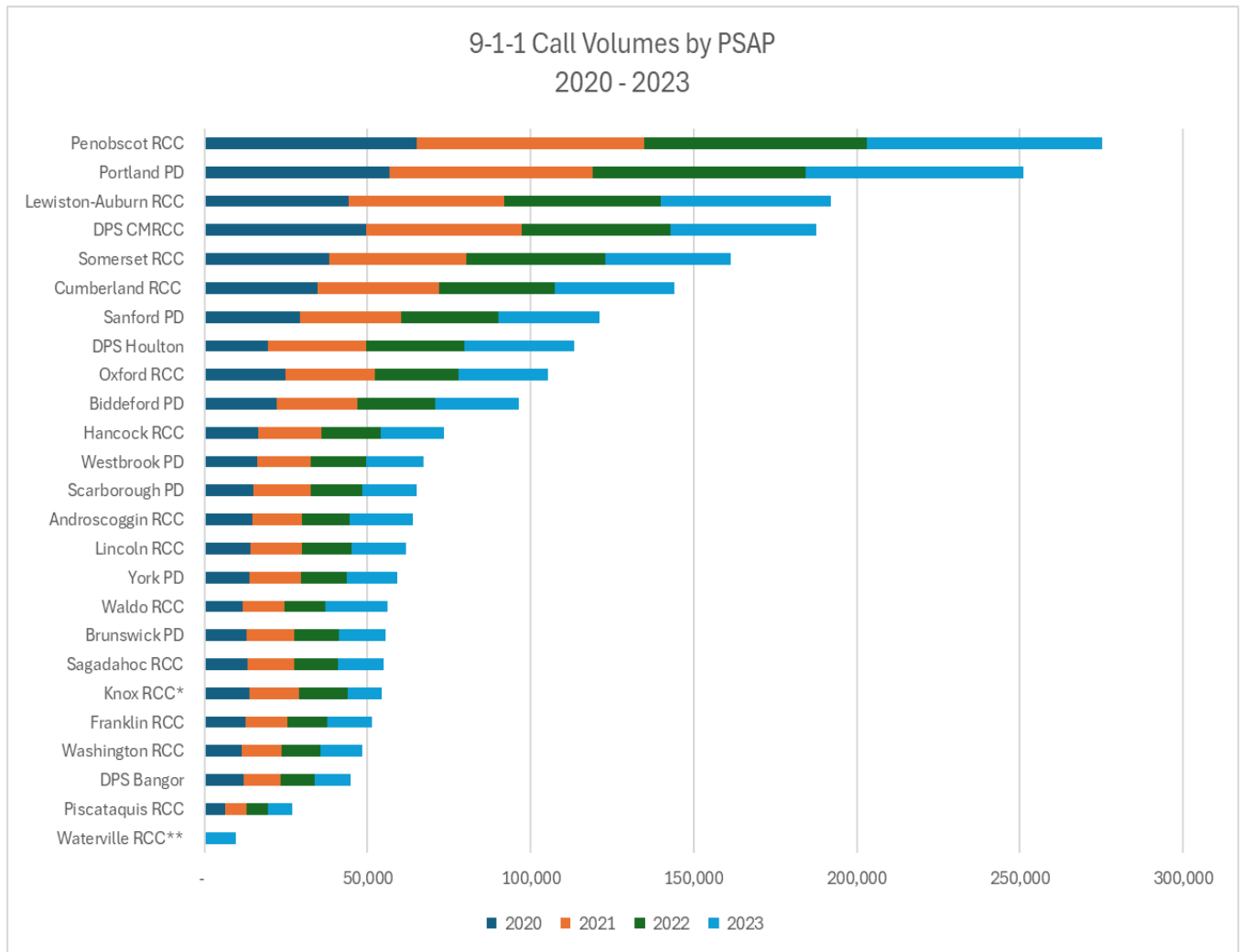


Figure 2 - 9-1-1 Call Volumes by PSAP 2020 - 2023

* stopped taking calls 8/14/23

** Started taking calls 7/11/23

In reviewing Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) incidents over the past three years, there was significant variability across PSAPs. This may be explained by the lack of standardization in creating CAD incidents between PSAP. However, the average number of CAD incidents entered ranged between 54,365 in 2020 and 56,207 in 2022.

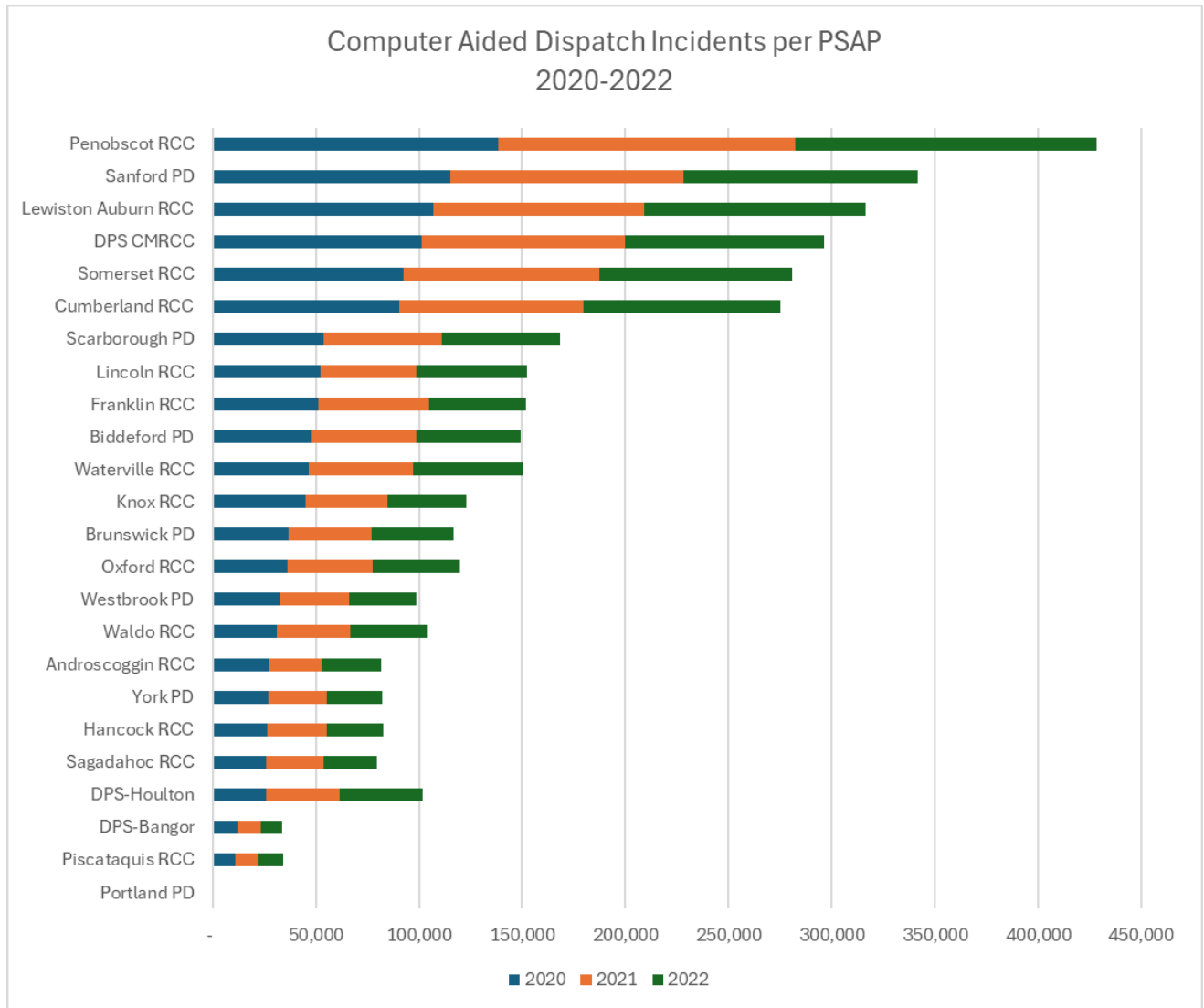


Figure 3 - CAD Incidents by PSAP 2020 - 2022

Both PSAP call volumes and CAD incident counts can be used to track trends in workload over time and to identify busy periods. This information can be used to staff PSAPs appropriately and to ensure that there are enough resources available to meet the needs of the community.

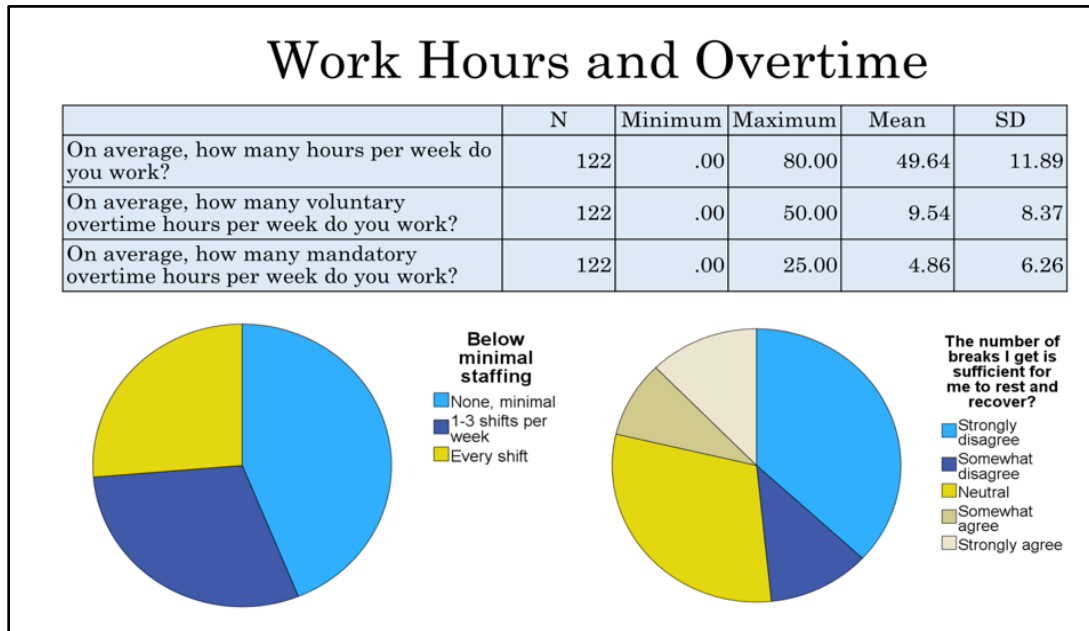


Figure 4 - PSAP Work Hours and Overtime Statistics

Overall, respondents reported working an average of 49.64 hours per week. Overtime was commonly reported, with an average of 9.54 hours per week of voluntary overtime and 4.86 hours per week of mandatory overtime. While 61.5% of respondents reported that their PSAP has a mandatory overtime policy in place to prevent being below minimum staffing requirements, 29.8% of respondents reported that their PSAP is below minimum requirements 1-3 shifts per week and 26.3% reported that their PSAP is below minimum requirements for every shift. Respondents reported an average of 1.09 breaks per shift and the average respondent reported that they somewhat to strongly disagree that the number of breaks that they get is sufficient to help them rest and recover.

On average, PSAPs reported \$1,068,791 in personnel costs this fiscal year, representing a significant increase from \$892,132 in the last fiscal year. The average overtime costs for this fiscal year were reported to be \$127,419, which represents a decrease from \$216,569 for the last fiscal year. Benefits were estimated to cost the PSAP an average of \$587,322 in the current fiscal year and an average of \$455,776 in the last fiscal year. However, it is important to note that the monetary values provided in this section should be interpreted with some caution. Between four and eight PSAPs did not provide information related to expenditures for salary, overtime, and/or benefits. As such, these numbers could be an over- or under-estimation of true costs.

Telecommunicators in the sample were reported to work a significant amount of overtime. On average, telecommunicators were reported to work 12 hours bi-weekly of voluntary overtime and 15 hours of mandatory overtime. While 43% of PSAPs have a mandatory overtime policy in place, the majority (57%) reported the absence of such a policy.

Wage and Benefits Competition Undermines Staff Retention

The extent of understaffing varied across PSAPs. A total of six PSAPs (27%) have staffing vacancy rates of 0%. The average vacancy rate was 30% for those PSAPs who have vacant seats. The average turnover percentage was 7%. However, this number varied considerably, with some PSAPs reporting no turnover (18%) and some PSAPs reporting up to 44% in the past year.

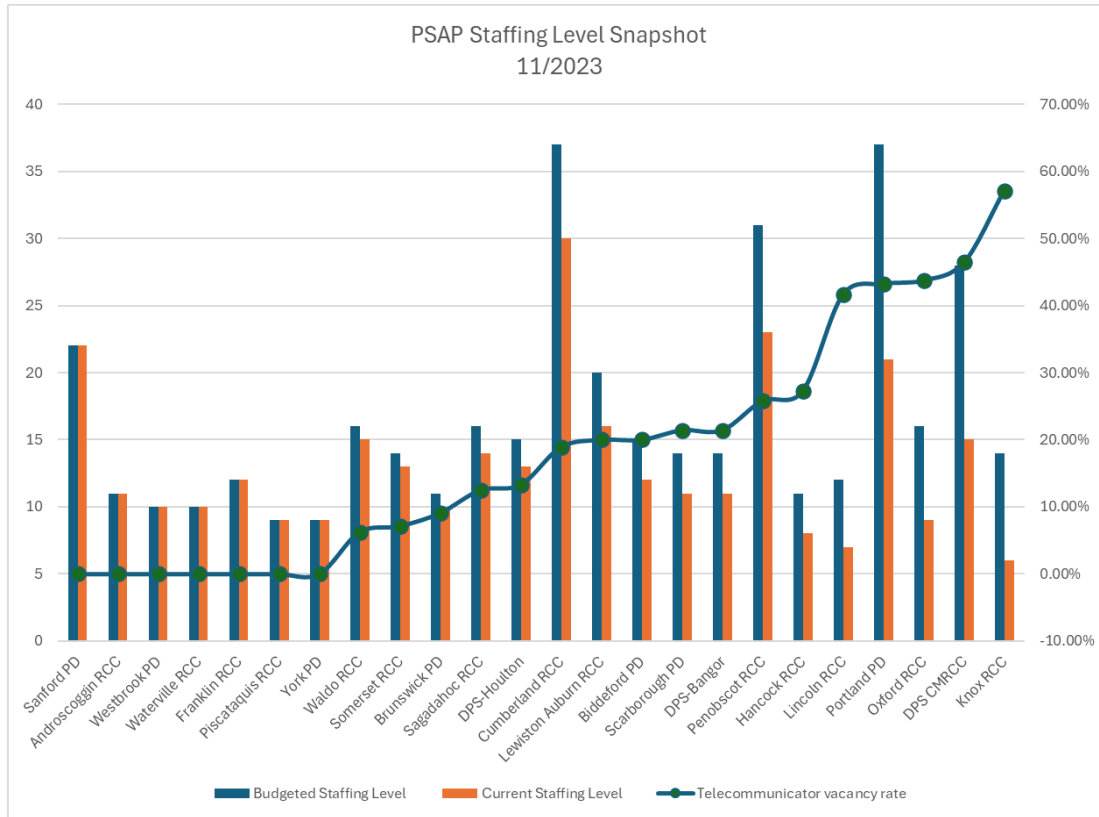


Figure 5 - Staffing Vacancy Rates by PSAP

The PSAP Survey examined the perceived reasons behind employee departures from the PSAPs. The most cited reasons were stress and mental health (58%), financial reasons (46%), commute (25%), retirement/early retirement (21%), cost of living (17%), management (17%), relocation (17%), and disability or medical diagnosis (8%).

Notably, 46% of PSAPs indicated other reasons for employee turnover. Ten respondents provided additional information, with 5 of the 10 indicating that scheduling is the primary reason for turnover (i.e, shift work schedules, missing holidays, or important events with family). Two PSAPs indicated that the amount of work hours and mandatory overtime has led to employees leaving. Further, each of the following was provided by one PSAP: inability of employees to multitask, toxic atmosphere, and new career path.

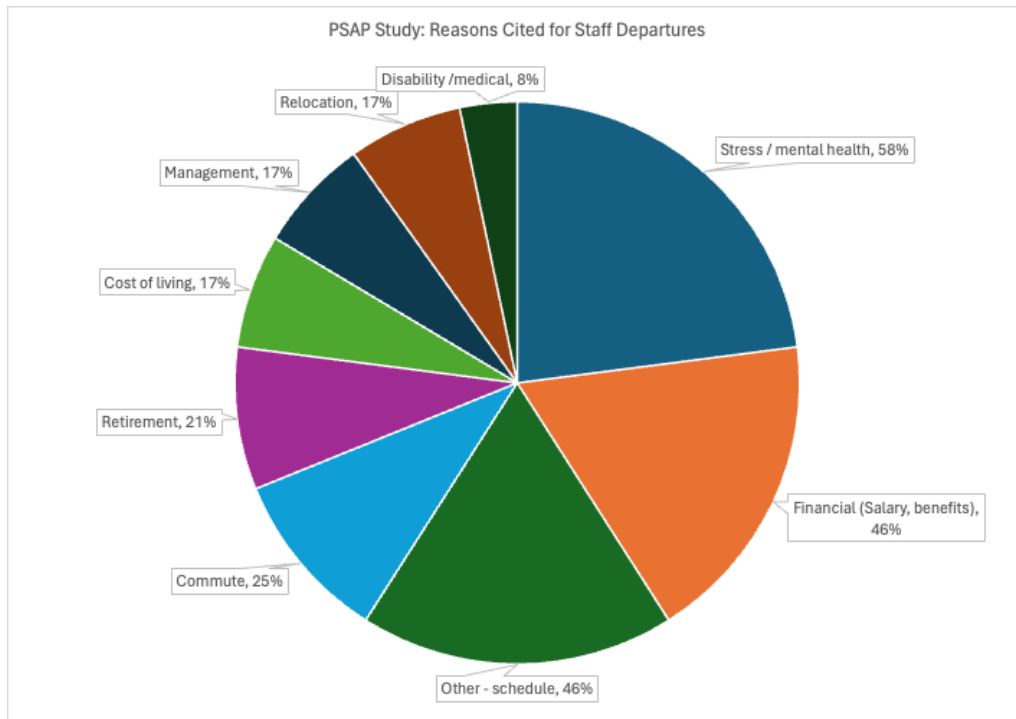


Figure 6 - Reasons for Leaving - PSAP Survey

Relatedly, 32% reported upcoming changes or innovations that they plan to implement to attract and retain staff, including a new union contract, cleaned up and reorganized physical space, new technological advancements, a new recruitment video, a civilian dispatch supervisor, increases in wages, mileage pay, and year-to-year matching.

PSAPs have widely reported losing staff to nearby centers as they have shifted salaries, benefits, and other incentives to attract trained and qualified personnel. In turn, to combat these initiatives, PSAPs have instituted retention efforts such as temporary stipends and salary increases, retention bonuses, and other measures to keep staff. **One agency reported that they implemented a temporary stipend of the employee base rate plus 30%, and another agency reported paying the base rate plus \$9.00 to keep staff.**

When evaluating the measures individually, they seem to be proactive and positive attempts to either recruit or retain trained and qualified staff, but systemically, it is creating a “salary war” among neighboring jurisdictions that could result in worsening instability. **Based on the reported data, PSAPs benefits costs have increased by 32.5% from the last fiscal year** (Note: 10 PSAPs did not report benefits data).

In the Telecommunicator Survey, when asked why co-workers are leaving the PSAP for other opportunities, the most highly cited reason was stress or mental health (89.3%), followed by financial reasons (55.7%), management concerns (50.0%), cost of living (26.2%), and commuting (14.8%).

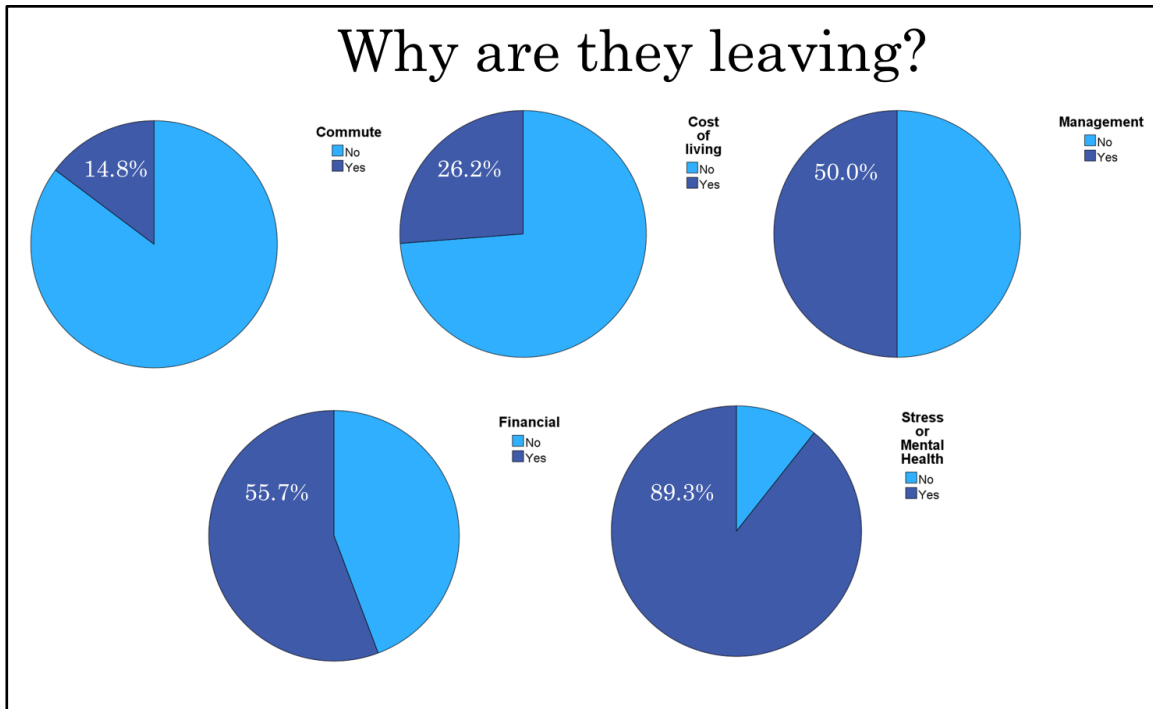


Figure 7 - Reasons for Leaving - Telecommunicator Survey

Overall, a small percentage of PSAPs have retention programs in place to retain employees (24.6%). Yet, 47.5% of respondents reported that they somewhat or strongly believe retention programs would enhance satisfaction and retention in their PSAP. Notably, employees who reported that they believe in the potential for positive impact from retention programs were the same employees who rated salary and benefits as the leading challenge faced by their PSAP. Very few respondents shared details regarding what retention programs were in place.

However, multiple respondents whose PSAP does not have a retention program expressed frustration that their PSAP has altered starting wages for incoming employees and implemented signing bonuses for new hires while doing little to nothing to keep their current employees. While there was no difference in mental health (or other outcomes) based on whether the respondent’s PSAP offered retention incentives, it is likely that numerous intervening factors diminish the direct impact of retention incentives on outcomes. For instance, it is possible that financial incentives for retention would have a larger impact on respondents who are currently working in PSAPs with lower salary.

Additionally, it is worth highlighting that nearly 81% of respondents reported that their PSAP has not implemented any measures to enhance work-life balance and nearly 58% reported that their leadership is not open to new approaches or innovations that may address staffing dynamics.

Tenure Distribution

The tenure distribution in Maine represents a diverse range of experience levels among the staff. The workforce is heavily skewed to new employees, with 45% having less than 3 years of experience. An additional 24% of the workforce was reported to have 4-10 years of experience, followed by 19% with 11-20 years of experience, suggesting a strong presence of moderately

experienced telecommunicators, which can represent a relatively stable workforce, with employees who have surpassed the initial learning curve and are likely contributing effectively to their roles.

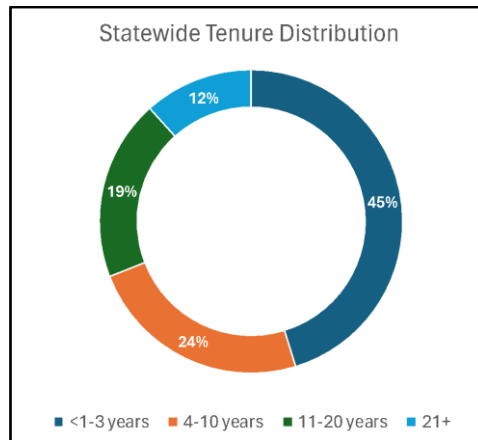


Figure 8 - Statewide PSAP Staff Tenure Distribution

On the other end of the spectrum, 21+ years is the smallest group, representing the most veteran employees. These employees are likely approaching retirement. Their impending departure could create gaps in knowledge and leadership, highlighting the need for effective succession planning.

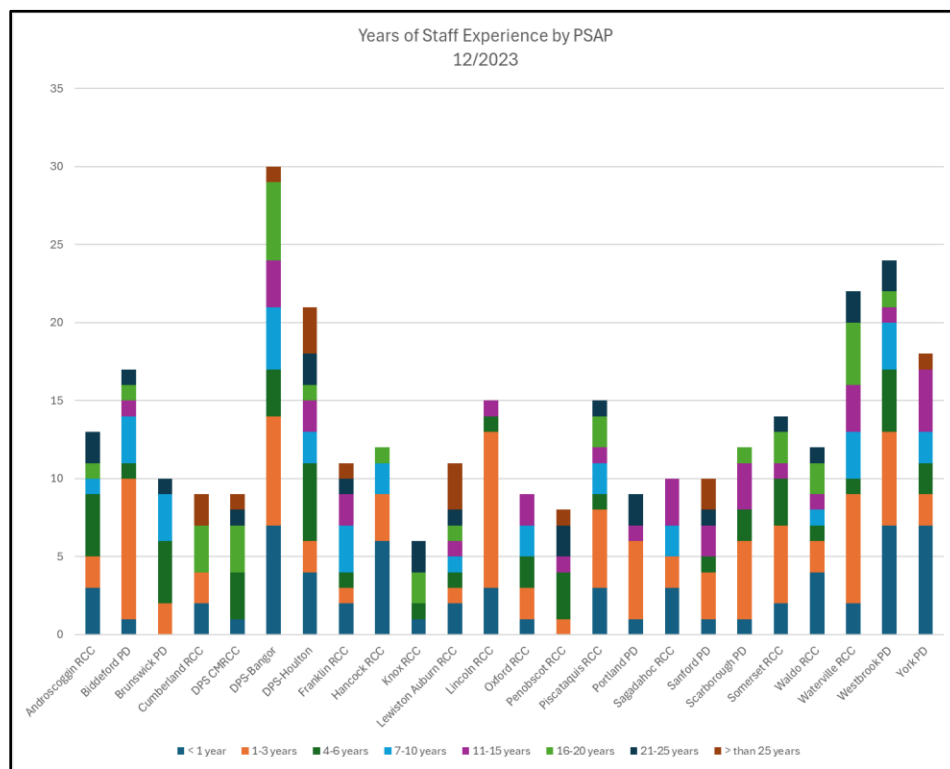


Figure 9 - Staff Tenure by PSAP

Challenges in Recruiting Amid Limited Local Talent Pools

On average, PSAPs reported hiring 2.6 trainees per year. The time to complete the hiring process varied substantially across PSAPs, ranging from 3 to 18 weeks in length, and averaging 7 weeks. Once applications are reviewed, PSAPs reported having between 3-7 stages in the hiring process, with the average having 5 stages.

PSAPs reported that an average of 53% of applicants are determined to be eligible (ranging from 8% to 100%). **However, only 28% pass the background check, with rates ranging between 5% and 67%.** Several PSAPs are considering streamlining their process as they also report losing candidates because of the processing time.

The entry-level base salary rate ranges between \$18-\$25.50 per hour, and with the temporary stipends, some PSAPs have increased the range to \$27-\$35. *When discussing why recruitment campaigns have been unsuccessful, one agency said, “We can’t get the funding to support the need to increase salaries and benefits. They can go to Subway and be a Sandwich Artist making \$25/hour. Why would they want to work here for less pay, more stress, and workdays, nights, weekends, and holidays?”*

Respondents were also asked to share what recruitment strategies they have implemented in the PSAP to attract new telecommunicators. Six PSAPs either entered no text, wrote “N/A,” or indicated that their PSAP has “not really done anything.” For the remaining 16 PSAPs, respondents shared that the following strategies have been perceived as successful in attracting new hires: offers of lateral transfers for wage consideration, increased pay and recruitment bonuses, leveraging current employees to recruit/refer potential trainees, word of mouth, social media, use of the website Indeed, revising the hiring process to have quick and consistent responses to applicants, and more proactive engagement of the 9-1-1 Public Education Team with the community. Of these strategies, referrals from current employees, social media, and recruitment bonuses were the most frequently cited.

Mental Health Concerns Escalate in the 9-1-1 Community

Results of the survey show that mental health among respondents is elevated when compared to the general population. Certain demographics were linked with risk for adverse mental health; specifically, respondents with 7-15 years of experience reported the highest levels of depression, anxiety, and stress when compared to those with fewer years of experience and those with more years of experience. This variable likely overlaps with age, which was also shown to predict adverse mental health in that respondents who reported being 25-34 years old reported greater depression and anxiety than those who were younger or older in age. Trainers may be carrying a high level of psychological burden, as they reported significantly higher levels of depression and stress than those who are not trainers.



Figure 10 - DAS Survey Results - Telecommunicator Survey

Consistent with first responders across the country, respondents reported symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress that surpass rates seen in the general population. Though 45.9% of respondents were in the normal range for depressive symptoms, 35.3% were in the mild to moderate range, and 18.9% were in the severe to very severe range. For anxiety symptoms, 59.0% of respondents were in the normal range, but 25.5% were in the mild to moderate range, and 15.6% were in the severe to very severe range. Stress symptoms were in the normal range for 52.5% of the sample but was in the mild to moderate range for 31.1% of respondents and in the severe to very severe range for 16.4% of the sample.

While a healthy percentage of telecommunicators participated, the sample size can be considered modest when attempting to make statistical comparisons. This may be especially true when there is high variability among participant responses or a lot of “noise.” That is, when the source of employee stress differs significantly across participants and PSAPs, it can be hard to identify statistical patterns when sample sizes are relatively small.

Second, it is possible that several variables that directly contribute to employee mental health in this sample were not assessed in the current survey. Employees were asked to rank order the largest challenges that their PSAP is currently facing. Salary was cited as the largest challenge among respondents, followed by other factors not listed, management, benefits, culture, location, and interpersonal conflict. Respondents were able to provide open-ended comments regarding their selection of “other.” Investigation into the open-ended responses (39 in total) revealed that most of the open-ended comments were related to staffing, noting that employees are working long hours, and the shift work schedule prevents work-life balance. Five respondents reported that the 24/7 shift schedule has made it hard to maintain work-life balance and retain trainees.

Further, several respondents reported that their PSAP has outdated equipment, which impacts the quality of the work environment.

Related to the above points, visual inspection of the data suggests that employee concerns tend to fall into one of two groups. The first group was larger in size and reported that salary, benefits, and location were the top challenges that their PSAP is facing. The second, smaller group reported that culture, interpersonal tension, and management were the top challenges that their PSAP is facing.

Outside Stressors:

The data showed that many respondents are facing stressors outside of the work environment. For instance, 9.8% provide care for elderly parents, 21.3% experience stress related to childcare,

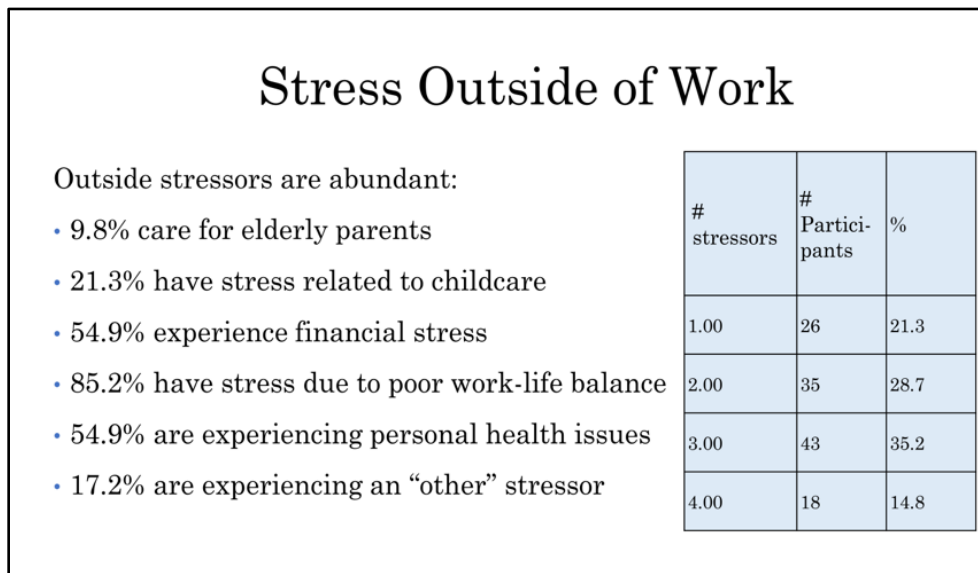


Figure 11 - Additional Stressors - Telecommunicator Survey

54.9% experience financial stress, 85.2% report stress due to poor work-life balance, 54.9% are experiencing a personal health issue, and 17.2% report an “other” form of stressor. While only 21.3% of the sample reported exposure to just one outside stressor, 28.7% reported exposure to two stressors, and the remainder (50.0%) reported exposure to three or more stressors outside of the work environment.

Protecting Mental Health and Enhancing Job Satisfaction:

According to the PSAP survey results every PSAP in the current survey reported having an employee assistance program (EAP) available to employees, with 68% indicating that employees have access to an EAP that is specific to public safety. Further, 68% of PSAPs indicated that they have strategies in place to recognize fatigue and burnout among telecommunicators and 86% of PSAPs regularly hold debriefing sessions or have other mechanisms in place to support employees following critical incidents. Four PSAPs specifically indicated the use of peer support in these circumstances.

Regarding stress management, resilience, and wellness training, 41% of PSAPs require their supervisors to complete ongoing training specific to this topic. A total of 41% of PSAPs require

continuing education related to mental health and wellness among all employees, with an additional 2 PSAPs reporting that they highly encourage additional training in this area but do not require it.

Training and Professional Development: A Key Priority

Initial training for a telecommunicator is lengthy, often starting with an average of 79 hours of in-house classroom training (ranging between 0 and 250) and occurs in 64% of PSAPs. Trainees spend an average of 187 hours in call-taking protocol/dispatch training (ranging from 0 to 480) in 77% of PSAPs, as well as an average of 520 hours completing on-the-job training with another telecommunicator (ranging from 100 to 960) in 100% of the PSAPs.

It should be noted that 9-1-1 call takers must complete a tuition-free, three-week in-person call-taker/dispatcher training academy hosted by the ESCB. The coursework includes the Emergency Telecommunicator Course, Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Protocols, Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD) Protocols and NG9-1-1 Equipment and Policy Certification. How much of this training is reported in the above data is unknown. Beyond the classroom there is significant on-the-job training that happens at the PSAP.

Respondents indicated that 72% of hired trainees complete initial training (ranging from 25% to 100%). When trainees are lost in the process, 73% of PSAPs reported that it is most likely to occur during on-the-job training with another telecommunicator, and 14% reported that it is most likely to occur shortly after the telecommunicator is released to work independently.

The training process is costly, starting with an average of \$1,100 to onboard new employees prior to training. PSAPs reported an average cost of \$28,744 to get a trainee through the entire training process. However, it is important to note that 5 PSAPs did not provide an estimate regarding total training costs.

PSAPs varied in the required number of hours for continuing education (0 to 72 hours) but fell at an average of 16 hours. The most offered continuing education was in health and wellness (offered by 91% of PSAPs), followed by stress management (77%), call-taking protocol (68%), PSAP technology (50%), or Other (27%; APCO, NENA, scenario-based training, vendor courses). The most reported format was in-person and online courses, which is offered by 100% of PSAPs, followed by on-the-job format (77%), remote online format (64%), in-person classroom format (59%), and webinars (59%). To maintain EMD and EFD certification, 36 hours of continuing education is needed.

For those interested in being a supervisor, the most reported training offered by the PSAP was CTO training (32.0%). Beyond CTO training, any other type of training or continuing education for those interested in supervisory roles was endorsed by less than 15% of the sample. Most notably, soft skills regarding managing people and communication were made available in less than 14% of PSAPs.

Opportunities for continuing education for those interested in a supervisory role were even more limited regarding stress management (11.5%) and health and wellness (10.7%). The picture was quite similar for senior managers. Specifically, no single continuing education opportunity for senior managers within the PSAP was reported at over 14%. Further, while 32% of respondents reported having the opportunity to attend a state-level conference through their PSAP, less than

16% reported opportunities of other professional development (i.e., attendance at a national-level conference, specialized certifications, or “other” professional development opportunity).

Employees who are interested in supervisory roles have opportunities for training and continuing education. Regarding training, 86% of PSAPs reported on-the-job training opportunities for those interested in being a supervisor, with 59% providing opportunities for training in management of employees, 50% providing opportunities for training in effective communication, 23% providing training opportunities in human resources, and 18% providing training opportunities in advanced technical skills. The average supervisor completes 15 hours of continuing education each year, though this number ranged from 0 to 84 hours. Notably, 10 PSAPs reported an average of zero hours of continuing education for supervisors.

For those interested in the role of senior manager, 68% of PSAPs reported opportunities for training in management of people, 55% in effective communication, 45% in human resources, and 45% in advanced technical skills.

2.4. Recommendations:

1. Create a PSAP Staffing Crisis Stakeholder Group

Results of the PSAP survey reveal that the majority of PSAPs are making active attempts to address challenges posed by staffing, turnover, training, and poor work-life balance among employees.

Despite these efforts, only 6 of the 22 PSAPs (27%) are fully staffed, 8 PSAPs (36%) have vacancy rates ranging from 6% to 30%, and 8 PSAPs (36%) have vacancy rates ranging from 42% to 57%. PSAPs need support to continue addressing this issue, which is critical to the public safety of the state of Maine.

Results of the survey reveal a workforce that is struggling across multiple domains. Like other 9-1-1 samples, respondents in this survey reported elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and stress when compared to the general population, as well as poor work-life balance. **Respondents reported working an average of nearly 50 hours per week with 40% of respondents working an average of 55 hours per week or more.**

Respondents are putting in these hours despite challenges associated with low salary, inadequate benefits, poor management, negative PSAP culture, and interpersonal tension in the workplace. Respondents are putting in these hours because of rampant under-staffing, as 26.3% reported that their PSAP is below minimum staffing requirements for every shift and an additional 29.8% of respondents reported that their PSAP is below minimum staffing requirements at least 1-3 shifts per week.

Employees cannot sustain such conditions, and many are choosing to leave or fail to make it through initial training. For those who stay, there are limited opportunities for training, continuing education, professional development, financial incentives, and recognition. Current efforts to address mental health (i.e., EAPs, vetted lists of mental health providers) are not having the desired impact, likely because employees struggle to find the time and resources to access them due to competing demands. A stakeholder group to address the PSAP staffing crisis would be helpful in developing coordinated 9-1-1 staffing and recruiting effort across the state on behalf of all PSAPs.

2. With additional ESCB resources, continue and expand training programs and continuing education opportunities for telecommunicators, supervisors and managers.

Factors such as staffing, and budget may directly contribute to the relatively sparse opportunities for training, continuing education, and professional development. However, it is critical that greater funding be considered and allocated to the adequate training of 9-1-1 telecommunicators, starting with trainees through senior managers beyond what is currently provided by the ESCB.

Given that management was the third leading challenge currently facing PSAPs, it is critical that supervisors and senior managers are provided opportunities to learn how to train, manage people, and communicate effectively. Notably, those who are currently serving in the role of trainer reported worse mental health and higher stress than those who are not serving in the role.

Development of training and leadership skills is vital to ensure the effectiveness of PSAP operations and bolster a positive culture within the agency. Telecommunicators in Maine need more training opportunities to enhance and build skills that will directly benefit the PSAP and workforce. The ESCB hosts the week-long National Emergency Number Association Center Manager Course every five years; one is planned for September 2024. Most recently offered the three-day PSAP Supervisor Course. One challenge the ESCB has found is the inability for PSAP staff to commit to multi-day training due to the staffing constraints faced by their centers.

Perhaps most concerning from a workforce perspective, there are indications that respondents feel there is limited hope for change in the future, as most respondents indicated that their PSAP does not seem open to change. There may be many reasons why PSAPs are resistant to change, among them, lack of time to engage in strategic planning amidst rampant under-staffing and forced overtime. Culture change is challenging and takes ongoing commitment and resources. It is difficult for employees to commit to culture change when basic needs are not being met and leadership teams are not adequately trained and prepared. This may be especially true for trainers and supervisors, who play a critical role in the health and operations of the PSAP. Amidst high levels of stress and uncertainty, organizations open the door for problematic workplace behaviors that may manifest in interpersonal tension and negative workplace culture. The data suggest that change needs to occur soon to ensure the future of this vital workforce. **Without significant change, those leaving the industry in Maine will not be replaced by a mentored and effective incoming workforce.**

3. Support telecommunicator reclassification at the state and federal levels.

Reclassification of telecommunicators as professionals and first responders would give 9-1-1 professionals the respect they deserve, as well as greater equity in benefits such as mental health support and the ability to apply for government grants (see Appendix C for more information).

- Reclassification also would also aid research into the mental and physical impacts of 9-1-1 jobs.
- To its credit, Maine has taken some steps towards this effort through special retirement plan benefits and recognition of mental stress within the workers compensation system.¹³

¹³Special retirement benefits - [5 M.R.S. § 18453](#) and Entitlement to compensation and services generally - [39-A M.R.S. § 201](#).

Other ways to provide equity in wages and benefits with others in the first responder community should be considered.

4. Consider a statewide 9-1-1 call Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Program Reducing Burdens, Enhancing Quality

The ESCB can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of 9-1-1 operations in Maine by implementing a **statewide Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) program for Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) and Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD) calls**. This program would alleviate the burden of internal QA/QC on PSAP staff, freeing up valuable time and attention for their primary responsibility: answering and dispatching emergency calls.

The Current Challenge: Time-Consuming, In-House QA/QC

Currently, PSAP staff, primarily supervisors, are tasked with conducting QA/QC of EMD and EFD related calls within their respective agencies. On average, each PSAPs review about 160 calls per month. While this dedication to quality assurance is commendable, it comes at a significant cost:

- **Time-intensive process:** Analyzing each call thoroughly takes away from supervisors' time that could be spent on other critical tasks like training, mentoring, and operational oversight.
- **Staffing constraints:** Short-staffed PSAPs struggle to find the time and resources necessary for thorough QA/QC, potentially impacting the effectiveness of the process.
- **Inconsistencies:** Internal reviews may vary in approach and rigor, leading to potential discrepancies in quality assessment across different PSAPs.

The Solution: A Statewide QA/QC Program

By establishing a statewide EMD and EFD call QA/QC program, the ESCB can address these challenges and reap numerous benefits:

- **Increased efficiency:** Third-party reviewers can handle QA/QC tasks, freeing up PSAP staff to focus on answering and dispatching calls.
- **Improved consistency:** Standardized procedures and qualified reviewers ensure consistent and objective assessment across all PSAPs.
- **Enhanced quality:** Dedicated expertise and resources can lead to a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of EMD calls, identifying areas for improvement and promoting best practices.
- **Reduced stress and burnout:** Alleviating the burden of QA/QC can improve staff morale and reduce stress levels, leading to a more positive work environment.

Implementation:

- **Procure third-party QA/QC services:** Contract with a qualified vendor specializing in EMD and EFD call review to handle the entire QA/QC process. Each PSAP would still

provide coaching to staff relative to review findings, but the vast majority of the workload would be removed.

Conclusion

Implementing a statewide EMD/EFD call QA/QC program is a strategic investment in the future of Maine's 9-1-1 system. By alleviating the burden on PSAP staff and ensuring consistent, high-quality call review, this program can lead to improved efficiency, enhanced quality of service, and a more positive work environment for emergency responders.

Section 3: Conclusion and Strategic Path Forward

The stability and efficiency of Maine's emergency response system are under significant strain due to critical staffing shortages within PSAPs. These shortages threaten the operational stability of the state's 9-1-1 system and present uneven impacts across various regions, leading to increased concern and instability. The root causes of these shortages are multifaceted, encompassing low compensation, high job stress, insufficient time for training and career development opportunities, and a lack of adequate financial support for operational costs. The report underscores the urgency of this crisis, noting that:

- **Critical Staffing Shortages:** Several PSAPs are operating with dangerously low staffing levels, directly impacting their ability to respond effectively to emergencies.
- **Uneven Impacts:** Disparities in staffing levels across the state exacerbate regional vulnerabilities, potentially compromising the uniformity and reliability of emergency services.
- **Uncoordinated Efforts:** The absence of a statewide strategy to address these shortages has resulted in piecemeal solutions that often pit PSAPs against each other for limited resources.

Digging Deeper: Root Causes and Implications

The staffing crisis is deep-rooted and influenced by a complex mix of factors, including inadequate compensation, high job stress, insufficient time for training, and lack of career advancement opportunities. These challenges deter new recruits and drive existing staff away, further exacerbating the situation. The implications are far-reaching, affecting not just the operational efficiency of PSAPs but also the health and well-being of the workforce:

- **Compensation and Benefits:** The report highlights the disparity in wages and benefits for PSAP staff, contributing to high turnover rates.
- **Work Environment and Stress:** The demanding nature of PSAP work, coupled with inadequate support, leads to burnout and job dissatisfaction.
- **Training and Professional Development:** Job demands limit opportunities for skill advancement and professional growth which hinder staff retention and morale.

Strategic Immediate Actions: Prioritizing Stability and Efficiency

To mitigate the immediate impacts of the staffing crisis, the report recommends a series of targeted actions, emphasizing the need for increased support, coordination, and resource allocation. These include:

1. **Increase ESCB Support:** Amplifying resources and funding dedicated to PSAP operations to directly tackle staffing needs.
2. **Establish a PSAP Staffing Crisis Stakeholder Committee:** Creating a group to develop and coordinate statewide staffing strategies.
3. **Expand Training and Education Opportunities:** Enhancing skill development and career advancement pathways to improve retention and job satisfaction.
4. **Implement a Statewide QA/QC Program:** Standardizing quality assurance practices to alleviate the burden on local PSAPs and ensure consistent service delivery.

Further Considerations for Long-Term Resilience

Looking beyond immediate fixes, the report outlines key areas for long-term strategic development to ensure the sustainability and efficiency of Maine's PSAP operations. These considerations include conducting a comprehensive cost study, revising statutes and definitions for clarity, and expanding grant programs to address one-time needs and promote system-wide stability.

- The appropriateness of DPS as the default PSAP or PSAP of last resort requires further investigation.
- The current governance structure, effective in stable times, may be limiting during challenges.
- Rule and legislative changes are needed if the ESCB is expected to address future challenges and ensure accountability of 9-1-1 funds at all levels.

A Unified Call to Action: Ensuring a Resilient Future

The staffing crisis confronting Maine's PSAPs requires a concerted, multi-stakeholder effort to implement the recommended actions and foster a robust, resilient emergency response system. This collaborative approach, involving the ESCB, DPS, local jurisdictions, and telecommunicators, is essential for enhancing system stability, public safety, and workforce well-being.

Conclusion

The findings and recommendations presented in this report offer a roadmap for addressing the critical staffing and operational challenges facing Maine's PSAPs. By adopting a comprehensive, coordinated strategy that balances immediate actions with long-term considerations, Maine can safeguard the effectiveness and resilience of its emergency response system, ensuring that it remains capable of meeting the state's needs both now and in the future.

Appendix A: PSAP Survey

Maine PSAP Survey

Section 1: Staffing
A. Demographics
1. PSAP name
2. What disciplines does your center dispatch? (check all that apply)
a. EMS
b. Fire
c. Police
d. Other (please specify below)
3. Is your PSAP represented by a union?
B. Metrics
4. What is your average total daily call volume for each category below? (Note: the ESCB will provide 9-1-1 call stats)
a. 10-digit
b. Admin
c. Ring down
d. Other (please specify type and number)
5. Enter the number of CAD incidents per year.
a. 2020
b. 2021
c. 2022
C. Current Staffing
6. What is the current Telecommunicator vacancy rate? (Note: this field auto calculates based on the values entered below)
a. How many Telecommunicators are you budgeted to employ?
b. How many Telecommunicators do you currently employ?

7. What is the annual turnover percentage of Telecommunicators for the past 2 years? (Note: this field auto calculates based on the values entered below)
a. Initial Staff Count as of July 1, 2021
b. Ending Staff Count as of June 30, 2022
c. Initial Staff Count as of July 1, 2022
d. Ending Staff Count as of June 30, 2023
8. Place the number of Telecommunicators you have in each of the years of experience ranges below. (if not applicable, please enter 0)
a. < 1 year
b. 1-3 years
c. 4-6 years
d. 7-10 years
e. 11-15 years
f. 16-20 years
g. 21-25 years
h. > than 25 years
9. Do you currently have a mandatory overtime policy in place? (if Yes, please provide the details below)
10. On average, how many hours of <u>voluntary</u> overtime is <u>one</u> Telecommunicator working bi-weekly?
11. On average, how many hours of <u>mandatory</u> overtime is <u>one</u> Telecommunicator working bi-monthly?
12. How much did you pay in overtime in your last fiscal year?
D. Hiring Process
13. On average, how many Telecommunicators do you hire annually?
14. Do you offer per diem / part-time positions? (if Yes, please answer the questions below)
a. How many part-time positions do you have? (Note: If you combine part-time and per diem, enter the total in this question and place a '0' in the per diem question below)
b. How many per diem positions do you have?
c. On average, how many hours do your part-time staff work per month?

15. Does your PSAP have any minimum education requirements prior to hiring (i.e., HS Diploma/GED, Bachelors, etc.)? (if Yes, please specify below)
16. Do employees with a technical/college degree receive a higher compensation for their educational level?
<p>Instructions for Question 17:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drag the items used from the left box into the right box. - Use the "Add item to list" input below the left box to add to the list as needed. - Order the list in the right box indicating the order or priority of the tests/tools used.
17. What types of hiring tests/tools are used during the application process and in what order are they done?
18. How much does it cost, specific to the hiring process, to onboard <u>one</u> new employee before training?
19. On average, how many weeks does it take one applicant to complete the hiring process?
20. On average, how many applications are received for one hiring period?
21. On average, how many eligible applicants are there from the applications for interview?
22. On average, how many of the eligible applicants pass the background check?
E. Job Rotation & Flexibility
23. What is the current shift schedule for Telecommunicators (hours/day/week)?
24. Is scheduling and rotation part of a union-negotiated process?
25. Are there policies in place to address scheduling preferences? (if Yes, please describe below)
26. Does the PSAP offer remote work options for Telecommunicators?
27. Do you offer job-sharing positions (two people share a 40-hour position that includes benefits)?
F. Staffing Costs
28. In the <u>current</u> fiscal year, what are your <u>budgeted</u> personnel salary costs (not overtime) for Telecommunicators?
29. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what were your <u>actual</u> personnel salary costs (not overtime) for Telecommunicators?
30. In the <u>current</u> fiscal year, what is your <u>budgeted</u> overtime costs for Telecommunicators?
31. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what were your <u>actual</u> overtime costs for Telecommunicators?
32. In the <u>current</u> fiscal year, what is your <u>budgeted</u> personnel benefits costs for Telecommunicators?
33. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what were your <u>actual</u> personnel benefits costs for Telecommunicators?

34. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what was the average cost of benefits for <u>one</u> Telecommunicator?
Section 2: Training
A. Initial Training
35. Other than the state-required training, what initial training programs do new Telecommunicators receive before beginning independent work? (check all that apply)
a. In-house classroom training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
b. Calltaking Protocol/Dispatch Training (i.e. EMD, EFD, EPD or other protocols)
c. On-the-Job Training (OJT) with another Telecommunicator
d. Other/Specialized training (please specify below)
36. During initial training, how many hours of each training program below does a new Telecommunicator receive? (Fill in hours for each. If not applicable, please enter 0)
a. In-house classroom training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
b. Calltaking Protocol/Dispatch Training (i.e. EMD, EFD, EPD or other protocols)
c. On-the-Job Training (OJT) with another Telecommunicator
d. Other/Specialized training (please specify hours and type)
37. Do you have or require training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your initial training?
38. What percentage of Telecommunicators successfully complete all initial training? (classroom and OJT)
39. In what part of training do you tend to lose the most Telecommunicators?
40. Are trainees assigned an exclusive OJT or rotate trainers?
41. If a trainee expressed a problem with a trainer, is there a policy/procedure in place to potentially move them to a different trainer?
42. What is the average cost to initially train <u>one</u> Telecommunicator?
B. Continuing Education
43. Beyond state required continuing education, how many hours of continuing education are Telecommunicators required to complete annually?
44. What types of continuing education are offered to Telecommunicators? (check all that apply)
a. PSAP Technology Training

b. Protocol
c. Stress Management
d. Health & wellness
e. Other (please specify below)
f. None
45. What modes of learning are utilized at your PSAP for continuing education? (check all that apply)
a. In Classroom
b. Remote online (not at work)
c. In-person online (at work)
d. Webinar
e. On-the-Job Training (OJT)
f. Other (please specify below)
g. None
46. Do you have or require training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your continuing education?
47. What opportunities for professional development do you offer Telecommunicators? (check all that apply)
a. Attend state conference(s)
b. Attend national conference(s)
c. Obtain professional certifications (i.e. ENP, RPL, etc.)
d. Other (please specify below)
e. None
48. Which, if any, of the following training programs are offered to Telecommunicators who show interest in supervisory roles? (check all that apply)
a. Human Resources training (i.e. agency/jurisdiction policies, procedures, laws)
b. How to manage people effectively
c. Methods of effective communication
d. Advanced technical training

e. On-the-Job Training (OJT)
f. Certified Training Officer (CTO) Training
g. Other (please specify below)
h. None
49. Are there cross-training opportunities available to Telecommunicators to learn additional skills/disciplines?
50. Are there specialized training tracks offered to Telecommunicators for career progression or skill enhancement? (if Yes, please specify below)
51. In the previous fiscal year, what is the average annual cost for continuing education of <u>one</u> Telecommunicator?
C. Supervisor Training
52. How many hours of continuing education are supervisory staff required to complete annually?
53. What types of continuing education are offered to supervisory staff? (check all that apply)
a. PSAP Technology
b. Protocol
c. Stress Management
d. Health & wellness
e. Other (please specify below)
f. None
54. Are supervisors provided continuing education in any of the following areas? (check all that apply)
a. Human Resources training (i.e. agency/jurisdiction policies, procedures, laws)
b. How to manage people effectively
c. Methods of communication
d. Advanced technical training (supervisory related duties)
e. CTO Training
f. On-the-Job Training (OJT)
g. Other (please specify below)
h. None

55. What modes of learning are utilized at your PSAP for continuing education? (check all that apply)
a. In Classroom
b. Remote online (not at work)
c. In-person online (at work)
d. Webinar
e. On-the-Job Training (OJT)
f. Other (please specify below)
g. None
56. Do you have or require training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your supervisory staff's ongoing training?
57. What opportunities for professional development do you offer supervisory staff? (check all that apply)
a. Attend state conference(s)
b. Attend national conference(s)
c. Obtain professional certifications (i.e. ENP, RPL, etc.)
d. Other (please specify below)
e. None
58. Which, if any, of the following training programs are offered to supervisory staff who show interest in senior management roles? (check all that apply)
a. Human Resources training (i.e. agency/jurisdiction policies, procedures, laws)
b. How to manage people effectively
c. Methods of communication
d. Advanced technical training
e. On-the-Job Training (OJT)
f. Other (please specify below)
g. None
59. Are there specialized training tracks offered to supervisory staff for career progression or skill enhancement? (if Yes, please specify below)

60. In the previous fiscal year, what is the average annual cost for continuing education of <u>one</u> supervisory staff member?
Section 3: Health & Wellness
A. Health & Wellness
61. Are there regular debriefing sessions or support mechanisms in place for Telecommunicators after handling critical incidents?
62. Are there strategies in place to identify Telecommunicator fatigue and/or burnout?
63. Does your PSAP offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or an equivalent program?
64. Does your PSAP/department have an EAP-type program <u>specific</u> to public safety personnel?
65. Does your agency have a vetted list of mental health providers with experience in public safety or PTSD that employees can contact for assistance?
Section 4: Recruitment
A. Recruitment Strategies
66. What recruitment channels do you primarily use to reach potential candidates? (check all that apply)
a. Jurisdiction/agency careers page
b. Mainstream job boards (i.e. Indeed, Monster, ZipRecruiter, etc.)
c. 9-1-1 job boards (i.e. NENA, APCO)
d. Social media (i.e. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
e. Local events
f. Full-time recruiter
g. Contract recruitment agency
h. Others (please specify below)
i. None
67. Are there any partnerships with local organizations, colleges, or military programs to source potential candidates? (if Yes, please explain each program and its effectiveness)
68. How do you promote the unique aspects and benefits of working at your PSAP to potential recruits?
69. What activities or strategies do your PSAP use to determine staffing needs?

70. What long-term strategies do you have in place to address staffing shortages and maintain a stable workforce?
71. Are there any upcoming changes or innovations you plan to implement to attract and retain staff? (if Yes, please specify below)
72. Which recruitment sources have been most effective in attracting qualified Telecommunicator candidates? (check all that apply)
a. Jurisdiction/agency careers page
b. Mainstream job boards (i.e. Indeed, Monster, ZipRecruiter, etc.)
c. 9-1-1 job boards (i.e. NENA, APCO)
d. Social media (i.e. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
e. Local events
f. Full-time recruiter
g. Contract recruitment agency
h. Others (please specify below)
i. None
73. What recruitment strategies have you implemented that have been successful in attracting new Telecommunicators?
74. What financial incentives, such as signing bonuses, do you offer to new and existing employees?
75. How much do you spend on recruitment annually?
76. If money were not an issue, what recruitment strategy would you add? (please be specific)
77. What types of support do you receive from your HR Dept. (check all that apply)
a. Dedicated HR officer/recruiter
b. Coordination of application process
c. Vendor management (i.e., HR manages background vendor, recruitment agency, etc.)
d. Financial support (i.e., HR funds application process)
e. Advertising
g. Other (please specify below)
f. None

Section 5: Retention
A. Retention Strategies
78. What retention strategies are in place for Telecommunicators?
79. Are there any special recognition or awards programs for exceptional performance or tenure? (if Yes, please describe)
80. Which of the following are the main reasons cited by Telecommunicators for leaving their positions? (check all that apply)
a. Financial (Salary, benefits)
b. Cost of living
c. Commute
d. Stress / mental health
e. Management
f. Relocation
g. Disability / medical diagnosis
h. Retirement / early retirement
i. Others (please specify below)
h. None
81. What financial incentives, such as retention bonuses, do you offer to existing employees?
82. On average, what is the total cost of incentives offered to Telecommunicators (per year)?
B. Employee Engagement
83. How do you assess employee satisfaction and engagement within your PSAP?
84. Have you implemented any measures to improve work-life balance and reduce stress among staff members? (if Yes, please describe below)
85. How do you gather feedback from your call-takers and dispatchers about their experiences and challenges? (check all that apply)
a. Suggestion box
b. Regular meetings with staff (i.e. weekly, monthly, quarterly)
c. Formal feedback process (please explain)

d. Open door policy (please explain below)
e. Others (please specify below)
f. None
86. Have there been instances where you've modified recruitment or retention strategies based on employee feedback or changing needs? (if Yes, please describe below)
87. Is PSAP leadership open to adopting new approaches or innovations in response to changing staffing dynamics? (if Yes, please describe how new approaches are evaluated for implementation below)
Section 6: Overall Success
A. Overall Success
88. What could the ESCB do for you to ease the burden of your PSAP operations?

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Appendix B: Anonymous Telecommunicator Survey

Maine Telecommunicator Survey

Section 1: Staffing
A. Demographics
Please answer the questions based on your personal experience and perspective within your role at your agency.
1. Select the answer below that best describes your current role with a Maine PSAP.
2. How many personnel are on your shift?
3. What shift are you on?
4. Is your PSAP managed by a civilian or sworn employee?
5. Are you currently represented by a union? If Yes, please describe using the Additional Details field below (i.e. public safety union or general classification union [craft labor union]).
6. Gender
7. Age
8. Years of Experience
9. Current employment status
10. Are you a supervisor or a member of management?
11. Which of the following roles are you trained to perform at your PSAP? (check all that apply)
Telecommunicator
Fire Dispatcher
EMS Dispatcher
Police Dispatcher
Other (please specify)
12. Are you trained to perform the role of CTO / Trainer? If Yes, please answer questions a. and b. below that will be displayed.
a. How many trainees have you been directly assigned in the past year?
b. How many trainees have you supported the training of in the past year (in addition to your primary trainee assignments)?

B. Current Staffing Situation
13. On average, how many hours per week do you work?
14. On average, how many <u>voluntary</u> overtime hours per week do you work?
15. Do you currently have a mandatory overtime policy in place? If Yes, please describe what the policy requires using the Additional Details field below.
16. On average, how many <u>mandatory</u> overtime hours per week do you work?
17. How often are you held over or forced in early for your shift in a typical week?
18. How often are you below your PSAP's minimum staffing requirement on your shift?
19. How many breaks do you get during your typical shift
20. The number of breaks I get is sufficient for me to rest and recover?
21. What do you see as the central challenges to staffing in your agency? (Rank in order of priority by dragging the selections up or down)
Section 2: Health & Wellness
A. PSAP Programs
22. Are there regular debriefing sessions or support mechanisms in place for you after handling critical incidents?
23. Does your PSAP offer an employee assistance program (EAP)?
24. Does your PSAP/department have an EAP program specific to public safety personnel?
25. Does your PSAP have a vetted list of mental health providers with experience in public safety or PTSD that you can contact for assistance?
26. What are some outside stressors that you believe are impacting your work? (check all that apply)
Care for elderly parents
Childcare
Finances
Work-life balance
Personal Health
Other (please specify)
B. Stress

<p>Instructions: Please read each statement and select a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you over the past week. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.</p> <p>The rating scale is as follows: 0 - Did not apply to me at all 1 - Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time 2 - Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time 3 - Applied to me very much or most of the time</p>
27. I found it hard to wind down
28. I was aware of dryness of my mouth
29. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all
30. I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g. excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)
31. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things
32. I tended to over-react to situations
33. I experienced trembling (e.g. in the hands)
34. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy
35. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself
36. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to
37. I found myself getting agitated
38. I found it difficult to relax
39. I felt down-hearted and blue
40. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing
41. I felt I was close to panic
42. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything
43. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person
44. I felt that I was rather touchy
45. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)
46. I felt scared without any good reason

47. I felt that life was meaningless
Section 3: Training
A. Initial Training
48. Other than the state-required training, what initial training programs did you receive before beginning independent work? (check all that apply)
In-house classroom training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
Calltaking Protocol/Dispatch Training (i.e. EMD, EFD, EPD or other protocols)
POST Standards Training Program (120 hours)
On-the-Job Training (OJT) with another Telecommunicator
Other/Specialized training (please specify)
49. During your initial training, how many hours, on average, did you receive training for each of the programs listed below? (fill in hours for each. If not applicable, please enter 0)
Classroom Training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
Calltaking Protocol/Dispatch Training (i.e. EMD, EFD, EPD or other protocols)
On-the-Job Training (OJT) with another Telecommunicator
Specialized training (please specify using the Add Additional Details link above)
50. Was there training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your initial training?
B. Continuing Education
51. How many hours of continuing education are you required to complete annually?
52. What types of continuing education are offered? (check all that apply)
Classroom Training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
Calltaking Protocol Training (i.e. EMD, EFD, EPD or other protocols)
On The Job Training (OJT) with another telecommunicator
Specialized training (please specify)
53. What modes of learning are utilized for your continuing education? (check all that apply)
In Classroom
Remote online (not at work)

In-person online (at work)
Webinar
On the Job Training (OJT)
Other (please specify)
54. Are you required to take training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your continuing education?
55. What opportunities for professional development have you been offered in the past? (check all that apply)
Attend state conference(s)
Attend national conference(s)
Obtain professional certifications (i.e. ENP, RPL, etc.)
None
Other (please specify)
56. Which of the following training programs are offered to anyone interested in supervisory roles? (check all that apply)
Human Resources training (i.e. agency/jurisdiction policies, procedures, laws)
How to manage people effectively
Methods of communication
Advanced technical training (Supervisory related duties)
On the Job Training (OJT)
Certified Training Officer (CTO)
None
Other (please specify)
57. Are there cross-training opportunities available to you to learn additional skills/disciplines?
B. Supervisor Training
58. How many hours of continuing education are you, as a supervisor, required to complete annually?
59. What types of continuing education are offered to you as a supervisor? (check all that apply)
PSAP Technology

Protocol
Stress Management
Health & wellness
Other (please specify)
60. Are you provided continuing education in any of the following areas? (check all that apply)
Human Resources training (i.e. agency/jurisdiction policies, procedures, laws)
How to manage people effectively
Methods of communication
Advanced technical training (Supervisory related duties)
On the Job Training (OJT)
Certified Training Officer (CTO)
Other (please specify)
61. What modes of learning are utilized at your PSAP for continuing education? (check all that apply)
In Classroom
Remote online (not at work)
In-person online (at work)
Webinar
On the Job Training (OJT)
Other (please specify)
62. Are you required to take training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your continuing education?
63. What opportunities for professional development have you been offered to participate in? (check all that apply)
Attend state conference(s)
Attend national conference(s)
Obtain professional certifications (i.e. ENP, RPL, etc.)
None

Other (please specify)
64. Which of the following training programs are offered to you if you're interested in senior management roles? (check all that apply)
Human Resources training (i.e. agency/jurisdiction policies, procedures, laws)
How to manage people effectively
Methods of communication
Advanced technical training (Supervisory related duties)
On the Job Training (OJT)
None
Other (please specify)
65. Are specialized training tracks offered for career progression or skill enhancement? If Yes, please specify.
Section 4: Retention
A. Retention Strategies
66. Are there retention programs in place at your PSAP?
67. Can you obtain any special recognition or awards programs for exceptional performance or tenure?
68. Does your PSAP have any financial incentives, such as retention bonuses, to existing employees? If Yes, please explain.
69. Retention programs are effective in promoting employee satisfaction and retention.
70. Which of the following are the main reasons cited by your colleagues for leaving their positions? (check all that apply)
Financial (Salary, benefits)
Cost of living
Commute
Stress / mental health
Management
Others (please specify)
71. What retention efforts would you find most appealing?

B. Employee Engagement
72. Does your PSAP assess employee satisfaction and engagement?
73. Has your PSAP implemented any measures to improve work-life balance and reduce stress among staff members? If Yes, please explain.
74. How does your PSAP gather feedback from you about your experiences and challenges? (check all that apply)
Suggestion box
Regular meetings with staff (i.e. weekly, monthly, quarterly)
Formal feedback process (please explain)
Open door policy (please explain)
Others (please specify)
They don't
75. Is PSAP leadership open to adopting new approaches or innovations in response to changing staffing dynamics? If Yes, can you give an example of change that has happened from a suggestion you or another colleague made?

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Appendix C: Reclassification; examples from other states

Why Reclassifying Telecommunicators Matters: A Deeper Dive

1. Recognizing the Unique Role and Expertise:

The current classification of telecommunicators as "administrative support" fails to capture the critical and complex nature of their work. They are the first point of contact in emergencies, requiring exceptional communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills under immense pressure. Dealing with life-or-death situations, trauma, and abuse daily takes a significant emotional toll. Reclassifying them as "professionals" or "first responders" acknowledges this unique expertise and the vital role they play in public safety.

2. Improving Recruitment and Retention:

Attracting and retaining qualified personnel is a major challenge for 9-1-1 centers. The current classification, along with lower pay and benefits compared to other first responders, discourages potential candidates, and leads to high turnover. Reclassification would elevate the profession, leading to:

- **Increased job satisfaction and morale:** Recognition and respect for their role would boost morale and commitment.
- **Improved benefits and compensation:** Reclassification could pave the way for better pay, mental health support, and other benefits, attracting and retaining qualified individuals.
- **Wider talent pool:** By attracting a broader range of candidates with diverse backgrounds and skills, the quality of service could improve.

3. Enhancing Public Safety:

A well-trained and motivated workforce is crucial for effective emergency response. Reclassification can contribute to:

- **Reduced response times:** A stable workforce with lower turnover can ensure adequate staffing levels for timely response.
- **Improved decision-making:** Experienced and skilled telecommunicators can gather critical information, guide callers, and dispatch resources more effectively.
- **Enhanced inter-agency collaboration:** Recognition as first responders fosters better communication and collaboration with other emergency personnel.

4. Aligning with National Efforts:

The growing national movement to reclassify telecommunicators reflects the recognition of their critical role. Bills like the 9-1-1 Saves Act aim to address this issue at the federal level. Reclassifying in Maine would align with this broader movement and contribute to establishing a consistent national standard.

5. Building a Strong Public Safety System:

By recognizing and supporting telecommunicators, you will invest in a vital component of the public safety system. Reclassification sends a clear message: the lives of 9-1-1 professionals matter, and their contributions are essential for keeping communities safe.

This is consistent with the survey results and analysis presented in sections 2.1.5.4, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 and 2.2.7.1 above. These findings are consistent with observations made by NENA, APCO and the National 9-1-1 Office. These findings also identify normative workplace issues telecommunicators face daily which likely contributes to difficulties in hiring and retaining telecommunicators.

In conclusion, reclassifying telecommunicators is not just a symbolic gesture, but a strategic step towards strengthening the emergency response system. It acknowledges their unique expertise, promotes better working conditions, and ultimately improves public safety for all.

Examples of efforts in other states

- AL – 11-98-1(12) (HB414, passed as 2022-387, signed by Governor 4/14/22) defines first responder as including public safety telecommunicators. The law also defines public safety telecommunicators (AL 11-98-1(17) focusing on job duties, e.g., answering 9-1-1 calls and dispatching appropriate resources.
- CA sec 8562(a)(5) defines public safety dispatcher: A public safety dispatcher or public safety telecommunicator. For the purposes of this paragraph, “public safety dispatcher or public safety telecommunicator” means an individual employed by a public safety agency, as the initial first responder, whose primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch emergency and nonemergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services by telephone, radio, or other communication device, and includes an individual who promotes from this position and supervises individuals who perform these functions.
- IL H 3940 defines telecommunicator as a first responder. See 30 ILCS 105/5.531, 50 ILCS 750/2 ““First responder” means someone designated by a public safety agency who is charged with responding to emergency service requests, including emergency communications professionals, public safety telecommunicators, public safety telecommunicator supervisors, and police, fire, and EMS personnel who operate in the field.” 07/28/2023 – signed by Governor as Public Act No. 366.
- Kansas 2020 Supp 48-949 (SB40) defines emergency responder to include TCs.

Appendix D: Draft Legislation

Sec. 1. 25 MRSA § 2121, sub-§ 4-A is enacted to read:

4-A. Dispatch center. "Dispatch center" means an emergency dispatch center that receives its 9-1-1 calls from a public safety answering point rather than receiving the calls directly.

Sec. 2. 25 MRSA § 2923-C is enacted to read:

2923-C. Cost reporting.

1. Reporting requirements. Annually, on a date prescribed by the bureau by rule, a public safety answering point and dispatch center shall provide the bureau with the costs incurred by the public safety answering point and dispatch center for the provision of enhanced 9-1-1 services.

2. Rules. The bureau shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules must include, at a minimum the following:

A. The manner by which a public safety answering point and dispatch center shall submit the cost information required pursuant to subsection 1;

B. The specific cost components for the provision of enhanced 9-1-1 services to be included in the report required by subsection 1; and

C. The date by which a public safety answering point and dispatch center shall submit the report required pursuant to subsection 1.

Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 3. 25 MRSA § 2927, sub-§3-E is enacted to read:

3-E. Quality assurance review support. The bureau shall contract with one or more 3rd-party vendors, using revenues in the E-9-1-1- fund, to provide the quality assurance review required of public safety answering points in meeting standards required when providing emergency medical dispatch services pursuant to Title 32, section 85-A and standardized dispatch protocols for fire 9-1-1 calls pursuant to section 3-C paragraph A.

Sec. 4. Public safety answering point staffing crisis stakeholder group. The Public Utilities Commission, Emergency Services Communication Bureau shall convene a stakeholder group to develop a coordinated 9-1-1 staffing and recruiting effort for all public safety answering points. The bureau shall ensure that there is stakeholder representation from state, county and municipal public safety answering points. On or before February 21, 2025, the bureau shall submit a report to the joint standing committee having jurisdiction over utilities and energy matters with a report that includes any recommendations, including draft legislation as necessary. The committee may report out a bill to the 132nd Legislature in 2025.

Sec. 5. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Emergency Services Communication Bureau 0994

Initiative: Establishes one Staff Development Specialist IV and associated All Other costs.

SUMMARY

This bill does the following:

1. It requires public safety answering point and dispatch centers to annually report to the Public Utilities Commission, Emergency Services Communications Bureau on the costs they incur for the provision of enhanced 9-1-1 services;
2. It requires the bureau to contract with one or more 3rd-party vendors, using revenues in the E-9-1-1- fund, to provide the quality assurance review required of public safety answering points in meeting standards required when providing emergency medical dispatch services and standardized dispatch protocols for fire 9-1-1 calls;
3. It requires the bureau to convene a stakeholder group to develop a coordinated 9-1-1 staffing and recruiting effort for all public safety answering points and ensure that there is stakeholder representation from state, county and municipal public safety answering points; and
4. It authorizes the bureau to hire one additional staff member.