



California PSAP and Staffing Study 2024

Supported by the California 9-1-1 Advisory Board
Long Range Planning Committee

SUBMITTED BY:



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Executive Summary

Overview of the PSAP and Staffing Study

Supporting the efforts of the 9-1-1 Advisory Board, Long Range Planning Committee, the 2024 California PSAP and Staffing Study provides a snapshot of the challenges facing telecommunicators and Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in the state. Surveys of both telecommunicators and PSAPs revealed concerns about staffing levels, work hours, pay & benefits, advancement opportunities, training, and stress. Increased stress, often linked to excessive overtime, and inadequate pay and benefits contribute to high turnover rates, with many leaving for better opportunities outside of public safety. The study also highlights the impact of personal life stressors, work-life balance issues, mental health concerns, and financial difficulties on telecommunicator well-being and turnover.

- 695 telecommunicators completed a survey revealing concerns about staffing levels, work hours, pay & benefits, advancement opportunities, training, and stress.
- 71 PSAPs completed a survey providing insights into staffing, operations, management, and perceived issues.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The Call taker/Dispatcher survey results highlight significant challenges faced by the 9-1-1 workforce, including heightened levels of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to the general population, alongside difficulties maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

- Respondents report working an average of 48 hours per week, with many working 52 hours or more.

Despite reporting low pay, inadequate benefits, ineffective management, negative work culture, and interpersonal conflicts as significant items of concern, telecommunicators remain dedicated.

- Staffing shortages are prevalent, with 38% reporting their PSAP is consistently below minimum staffing levels for every shift
- An additional 12% of PSAPs experienced shortages for 2-3 shifts weekly.

The top challenge identified from the results of the survey is Salary/Pay followed by Poor Management and Outdated Training.

- 47% cite Salary as the primary issue and 66% believe financial incentives would enhance retention.
- 26% of respondents criticized management's training and decision-making. Limited support and training for supervisors and managers exacerbates the staffing crisis, as inadequate training hinders employee recruitment and retention.

- Several respondents reported their training programs need substantial revision, but their supervisors are too over-committed to make necessary changes. It was also noted that improved management training in areas such as leadership, communication, and mental health was needed.

Budget constraints and staffing levels limit training and professional development opportunities, resulting in high stress and attrition. Stress and mental health issues were reported as major reasons for employee attrition, with

- 74% cited Stress and Mental Health issues as a major contributor to employee attrition. PSAPs with specific Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and mental health resources report better overall mental health.

There is a prevalent sense of pessimism about change within PSAPs, with many employees reporting feeling their organizations are resistant to new ideas. This resistance is linked to poorer mental health outcomes and is often due to limited time for strategic planning and insufficient leadership training.

The PSAP survey results show that while many centers are actively addressing staffing, turnover, training, and work-life balance challenges, effectiveness varies and is difficult to determine due to the small survey size.

- 16% of PSAPs report staffing below 69%, and
- 28% report staffing between 70% and 79%.

This staffing crisis forces a few employees to cover the workload of many, leading to overwork and potential errors. The study highlights a critical staffing crisis in California's 9-1-1 industry and suggests prioritizing technology integration, management training, transformation of training practices, and resilience and mental health training for new hires to address these issues effectively.

Key findings include:

- The positive impact of technology on reducing workload and overtime
- The balance needed in on-the-job training hours to improve trainee completion rates, and the benefits of initial mental health training in lowering overtime and vacancy rates

Effective staffing practices are crucial for maintaining the optimal performance and sustainability of 9-1-1 Call Takers and Dispatchers. Addressing current challenges and implementing best practices can significantly improve recruitment, retention, and employee satisfaction in California. Recommendations aimed to enhance employee retention, job satisfaction, and mental health include:

- ◆ Addressing Short Staffing and Overtime Demands
- ◆ Improving Recruitment and Hiring
- ◆ Enhancing Retention Strategies
- ◆ Improving Operational Efficiency
- ◆ Improving Compensation and Benefits
- ◆ Mental Health Support
- ◆ Standardizing Training and Education
- ◆ Enhancing Management and Work Culture
- ◆ Promoting Work-Life Balance
- ◆ Employee Recognition and Appreciation
- ◆ Regular Feedback and Evaluation
- ◆ Updating Job Descriptions

Addressing these issues requires dedicated resources and cultural change to improve the well-being and functionality of the PSAP workforce. Without significant reforms, the staffing and retention crisis in California's PSAPs is likely to continue.

By implementing these solutions, PSAPs can create a supportive and sustainable work environment for 9-1-1 telecommunicators, ultimately improving employee well-being and the quality of emergency response services.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Scope

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), Public Safety Communications (PSC), CA 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Branch (CA 9-1-1 Branch) is authorized by Government Code (GC) Sections 53100-53121 to manage and oversee statewide 9-1-1 Services and by GC Section 8592 to oversee public safety communications.

The authority to oversee the expenditure of State Emergency Telephone Number Account (SETNA) funds is provided in the California Department of Finance's (DOF) Manual of State Funds, 0022. The CA 9-1-1 Branch is responsible for administering SETNA, which provides funding to California Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) for 9-1-1 systems and services. At the direction of the Long-Range Planning Committee via the 9-1-1 Advisory Board, this study was completed to better understand challenges facing staffing levels in the emergency communications centers.

With the introduction of new technologies and the ongoing PSAP staffing challenges, the California PSAP and Staffing Study will determine the best practices and challenges facing the PSAPs in recruiting, retention, and training of Public Safety Dispatchers (PSDs).

Determining best practices and challenges facing the PSAPs in recruiting, retention, and training of PSDs involves a multifaceted approach that integrates evaluation, analysis, and strategic recommendations. This section outlines the steps taken to comprehensively evaluate Call takers/Dispatchers in California.

A timeline for the development of this report is provided in the table below.

Timeframe	Milestone
Sept 2023	Call taker/Dispatcher and PSAP Surveys Developed
Sept 2023	Pilot Surveys Conducted
Nov 2023	Online Surveys Opened
Nov 23–Jan 24	Call taker/Dispatcher Data Collection
Nov 23-Mar 24	PSAP Data Collection
Jan 24-Feb 24	Call taker/Dispatcher Data Analysis
Mar 24-Apr 24	PSAP Data Analysis
April-May 24	CA PSAP and Staffing Study Report Writing
June 2024	CA PSAP and Staffing Study Report Completed

1.2 Approach

To ensure comprehensive data gathering, a varied array of methodologies were used to understand perspectives, challenges and aspirations of Call takers/Dispatchers. An online survey was developed to capture diverse perspectives and insights from many stakeholders employed in California PSAPs.

There were 695 active-duty Call taker/Dispatcher surveys completed. The survey was open for approximately 90 days. This allowed a thorough assessment and subsequent recommendations for improving the recruiting, retention, and training of PSDs in California.

2. Call taker/Dispatcher Survey

2.1 Workforce Demographics and Trends

2.1.1 Demographic Profile of Current Workforce

A total of 695 telecommunicators participated in the survey, all of whom were active duty at a PSAP in California, with nearly all working full-time. Most respondents identified as female, with a smaller portion identifying as male, and a few identifying as non-binary/other or choosing not to respond. The age distribution was normal, with participants ranging from 18 to over 55 years old, most commonly between 25 and 44. In terms of experience, the group was diverse, with some having three years or less, others with 4-10 years, a similar number with 11-20 years, and the remainder with over 20 years of experience.

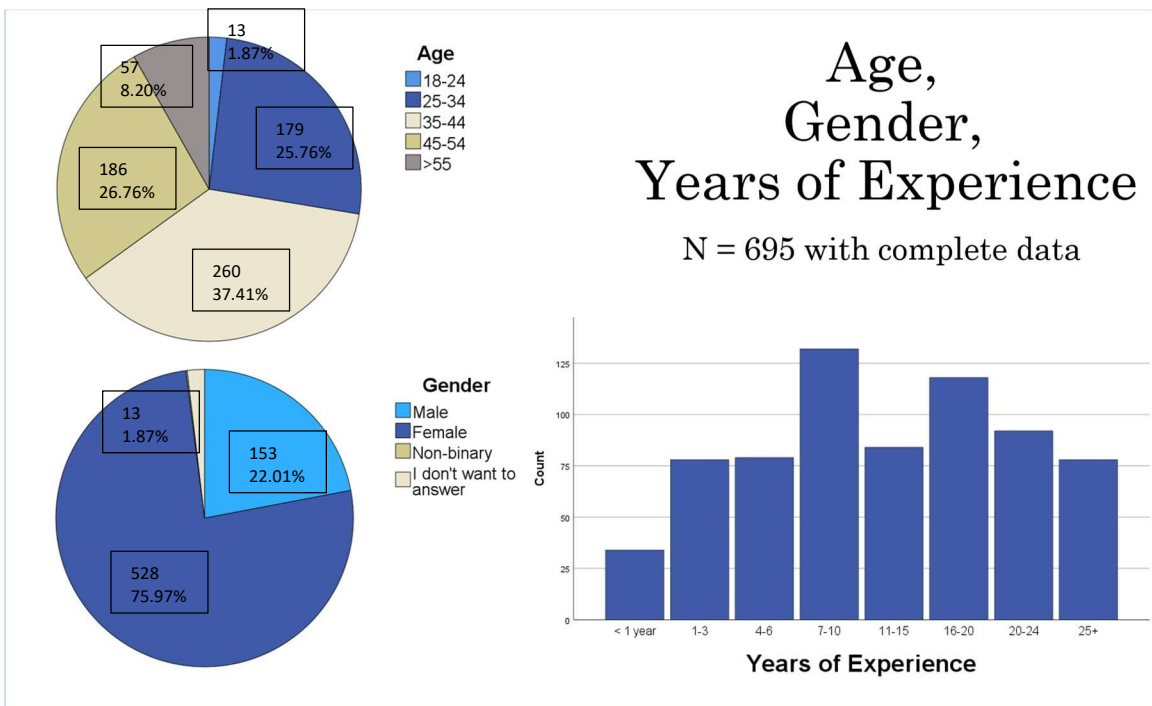


Figure 1 - Age, Gender, Experience

Nearly half of respondents reported working day shift, followed next by night shift, with less on overlapping shifts, and the least reported on evening shift.

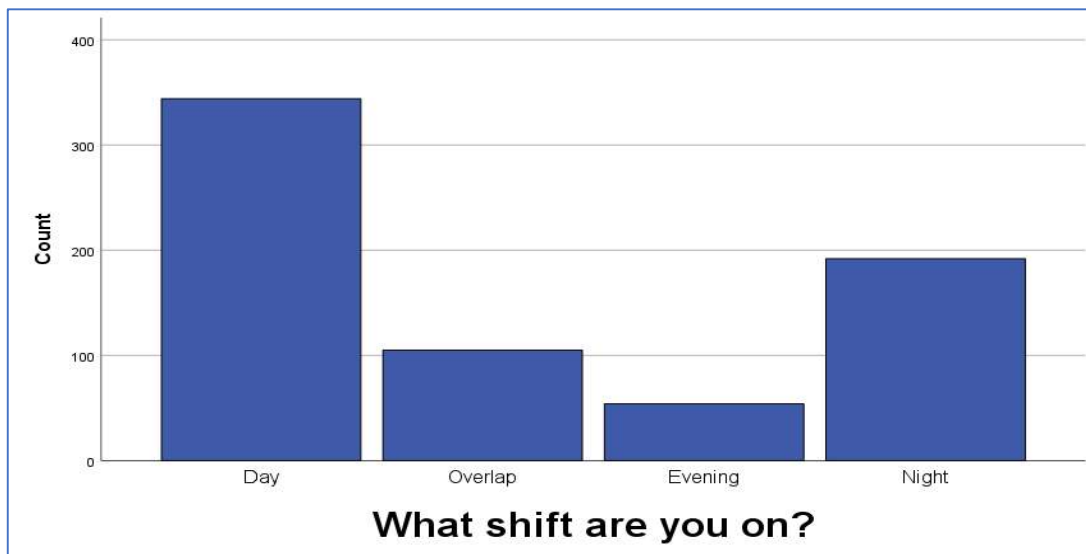


Figure 2 - Shifts

2.1.2 Analysis of Workforce Trends

Most employees are trained as call-takers and police dispatchers, but fewer are trained as fire dispatchers and EMS dispatchers. In total, a little more than half of the survey participants reported being trained in one or two of these roles, while less than a quarter reported being trained in three roles or all four roles.

Almost a third of respondents are currently in the role of supervisor or manager, while nearly three quarters are performing in the role of a trainer. Among those, 495 are trained to be a CTO/trainer. Trainers were assigned an average of three trainees in the past year (with a range of 0 to 40) and supported an average of five additional trainees in the past year (with a range of 0 to 51).

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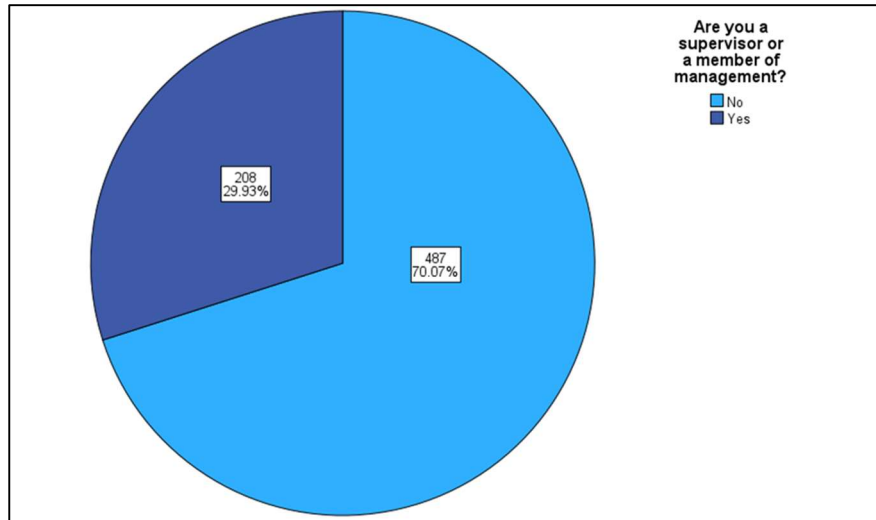


Figure 3 - Supervisor/Management

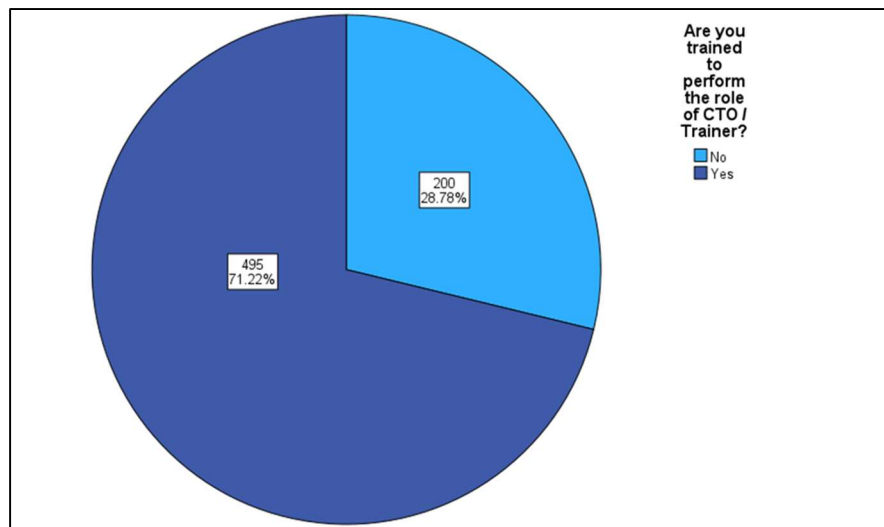


Figure 4 - CTO

Overall, respondents reported working an average of 48 hours per week. Overtime was commonly reported, with an average of 9 hours per week of voluntary overtime and 5 hours per week of mandatory overtime.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
On average, how many hours per week do you work?	695	1.00	120.00	48.14	11.55
On average, how many voluntary overtime hours per week do you work?	695	.00	80.00	8.99	9.64
On average, how many mandatory overtime hours per week do you work?	572	.00	96.00	5.55	7.92

Table 1 - Hours Worked per Week

While 72% of respondents reported that their PSAP has a mandatory overtime policy in place to prevent being below minimum staffing requirements, 12% of respondents reported that their PSAP is below minimum requirements 2-3 shifts per week and 37% reported that their PSAP is below minimum requirements for every shift.

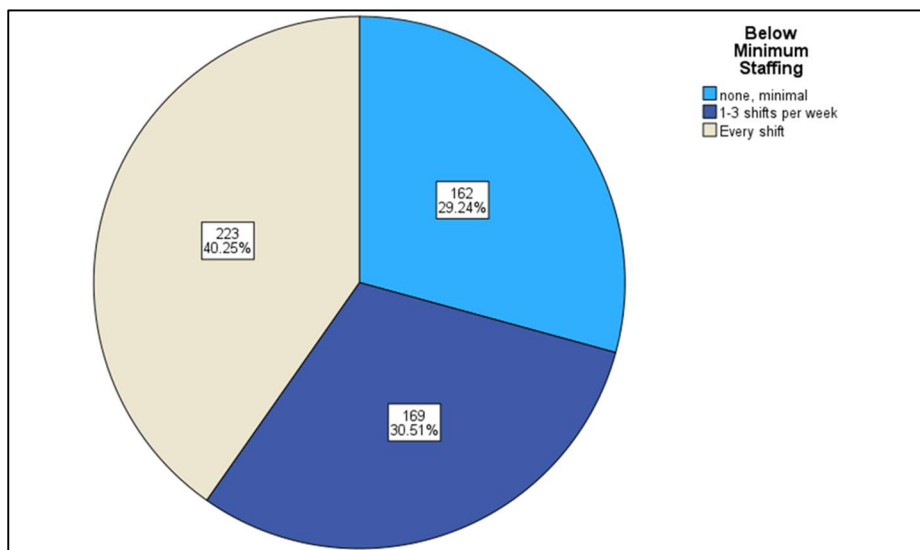


Figure 5 - Maintaining Minimum Staffing

Respondents reported an average of 2 breaks per shift and almost half of the participants of the survey reported that they “somewhat to strongly disagree” that the number of shifts that they get is sufficient to help them rest and recover, while a fourth fell in the “neutral” category.

Survey Characteristics: Agencies

88% of respondents worked in PSAPs falling within three size categories.

- 1-3 personnel on shift (26%)
- 4-8 personnel on shift (39%)
- 9-20 personnel on shift (22%)

The remainder worked in PSAPs with 20-50 personnel on shift or greater than 50. Over half of the PSAPs were managed predominantly by civilians, with nearly a third being managed by sworn employees or both. Nearly 90% of respondents reported being represented by a union.

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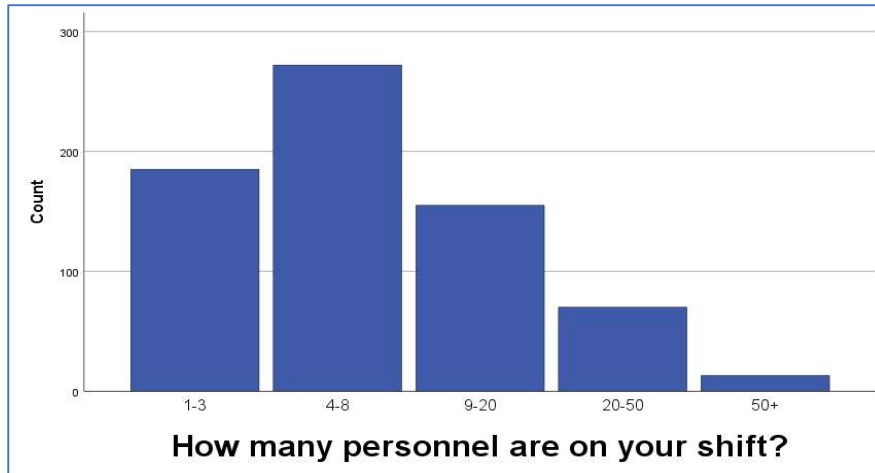


Figure 6 - Personnel per Shift

2.1.3 Implications of Workforce Trends on Staffing

Respondents were asked to rank the challenges most relevant to their agency. Salary was the top challenge for almost half of respondents, followed by management, and culture. Far fewer respondents reported "Other" as the top challenge, with conflict, benefits, and location trailing. Respondents fell into two groups: one prioritizing salary, benefits, and location, and the other focusing on management, culture, and conflict.

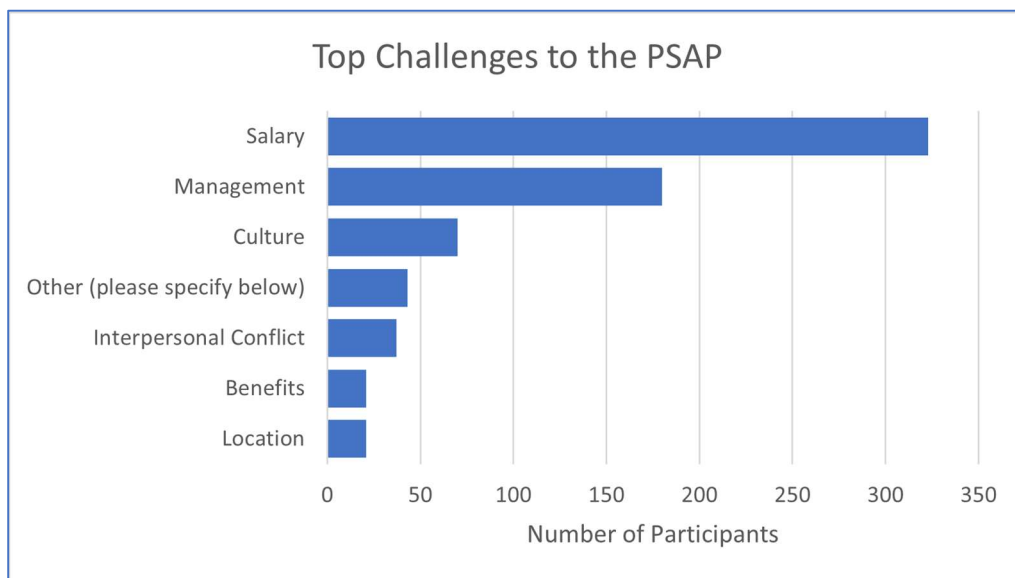


Figure 7 - Challenges to PSAPs

107 respondents provided detailed comments. The most common issues were high workload, low staffing, and inflexible scheduling followed by lack of quality applicants or understanding of job demands and inadequate training programs. Other concerns included unrealistic retirement age, cost of living, and lack of municipal support.

Reportedly well over half of PSAPs offer regular debriefings after critical incidents, have an employee assistance program, a public safety-specific assistance program, and access to vetted mental health providers with first responder experience.

Outside Stressors:

The data revealed that respondents face significant stressors outside of work. These include caregiving for elderly parents, childcare stress, financial stress, poor work-life balance, personal health issues, and other stressors. Among the 29 "other" stress responses, common categories were poor mental health, animal care, family health issues, physical health concerns, commute, and various personal challenges like troubled marriage or recent family death.

Stress Outside of Work		
Outside stressors are abundant:		
• 21.3% care for elderly parents		
• 34.7% have stress related to childcare		
• 60.0% experience financial stress		
• 86.3% have stress due to poor work-life balance		
• 59.4% are experiencing personal health issues		
• 6.9% are experiencing an "other" stressor		
# stressors	# parts	%
1.00	124	17.8
2.00	179	25.8
3.00	230	33.1
4.00	119	17.1
5.00	39	5.6
6.00	4	.6

Table 2 - Reported Stressors

Mental Health:

Respondents reported higher rates of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to the general population, similar to other first responders. All three areas, depression, anxiety, and stress rated similarly with the respondents with a little more than half in the normal range, around a third in the moderate range, less than a quarter in the severe to very severe range.

Impacts on Mental Health

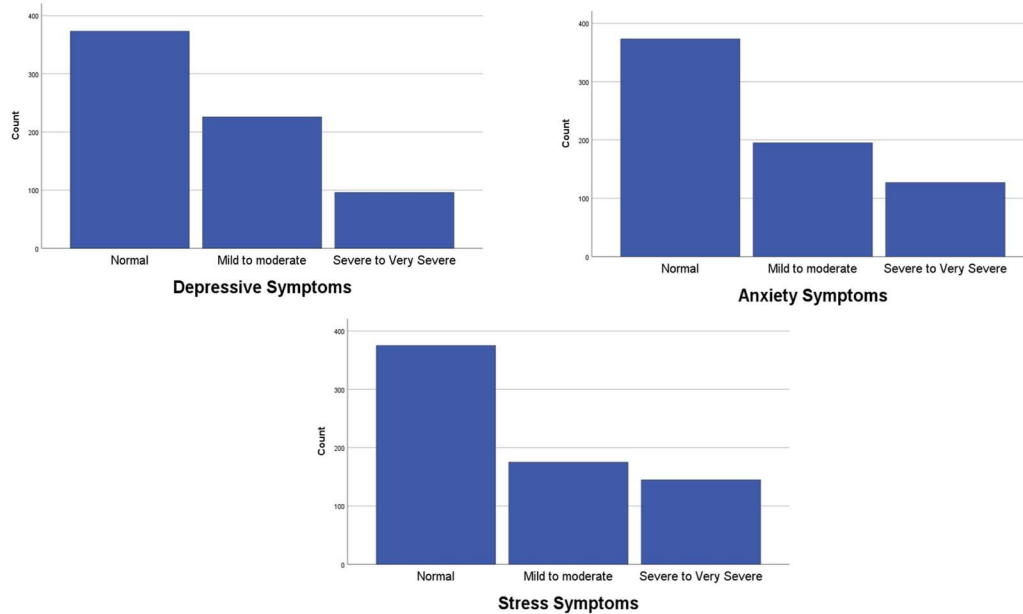


Figure 8 - Mental Health Impacts

Survey results indicate that respondents' mental health is similar to other 9-1-1 workers but worse than the general population. Key findings include:

- Trainers reported higher levels of depression and stress than non-trainers.
- Supervisors and managers had more depressive symptoms and slightly higher stress than non-supervisors.
- Mid-career employees (ages 35-44, 4-15 years' experience) showed the highest stress and depression levels, but this was linked to the number of outside stressors rather than age or experience alone.
- Mental health symptoms worsened with more work hours per week, especially with mandatory overtime, while voluntary overtime had no effect.
- Employees in understaffed PSAPs reported more stress, depression, and anxiety than those in less understaffed centers.
- Access to public safety-specific employee assistance programs and vetted mental health professionals was linked to better mental health.
- External stressors like childcare, work-life balance, and personal health were strongly associated with poorer mental health.
- Workplaces resistant to new health and wellness policies correlated with worse mental health, particularly depression.
- Employees who received training in stress management and resilience, or who worked in environments that recognized good performance, reported better mental health.

There were no significant differences in mental health based on the primary challenges identified by respondents (e.g., salary vs. culture), and no other study variables were significantly tied to mental health outcomes.

2.2 Training and Development

2.2.1 Overview of Existing Training and Development Initiatives

Initial training programs across PSAPs were largely consistent. Most respondents received on-the-job training (averaging 530 hours), call-taking protocol training (averaging 183 hours), and classroom training (averaging 125 hours). Over half received POST standards training before working independently, while fewer received fire dispatch training. Cross-training opportunities varied.

Only one-third received initial training in stress management, resilience, or wellness, and even less are required to continue this training.

Initial Training Type	% Received Training	Average Training Length (Hours)
On-the-job training	89.5	530
Call-taking protocol	75.1	183
Classroom training	77.0	125
POST standards	60.3	120
Fire dispatch	28.6	53

Table 3 - Training Types and Length

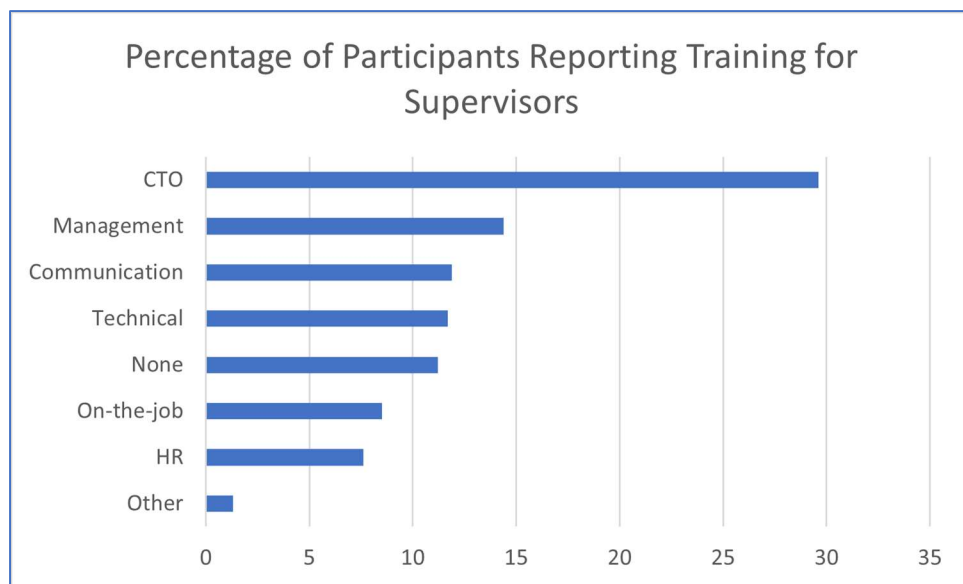


Figure 9 - Supervisor Training

2.2.2 Continuing Education

The average required continuing education hours reported was 22, with a wide range from 0 to over 80 hours. The most common types of continuing education were classroom education followed by specialized education and call-taking protocol. Less common were on-the-job and fire dispatch training. Continuing education modes included classroom, remote online learning, in-person, online webinars, and on-the-job learning.

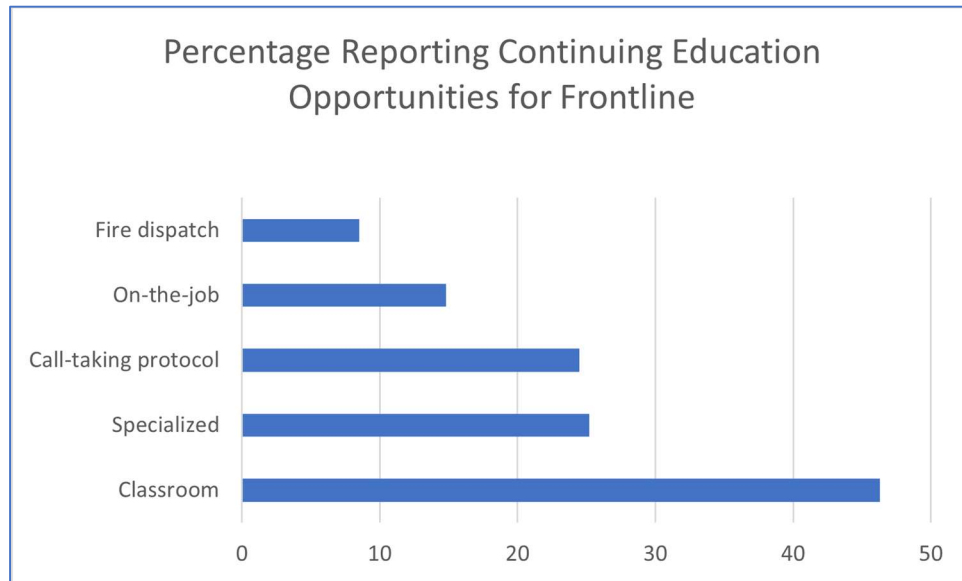


Figure 10 - Continuing Education

Supervisors averaged 21 hours of continuing education per year, with some reporting over 48 hours and others over 80 hours. However, continuing education for supervisors and senior managers was limited. Only a small percentage of PSAPs offered training in areas such as technology, stress management, health and wellness, and management, with some reporting no training opportunities at all for senior managers.

These findings should be interpreted cautiously, as non-supervisory respondents may not be fully aware of the opportunities available to supervisors and senior managers.

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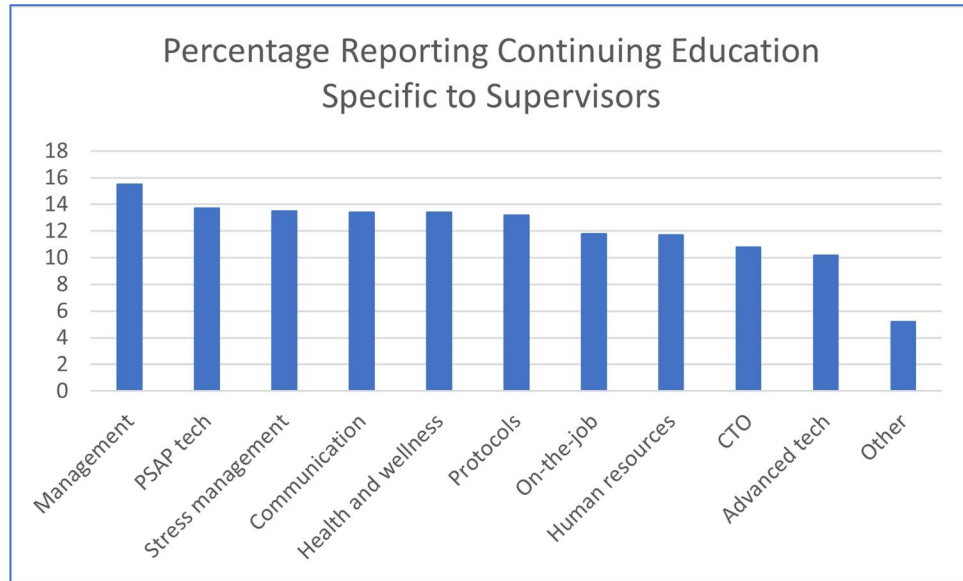


Figure 11 - Continuing Education for Supervisors

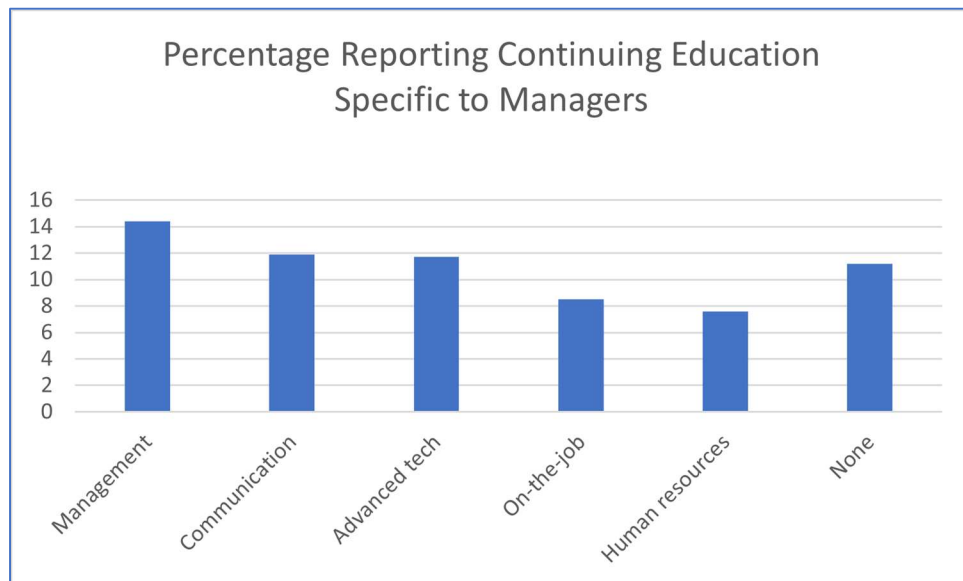


Figure 12 - Continuing Ed for Managers

Questions about continuing education for senior managers revealed limited opportunities. While all respondents answered, there may be some bias, as non-senior managers might not be fully aware of the available training. The most common training areas for senior managers were management, communication, advanced technology, on-the-job training, and human resources. However, a significant portion reported that their PSAP offers no training for senior managers.

2.2.3 Professional Development

Overall, respondents reported a low number of professional development opportunities afforded by their PSAP. A small percentage of respondents having reported opportunities to attend a state-level conference, and fewer reported attending a national-level conference. While less than 20% have had the opportunity to pursue specialized certifications, a third reported some “other” professional development opportunity.

Training and Continuing Education Opportunities

The results showed no significant associations between access to specific training or continuing education and other factors in the dataset, likely because training opportunities were generally limited. Statistically, it's hard to find significant differences when the majority lacks training experience. Additionally, individual training experiences may not significantly impact other variables.

Approximately 20% of respondents could attend a state-level conference, only one-third had opportunities for other professional development, such as national conferences or specialized certifications.

Incentives, Recognition, Low Desire for Change

Only a small percentage of PSAPs have retention programs, but over three-quarters of respondents believe such programs would improve satisfaction and retention. Those who see potential in retention programs often cite salary and benefits as their main challenges. Few details were shared about existing retention programs, but most respondents suggested that enhancements should focus on wages, with nearly two-thirds prioritizing salary, bonuses, and retention pay. Other suggestions were less common.

Although about two-thirds of PSAPs offer performance awards, many respondents feel these awards are insignificant without fair compensation. This reflects a broader sentiment among 9-1-1 telecommunicators that recognition is undervalued when employees face financial strain. More than half identified financial issues as a key challenge for staffing and retention.

Additionally, a significant majority of respondents said their PSAP has not taken steps to improve work-life balance, and over two-thirds reported that leadership is resistant to new approaches for addressing staffing issues. While these factors were not statistically linked to mental health or other variables, the lack of significant findings may be due to uneven group distribution.

2.3 Staffing Retention

2.3.1 Overview of Current Retention

Retention and Incentives:

Among respondents, less than a quarter reported that their PSAP has a retention program in place. When all participants were asked if retention programs would be effective in promoting employee satisfaction and retention, many reported that they “somewhat agree” or “strongly

agree” that retention programs would enhance satisfaction and retention in their PSAP, while fewer endorsed this question as “neutral” and even less reported that they “somewhat or strongly disagreed” that these programs would be effective. At the present time, 75% of respondents stated that their PSAP does not offer financial incentives to stay (e.g., retention bonuses).

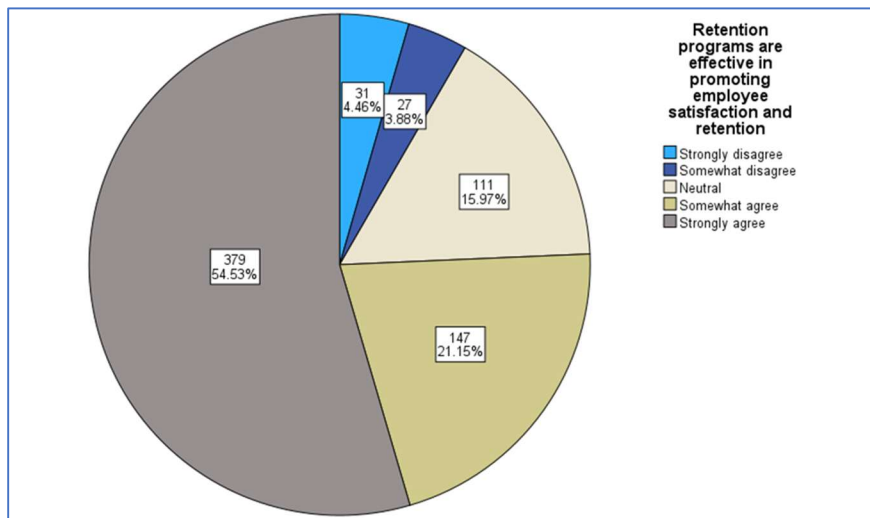


Figure 13 - Retention Program Effectiveness

Respondents were asked to suggest effective retention incentives, and over 90% provided written responses. The most common suggestion was increased wages, including salary, bonuses, and retention pay. This was significantly more frequent than the next most common category, a better work environment, which included recognition, support, and mental health resources. Other suggestions included increased benefits (59 responses), better management (63 responses), more promotion opportunities (26 responses), additional training and education (39 responses), improved scheduling (56 responses), and various "other" responses (86 responses), with many emphasizing enhanced work-life balance without specific details.

2.3.2 Staffing Retention Challenges

When asked why co-workers are leaving the PSAP for other opportunities, the most highly cited reason was stress or mental health, followed by management concerns, close behind was financial reasons and the cost of living, commuting and “other” reasons were cited as lesser reasons.



Figure 14 - Reasons for Leaving

Most respondents reported that their PSAP does not assess employee satisfaction and engagement, though some respondents reported that their PSAP gathers feedback through suggestion boxes, regular meetings, formal feedback, and open-door policies. Nearly half of respondents reported that their PSAP does not make any effort to gather feedback about employee experiences and challenges.

Finally, 82% reported that their PSAP has not implemented any measures to improve work-life balance and reduce stress among employees, while 68% reported that leadership in the PSAP is not open to adopting new approaches or innovations in response to changing staffing dynamics and current challenges.

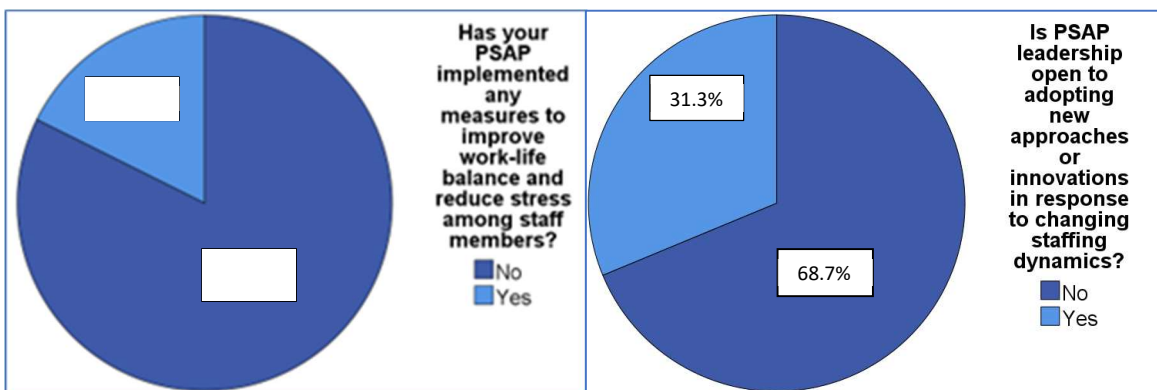


Figure 15 - Work/Life Balance and Open to New Ideas

3. PSAP Survey

3.1 PSAP Demographics and Metrics

A total of 64 PSAPs completed the survey out of the 443 PSAPs listed in California (14%).

A breakdown of disciplines for which emergency services the PSAPs dispatch reveals that slightly over half of the PSAPs dispatch for only the police. Of the remaining PSAPs, 19% dispatch for fire and EMS, 8% dispatch for police and fire, and 5% dispatch for fire only. A total of 17% of PSAPs dispatch for all three disciplines.

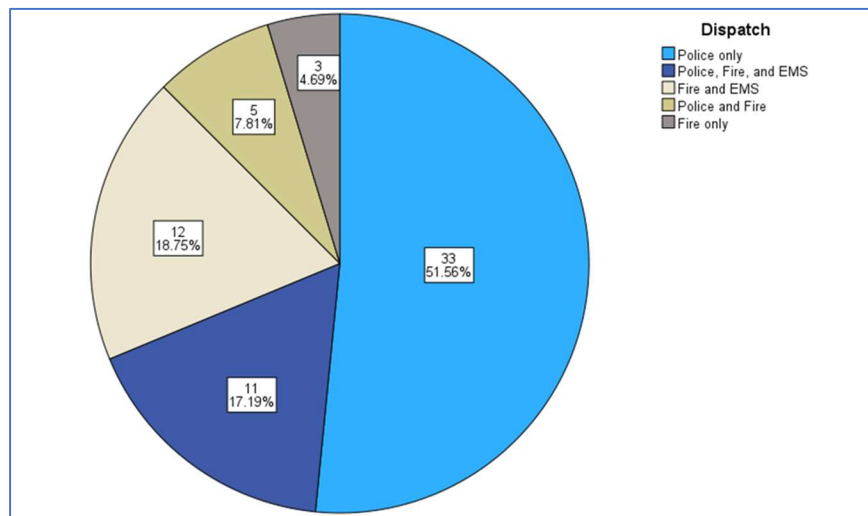


Figure 16 - Disciplines Dispatched

A little over half of the PSAPs are managed by a civilian employee, with the remaining split between a sworn employee or being managed by both a civilian and sworn employee.

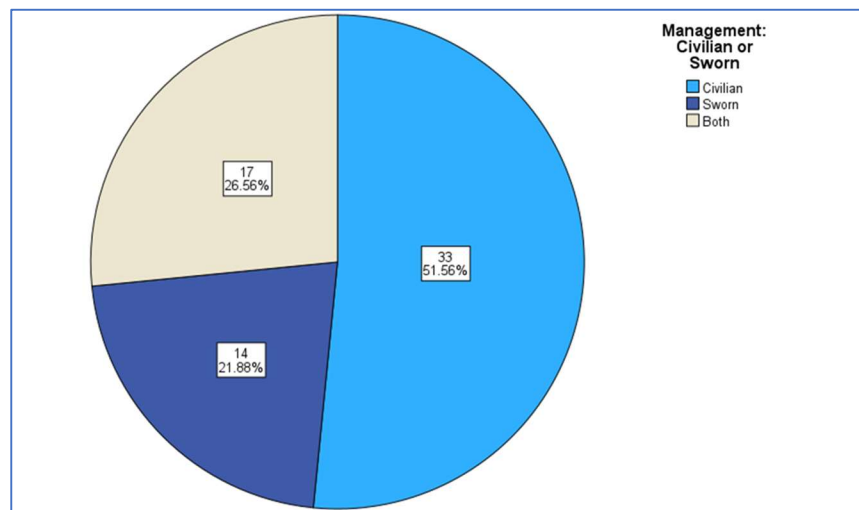


Figure 17 - PSAP Management Type

With one exception, all PSAPs reported being represented by a union, with almost half of those PSAPs indicating that scheduling and rotation are part of a union-negotiated process. A slight majority of PSAPs indicated that there are policies in place to address scheduling preferences, suggesting that just under half of PSAPs do not have policies in place to consider employee preferences. There was only one PSAP that reported offering remote work options for call-takers/dispatchers, though two respondents indicated that their PSAP is making attempts to offer this opportunity to employees.

The majority of PSAPs reported that employees work 12-hour shifts, followed by 10-hour shifts, 8-hours shifts, or 24-hour shifts. A minimal number of PSAPs reported hybrid scheduling, which was typically a mix of 12-hour and 10-hour shifts.

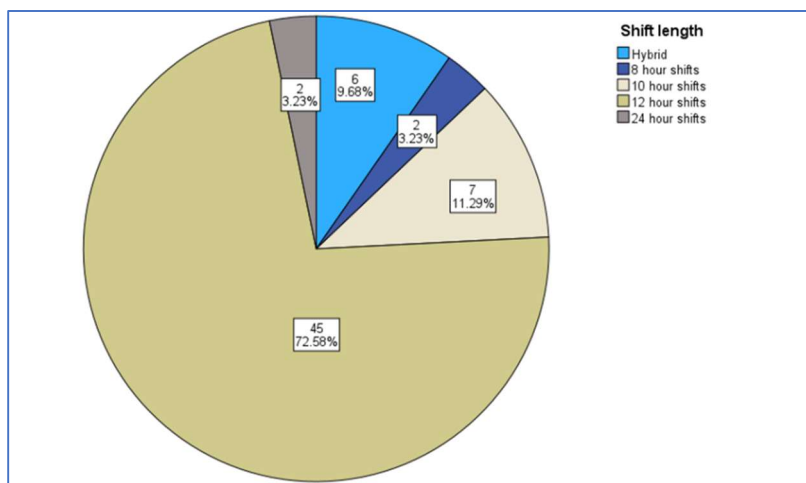


Figure 18 - Shift Length

Call Volume and CAD incidents:

The average daily call volume varied substantially across PSAPs. The majority of PSAPs handled 101 to 500 calls per day, followed by less than 100 calls per day, 501 to 1,000 calls per day, and 1,001 or more calls per day. The average for the full survey was exactly 500 calls per day with a range of 10 to 3,950. However, two outlying values were observed for California Highway Patrol and San Jose Police and Fire. These agencies reported significantly higher daily call volumes than other agencies (i.e., 3,000 or more daily calls). Removing these two agencies from the analysis, the average call volume for the remaining agencies was 404 daily calls.

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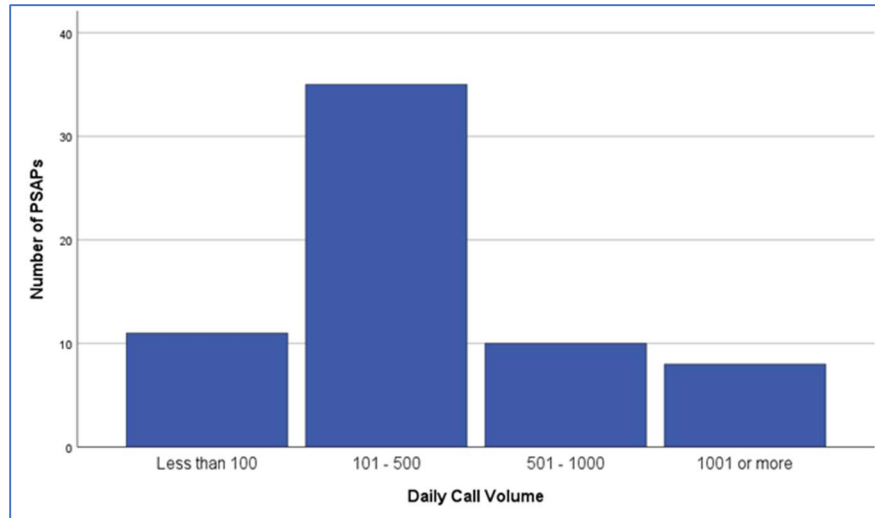


Figure 19 - Daily Call Volumes

The number of reported CAD incidents per year varied significantly, with the largest number reported by the California Highway Patrol. The average yearly number of CAD incidents for all PSAPs can be seen in the table below. When removing the two outlying values of CHP and San Jose, the average number of CAD incidents per year was 87,663 for 2020, 90,042 for 2021, and 89,871 for 2022.

Year	Average	Minimum	Maximum
2022	105,758	970	1,059,020
2021	109,397	1,118	1,270,736
2020	106,877	775	1,105,030

Table 4 - Annual CAD Data

Staffing, Turnover, and Retention:

The extent of under-staffing varied across PSAPs. A total of 10 PSAPs reported a staffing vacancy rate of 0% or less, while another 10 PSAPs reported a staffing vacancy rate over 30%. The majority of PSAPs fell in the middle, with 38 PSAPs reporting vacancy rates ranging between 10% and 29%. The average across all PSAPs represented in the survey was 19%.

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Figure 20 - Reported Staffing Vacancy Rates

PSAPs in the study reported a wide range of budgeted positions, ranging from 5 to 179. The average number of budgeted positions for the full survey was 25. The number of employed positions also ranged substantially from 4 to 163, with an average of 20. PSAPs with 10 to 19 employees were the most represented in the survey, with a little less than half of PSAPs falling into this category.

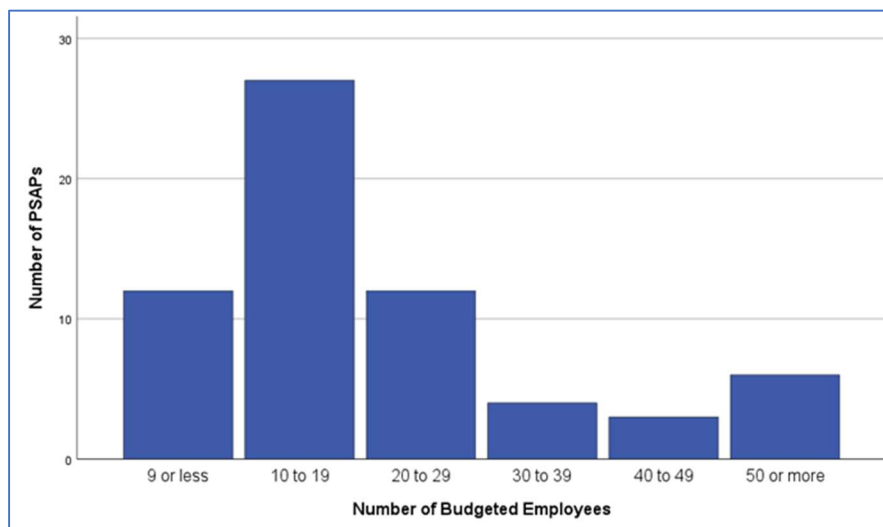


Figure 21 - Number of Budgeted Staff

A staffing percentage for dispatchers/call-takers was calculated by dividing the current number of employees by the number of budgeted positions. This revealed that 10 PSAPs were reported to be fully staffed per their number of budgeted positions. Conversely, 10 PSAPs reported staffing percentages below 69% and 18 PSAPs reported staffing percentages between 70% or 79%.

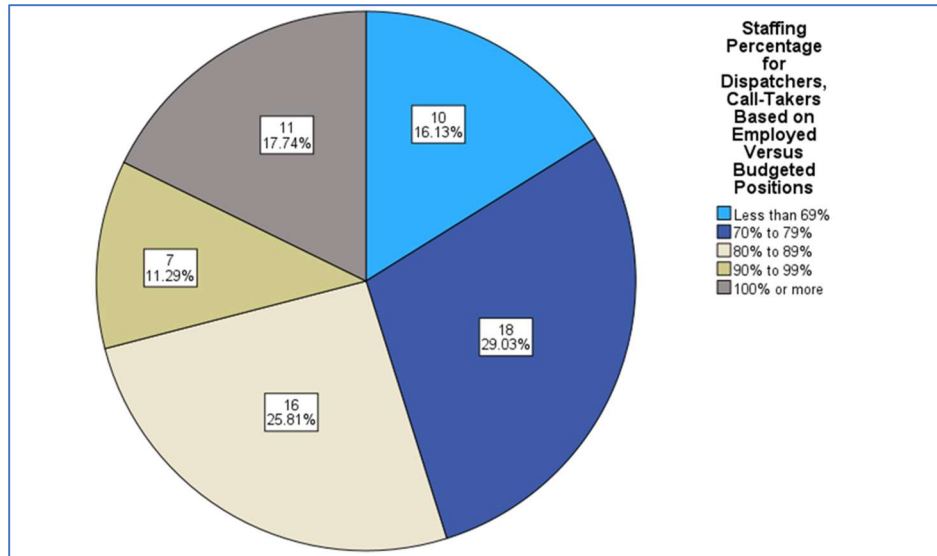


Figure 22 - Staffing Breakdown by Function

PSAPs provided staff counts at the start and end of fiscal years 2022 and 2023. In fiscal year 2022, 39% of PSAPs lost staff, 31% retained the same number, and 30% gained staff. In fiscal year 2023, 41% lost staff, 20% retained the same number, and 39% gained staff. Nine PSAPs (14%) experienced staff losses in both years and were notably more understaffed.

The workforce predominantly consists of employees with less than six years of experience. Over half of the employees have less than six years of experience. About one-third have between seven and 20 years of experience and the remaining employees have over 20 years' experience.

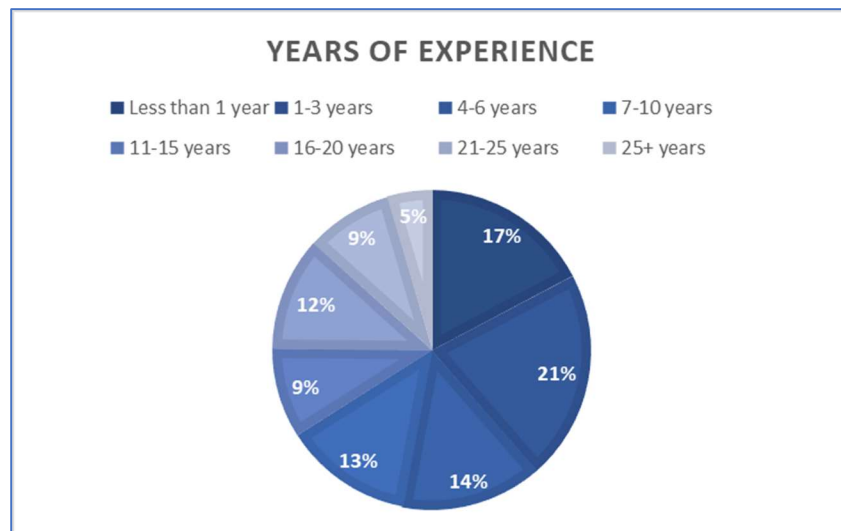


Figure 23 - Years of Experience

Currently, more than half of PSAPs offer per diem positions. Among these, some have no part-time/per diem employees, while others have varying numbers: one, two, three, four, or five or more. The average monthly hours worked by part-time/per diem employees is 53, although many work fewer than 40 hours per month. Most PSAPs do not offer job-sharing.

For determining staffing needs, PSAPs often use call volume data or the ECATS staffing model. Other methods include state standards, staff discussions, or external consultants. Some PSAPs either lack a defined strategy or are already under-staffed.

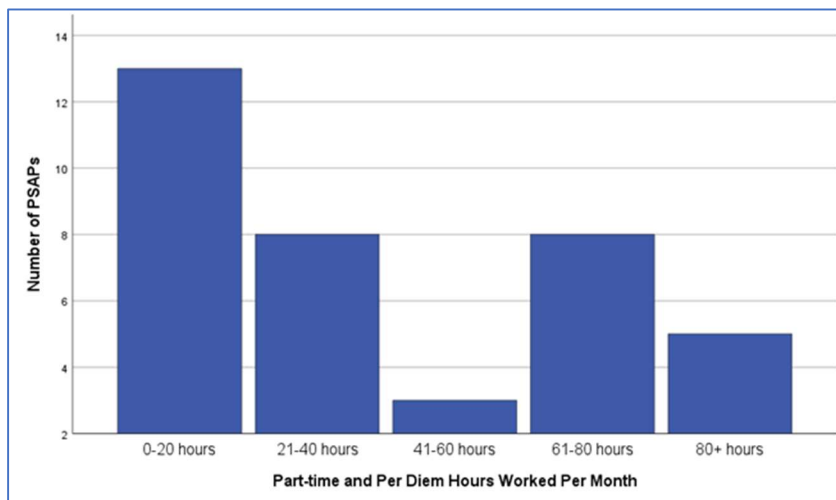


Figure 24 - Part Time and Per Diem Hours per Month

The main reasons for employee departures include stress and mental health issues, followed by financial concerns, relocation, cost of living, and commute challenges.

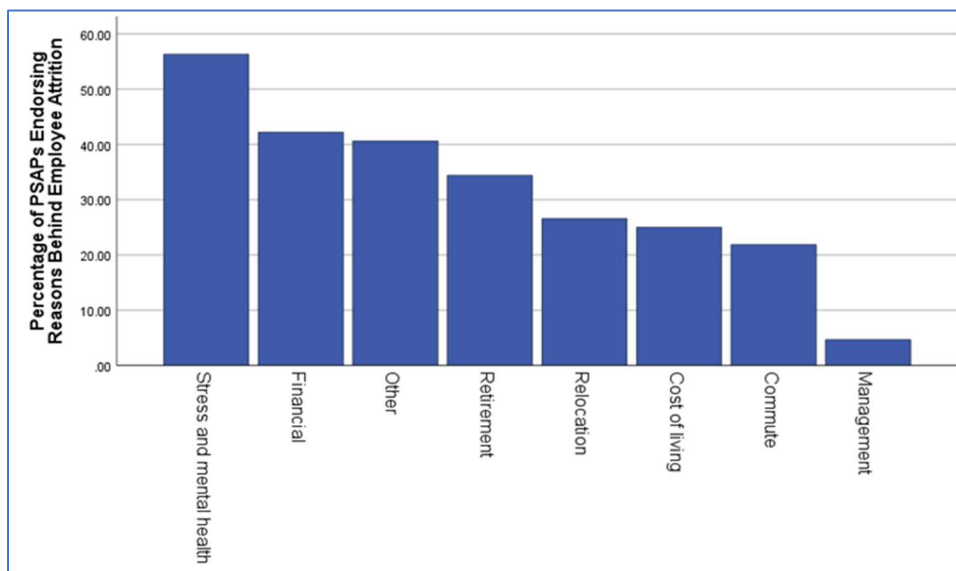


Figure 25 - Reasons PSAPs gave for Staff Leaving

About 40% of PSAPs cited "other" reasons for employee attrition, such as poor work-life balance, excessive overtime, dislike of shift work, career changes, and personal life demands. Additionally, 34% reported retirements after long careers.

To address staffing shortages, a quarter of PSAPs are transforming recruitment and training processes while others focus on enhancing work culture and expanding per diem/part-time positions. Some are negotiating retention bonuses or hiring incentives. Despite these efforts, more than a quarter of PSAPs have no long-term strategies.

Regarding new hires, 41% plan to implement changes like new training software, updated equipment, and higher salaries to attract and retain staff. Financial incentives for retention, such as bonuses or longevity pay, are offered by almost a third of PSAPs, with a few providing bilingual or education incentives.

Work Hours:

The majority of PSAPs reported having a formal policy for assigning mandatory overtime. Monthly, voluntary overtime averaged 22 hours across all PSAPs and between 0 and 96 hours. Examining the standard deviation revealed that two-thirds of PSAPs reported average voluntary overtime hours to range between 4 and 41 hours per month, suggesting a high level of variability across PSAPs in the survey.

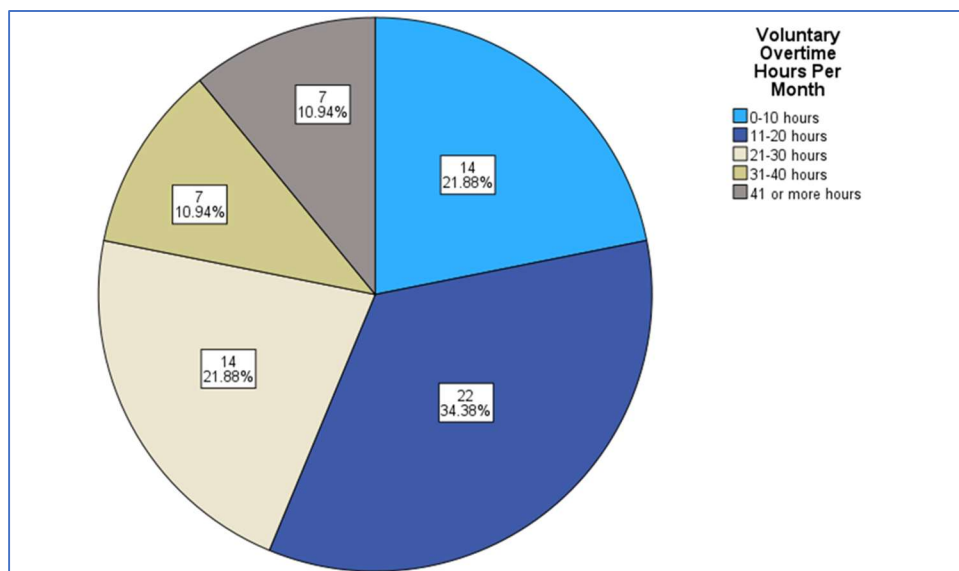


Figure 26 - Reported Voluntary Overtime per Month

PSAPs averaged 17 hours of mandatory overtime per month, ranging from 0 to 120 hours. Most PSAPs (68%) reported between 0 and 43 hours per month. About 23% of PSAPs reported no mandatory overtime. Overtime costs varied widely, from \$0 to \$2,047,431, with an average of \$388,250. However, 11 PSAPs did not provide data, and 13 reported \$0 despite having assigned overtime, indicating possible reporting issues. It is unclear whether responses of "0" were a true value or whether these responses were supposed to indicate that the value was unknown. As such, this information should be interpreted with a high level of caution.

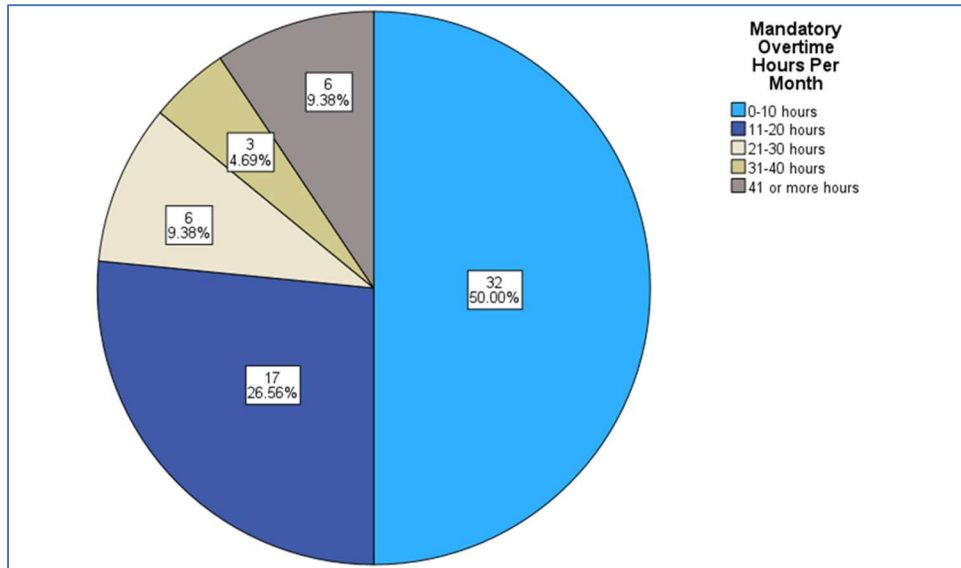


Figure 27 - Reported Mandatory Overtime per Month

3.1.2 Current Staffing Trends

Hiring and Recruitment:

The average PSAP reported hiring 4.2 trainees per year with a range of 0 to 15. Over half of PSAPs reported hiring two or fewer trainees per year. Of the remaining PSAPs, 16 reported hiring three or four trainees, 9 reported hiring five to nine trainees, and five PSAPs reported hiring 10 or more trainees each year.

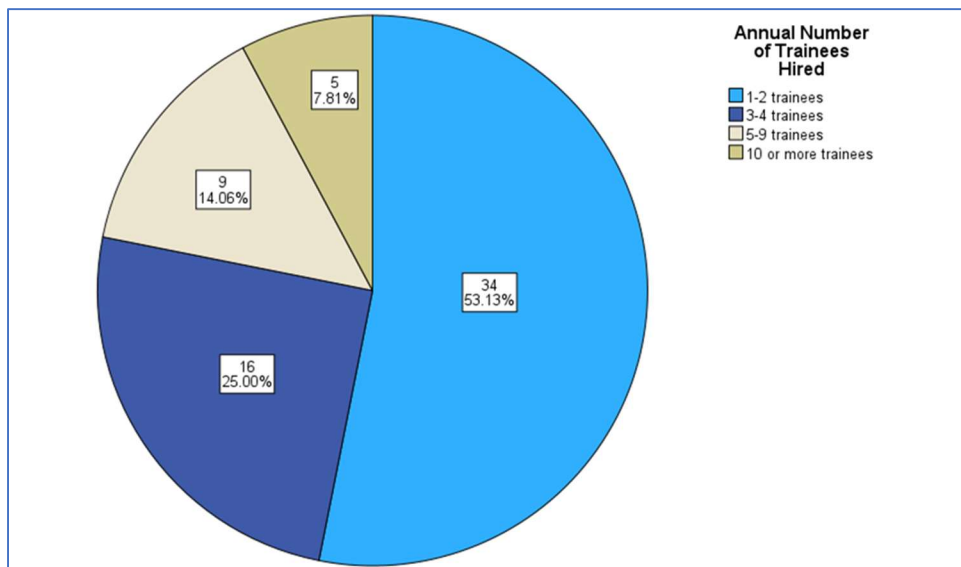


Figure 28 - PSAP Reported Annual Hires

Most PSAPs (88%) require new hires to have at least a high school diploma or GED. In 31% of PSAPs, candidates with technical or college degrees may earn higher salaries or receive educational incentives.

For recruitment, PSAPs commonly use agency career pages, social media, and local events. Mainstream job boards and 9-1-1 job boards are also utilized, along with other methods like job fairs and newspaper ads. Jurisdiction/agency job boards and social media are deemed the most effective. Additionally, a little more than half of PSAPs have dedicated recruitment teams, while some partner with local organizations, colleges, or military programs for recruitment.

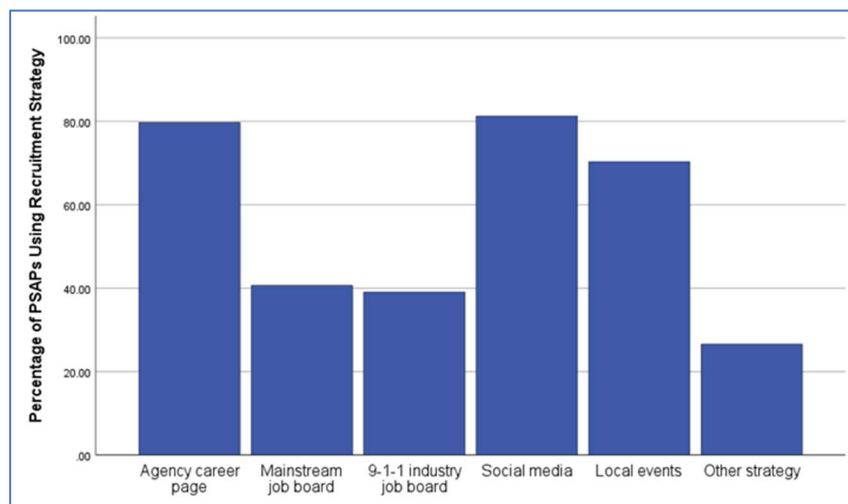


Figure 29 - Recruitment Strategies

The number of applications per hiring period ranged widely from 0 to 310, with an average of 52. Notably, nearly half of PSAPs received 10 or fewer applications per cycle, while others received fewer than 50. On average, 32% of applicants advanced to the interview stage, though this rate varied. Over half of PSAPs reported that 25% or fewer applicants reached the interview stage, and a quarter reported that only 10% or fewer did.

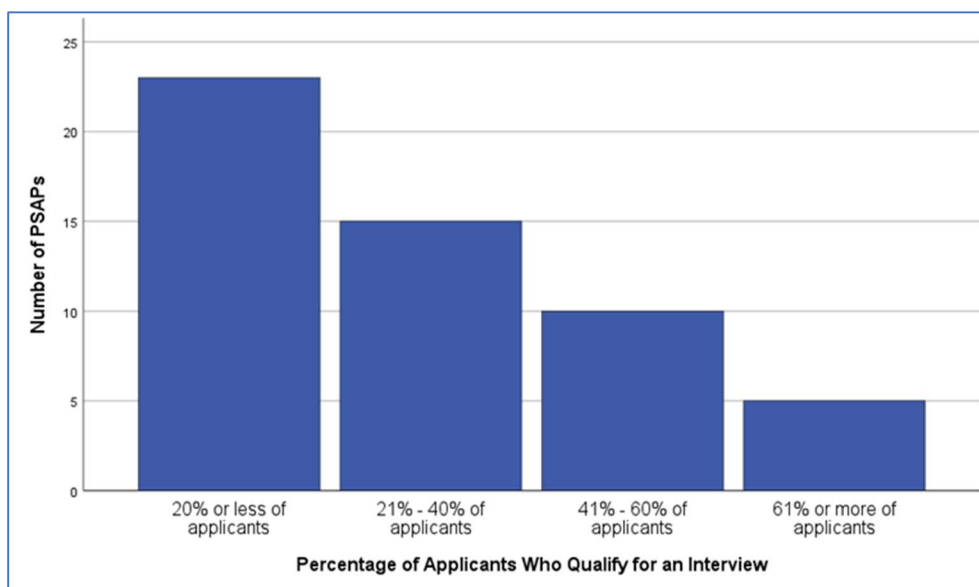


Figure 30 - Qualifying Applicants

On average, 39% of eligible applicants pass the background check, though half of PSAPs reported that 25% or fewer pass, while a quarter reported 75% or more pass.

Regarding promoting the job, 23% of PSAPs do not actively highlight the unique and positive aspects of working in 9-1-1. However, some PSAPs engage in various promotional activities, such as direct outreach to potential employees, emphasizing the telecommunicator's community role, conducting meet-and-greet tours, and offering ride-alongs with first responders.

For recruitment, 31% of PSAPs reported little to no effort in attracting new telecommunicators. Successful strategies mentioned by others included lateral transfers with wage considerations, increased pay and recruitment bonuses, employee referrals, social media, and a streamlined hiring process. Referrals, social media, and recruitment bonuses were the most commonly cited effective methods.

3.2 Training and Development

3.2.1 Overview of Existing Training and Development Initiatives

Out of the PSAPs surveyed, 48 reported having a formalized training program aligned with national 9-1-1 guidelines. On average, 60% of trainees complete the program and are cleared to work independently. In less than half of the PSAPs, 75%-100% of trainees complete training, while others see only 25%-49% of trainees finish.

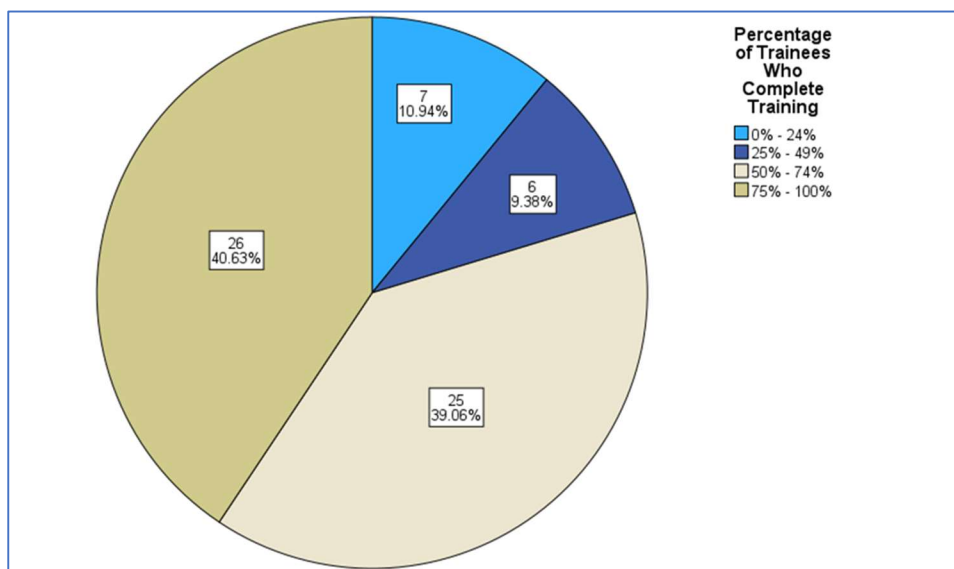


Figure 31 - % of Trainees Who Complete Training

Initial training for call-takers/dispatchers is extensive, often starting with around 101 hours of in-house classroom instruction in a majority of the PSAPs, followed by 102 hours of protocol/dispatch training in about half of the PSAPs. Trainees typically complete about 880 hours

of on-the-job training. Some PSAPs include fire dispatch training, averaging 68 hours, and 44% require the 120-hour California POST training. Additionally, 38% of PSAPs require training in stress management, resilience, or wellness, although details on this are limited.

Training	# of PSAPs requiring training	Min hours	Max hours	Avg hours
Classroom training	91%	0	672	101
Call-taking protocol	58%	0	1,008	102
On-the-job training	95%	0	2,600	880
Fire dispatch	39%	0	600	68
California POST	44%	0	120	120

Table 5 - Training Types and Lengths

3.2.2 Continuing Education

PSAPs varied in the required number of hours for continuing education to be completed biannually (0 to 100 hours) but fell at an average of 28 hours. The most offered continuing education opportunity was in call-taking protocol, followed by health and wellness, PSAP technology, stress management, or other specialized training opportunities.

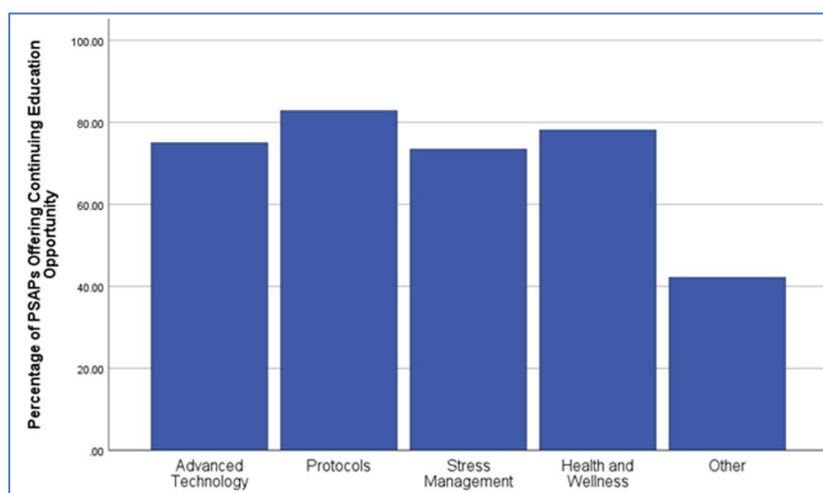


Figure 32 - PSAPs Offering Continuing Education

The most commonly reported format for continuing education was classroom training, followed by in-person virtual training, webinars, off-site virtual training, on-the-job training, and other formats.

The majority of PSAPs offer their telecommunicators the opportunity to attend state level conferences and/or pursue professional certifications. A smaller percentage offer the opportunity to attend national level conferences. The majority of PSAPs also reported cross-training opportunities for employees, with a smaller percentage reporting specialized training tracks for career progression or skill development.

Training, Continuing Education, and Professional Development for Supervisors and Senior Management:

Employees who are interested in supervisory roles have numerous opportunities for training and continuing education. Regarding training, three-quarters of PSAPs reported the opportunity to complete CTO training and reported the opportunity to complete on-the-job training, half reported the opportunity to complete management training and training in effective communication, a few less reported the opportunity to complete training in human resources training and advanced technical skills.

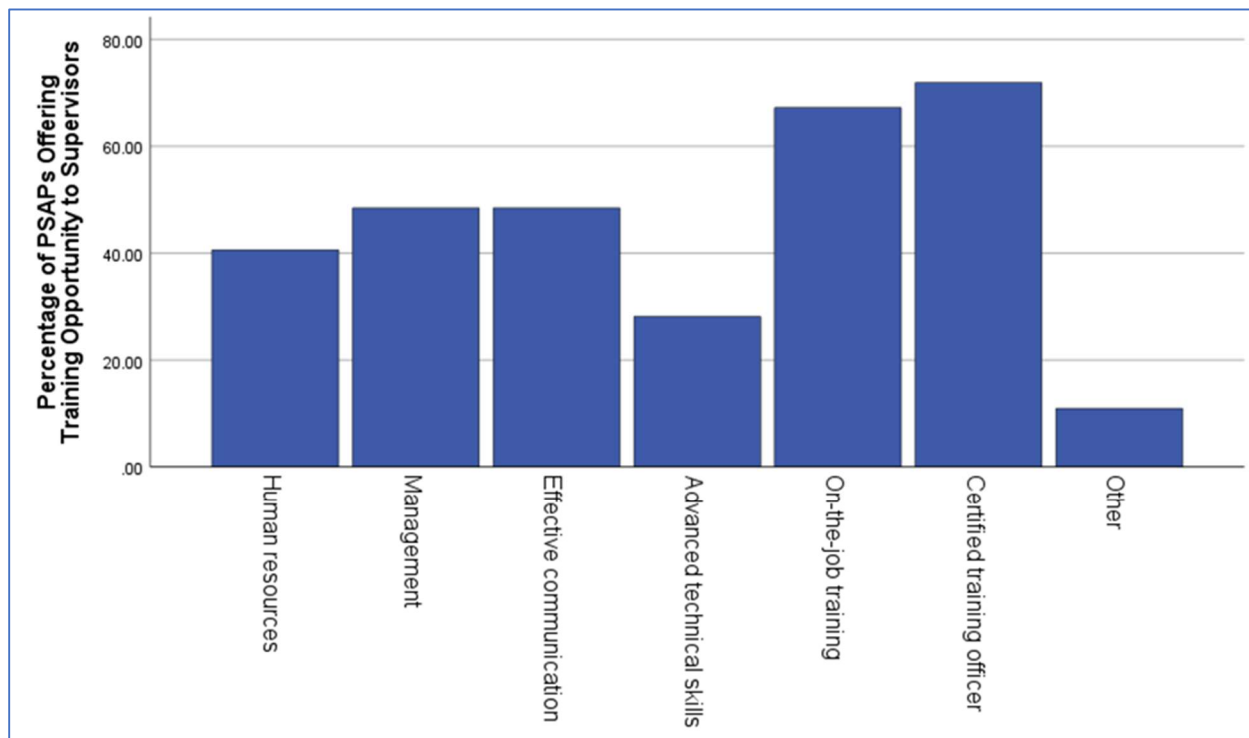


Figure 33 - Supervisor Training

Supervisors typically complete 26 hours of continuing education every two years, though this ranges from 0 to 80 hours, with some PSAPs reporting no continuing education at all. The most common requirement is 24 hours.

Continuing education for supervisors often includes call-taking protocols, PSAP technology, health and wellness, stress management, and other domains. Supervisors also have access to training in management, advanced technical skills, human resources, communication, on-the-job training, and certified training officer courses. Most PSAPs support supervisors' attendance at state and national conferences and the pursuit of professional certifications.

For senior managers, training is offered in management, communication, human resources, on-the-job training, advanced technical skills, and other areas.

3.3 Health & Wellness

3.3.1 Health and Wellness Initiatives

PSAPs reported a number of practices aimed at protecting and enhancing the mental health of their workforce. For instance, every PSAP in the current survey reported having an employee assistance program (EAP) available to employees. 77% indicated that employees have access to an EAP that is specific to public safety and a few less indicating that their PSAP has a vetted list of mental health providers in the community to which employees can go for assistance. Furthermore, a majority of PSAPs reported that there are regular debriefing sessions or support mechanisms in place for call-takers/dispatchers after handling critical incidents. Though these efforts were reported to be in place, only around half of PSAPs indicated that they have strategies in place to identify employee burnout and/or fatigue.

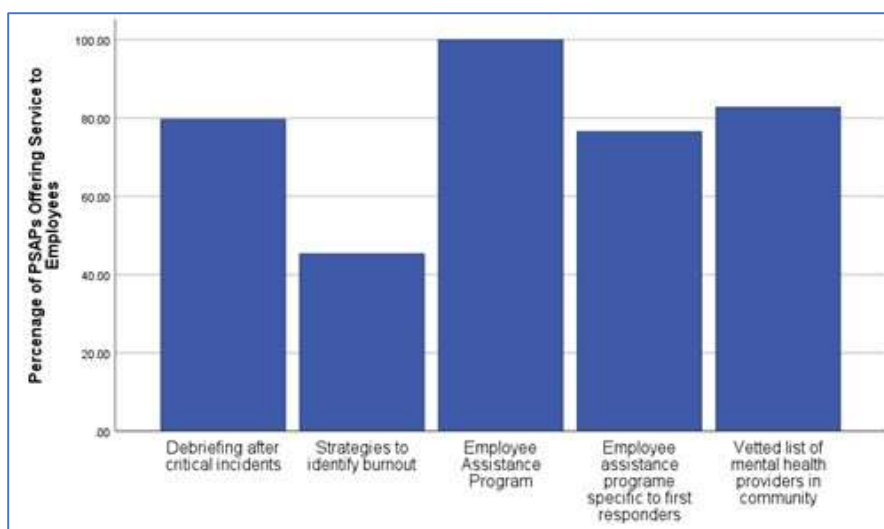


Figure 34 - Services Offered to Employees

For stress management, resilience, and wellness training, 45% of PSAPs require supervisors to undergo ongoing training, while 47% mandate continuing education on mental health and wellness for all employees, with some encouraging but not requiring it.

A little more than half of PSAPs have implemented strategies to improve work-life balance and mental health, including limits on overtime, quiet rooms, therapy dogs, scheduled training days, on-site crafting materials, team-building activities, a treadmill, and Mindbase software.

Employee satisfaction and engagement are primarily assessed through group or one-on-one meetings, with some PSAPs using anonymous surveys or interpreting a "lack of complaints" as a sign of satisfaction. Notably, 10 PSAPs reported they do not assess these areas.

Regarding feedback, a majority of PSAPs have an open-door policy or hold regular feedback meetings, with only a few having a formal feedback process or use a suggestion box for anonymous input.

3.4 Staff Recruitment and Retention

3.4.1 Recruitment Strategies

Nearly half of the respondents reported adapting recruitment strategies based on feedback or changing needs. Adjustments included adding peer review interviews and supervisor panels to better assess cultural fit and work-life balance. Some agencies increased salaries by up to 10%, but this did not significantly boost the applicant pool. Other changes involved increasing staff participation in recruitment events, modifying interview practices, reducing educational requirements, and enhancing efforts to recruit lateral hires. The traditional "dispatchers don't cry" mindset is being replaced with a more supportive approach, leading to changes in training, scheduling, and the hiring process. Additional adjustments include streamlining background checks, using testing software like CritiCall, mandating recovery time between shifts, and modifying job descriptions to include entry-level positions to broaden the candidate pool.

3.4.2 Retention Strategies

Respondents reported using various retention strategies, including wellness and on-duty fitness programs, a 10% retention bonus after one year, and longevity pay at the 10-year mark. Efforts to maintain a positive work environment and work-life balance include flexible scheduling, mental health support, and recognition programs. Continuous communication with applicants and staff, training opportunities, involvement in specialized assignments, and seniority-based shift bidding are also emphasized. Additional benefits include vacation accrual increases.

Over half of the respondents have recognition programs for dispatcher excellence, such as Dispatcher of the Year, commendations, service pins, and awards for exemplary service. Perks include dedicated parking spots, conference tuition, and travel. Recognition is also given through Employee of the Month/Quarter/Year programs, internal ceremonies, and industry-level commendations.

When asked why Call taker/Dispatchers leave their positions, PSAP's responded with the following:

- Financial: 42%
- Cost of living: 28%
- Commute: 24%
- Stress / mental health: 55%
- Management: 5%
- Relocation: 31%
- Retirement / early retirement: 34%
- Other: 41%
 - Pursuit of a different career path
 - Job opportunities (firefighter jobs, spouse job opportunities), job is not for them (shift work, type of work, etc.)
 - Promotion at outside agency

- Advancement opportunities elsewhere
- Raising a family
- Desire for more normal hours with weekends and holidays off
- Limited opportunities for growth within current department
- Motherhood: opting for part-time work or leaving for non-shift work to spend more time with children
- Dissatisfaction with current boss or police administration
- Overtime not aligning with work-life balance expectations
- Preference for private sector jobs with higher pay
- Workload and forced overtime leading to poor work-life balance
- Inability to handle demanding schedule
- Toxic work environment and management's failure to address bullying behavior
- New moms choosing to become stay-at-home parents
- Leaving for agencies with higher wages or moving out of the area
- Medical issues leading to transitioning to per diem work
- Preference for civilian management with dispatch experience

The majority of PSAP responses indicated there are no financial retention incentives for existing employees. The remaining state their employees receive various financial incentives and bonuses to enhance retention and recognize their service. These include:

- Increased monthly retention bonus
- Additional paid time off
- Annual retention bonuses and stipends for additional work or projects
- 5% pay increase at the 10-year mark for longevity
- Bilingual pay, education incentives, and longevity pay
- Emergency Medical Dispatch and Emergency Fire Dispatch certifications, training pay, and bilingual pay
- Hiring/retention bonuses of \$10,000 per year
- Longevity pay, with increases every five years
- Double time on overtime during short-staffed periods
- Special assignment pay, night differential pay, and education incentives
- Base salary increases upon completing five years of service, and an additional 1.5% after ten years.

Several PSAPs assess employee satisfaction and engagement through methods like annual evaluations, Individual Development Plans (IDPs), meetings, surveys, and ongoing one-on-one communication. Supervisors gather feedback via in-person conversations, surveys, focus groups, and exit interviews. Recognition programs, health initiatives, and transparent communication are used to boost morale.

Only 35% of agencies focus on dispatcher well-being with initiatives like flexible time off, part-time work, equitable overtime, wellness rooms, emotional support dogs, and mental health counseling. Efforts to reduce mandatory overtime include schedule changes and increased staffing.

Feedback from call-takers and dispatchers is collected through open-door policies, meetings, formal feedback processes, suggestion boxes, emails, wellbeing committees, and anonymous surveys.

Most respondents indicated that PSAP leadership is receptive to changes driven by staffing dynamics. New ideas are discussed with staff, and some are implemented or tested on a trial basis. Leadership considers staffing needs, fiscal impact, and alignment with values when evaluating changes, focusing on improving working conditions and exploring innovations like cross-training. A small percentage reported resistance from leadership to new ideas related to staffing.

In 2020, California reclassified telecommunicators as First Responders under Assembly Bill 1945, acknowledging their crucial role. This reclassification may improve job satisfaction, pay, and benefits, making the career more attractive, though it also brings increased responsibilities. California PSAPs need to update job descriptions to reflect the critical duties of telecommunicators, aligning with national efforts to reclassify them as first responders, which is essential for recruitment, training, and retention.

3.5 Technology & Resources

3.5.1 Technology

A total of 13 PSAPs reported using technology enablement to reduce workload on call-takers/dispatchers and/or create efficiencies (i.e. artificial intelligence, machine learning, call path processes, etc.). Of those, five PSAPs reported using phone trees. In addition, half of PSAPs indicated that they are currently evaluating or plan to evaluate specific technologies that would reduce workload or create efficiencies for call-takers/dispatchers.

Data Interpretation:

Statistical analyses were conducted to explore associations among variables in the dataset, but the small survey size warrants caution in interpreting the results. Uneven group sizes, such as comparing groups of 20 to 44, can make it harder to find statistical significance. More PSAP data would improve the chances of identifying significant associations.

Some expected significant associations were found. For example, larger agencies with higher call volumes had more employees, trainees, and applicants. Additionally, agencies with higher

vacancy rates reported significantly more mandatory overtime, though not more voluntary overtime.

In terms of other significant associations, the data revealed the following:

- PSAPs that require initial mental health training have lower voluntary overtime hours, lower vacancy rates, and a higher percentage of applicants who complete training.
- There was an inverted U in the association between on-the-job training hours and percent of trainees who complete training. PSAPs that required the least on-the-job training and PSAPs that required the most on-the-job training had the lowest percentage of trainees who complete training. PSAPs in the middle range regarding on-the-job training hours had the highest percentage of trainees who complete training.
- PSAPs that use technology enablement to reduce workload on call-takers/dispatchers and/or create efficiencies experienced fewer changes in staffing levels, less voluntary overtime, and less mandatory overtime.

Apart from the bulleted associations above, there were no other statistically significant associations between any of the following variables:

- Management (i.e., sworn, civilian, both)
- Shift length (i.e., hybrid, 12 hour, 10 hour, 8 hour)
- Daily call volume
- Annual number of CAD incidents
- Current vacancy rate
- Turnover rate
- Voluntary overtime hours
- Mandatory overtime hours
- Number of hires annually
- Number of per diem or part-time positions
- Use of minimum education requirements
- Training and continuing education opportunities offered
- Professional development opportunities offered
- Cross-training opportunities
- Number of required continuing education hours
- Debriefing practices
- Use of an EAP with or without specialization in public safety
- Recruitment practices
- Partnership with local agencies to enhance recruitment
- Willingness to change

- Use of financial incentives for applicants (i.e., hiring bonus) or existing employees (i.e., longevity/retention pay)

Several factors may explain why more statistically significant associations were not observed. The small survey size and high variability among variables posed statistical challenges. While the study's representation of diverse PSAPs is a strength, the effectiveness of hiring and retention strategies likely varies by PSAP size and location. What works for one PSAP may not work for others, making it difficult to generalize findings.

Outliers, such as responses from the large California Highway Patrol and smaller PSAPs, also impacted the results. Extreme values were adjusted or removed for averages and inferential analyses but retained when describing percentages.

Only 64 out of 443 PSAPs responded, raising concerns about potential bias. The survey may overrepresent proactive PSAPs with leadership invested in research or those with enough resources to participate.

It is also important to note that the study's cross-sectional nature is a limitation. In cross-sectional designs, the data represent a snapshot of current functioning. By way of example, the current study found no association between financial incentives and staffing levels. However, many PSAPs indicated they have just recently integrated financial incentives to retain employees. It is possible that the effect of financial incentives is not observed until several years after their adoption in a PSAP once more employees have qualified for, and received, the additional pay.

3.6 Comparison to Telecommunicator Survey

The surveys for telecommunicators and PSAPs differed in their questions, but both groups addressed training, continuing education, and professional development opportunities. PSAP leadership reported more opportunities than telecommunicators, likely due to leadership's broader awareness or more optimistic view. This suggests that PSAP leadership may need to more actively promote existing opportunities to frontline employees.

A similar gap was noted in perceptions of openness to new policies, with telecommunicators viewing leadership as less open to change than leadership perceives itself. This could be due to a lack of awareness among telecommunicators about leadership efforts.

The most significant disparity was in views on management's role in turnover. While 65% of telecommunicators cited management as a key reason for co-worker attrition, less than 10% of PSAP leaders saw it as a major factor. This points to a disconnect between PSAP management and frontline employees.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary of Key Findings of the Call taker/Dispatcher Survey

The survey results depict a workforce grappling with various challenges across multiple fronts. Similar to findings in other 9-1-1 studies, respondents in this survey reported heightened levels of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to the general population, alongside struggles with maintaining a healthy work-life balance. On average, respondents reported working 48 hours per week, with a quarter of them working 52 hours or more. Despite facing obstacles such as low pay, inadequate benefits, ineffective management, a negative work culture, and interpersonal conflicts, respondents persist in these demanding roles. Their dedication persists despite widespread understaffing, with 38% reporting their PSAP is consistently below minimum staffing levels for every shift, and an additional 12% experience shortages for 2-3 shifts weekly. Such conditions are unsustainable, leading many employees to either leave or struggle to complete initial training. For those who remain, opportunities for training, ongoing education, professional growth, and financial incentives are severely limited.

Salary was listed as the top challenge facing PSAPs among respondents, with 47% reporting salary as the number one challenge faced by their PSAP, and two-thirds of employees reporting that financial incentives would greatly enhance retention in their PSAP. Financial concerns were also reported as the third leading perceived cause behind co-workers' attrition from the PSAP. As salary is directly contributing to retention, and therefore staffing issues in the PSAP, it is critical to consider programs and funding that can increase the salary of this critical workforce in the state of California.

Following salary, 26% of respondents reported that the primary challenge faced by their PSAP is poor management. Written responses revealed that respondents believe management is poorly trained, “doesn’t know what they’re doing,” are unequitable in the enforcement of policies and schedule, and simply “don’t care about employees.” Respondents indicated that management is not open to new ideas for change, and many are focused on short-term solutions to long-term problems. Notably, trainers, supervisors, and managers are receiving limited support and training. This subgroup reports worse mental health overall than frontline employees, and the training and continuing education opportunities for employees serving in these critical roles are extremely limited. It is likely that the lack of support and training for these employees is having a direct impact on employee recruitment and training, which perpetuates the staffing crisis when trainees are not adequately trained or cannot complete the training program. Numerous employees reported that their training program needs to be substantially revised, but that supervisors and managers are too over-committed to other tasks to spend the time necessary to transform and improve their training program. It is vital that supervisors and managers receive additional training focused on: (1) management, (2) adult learning, (3) effective communication,

and (3) mental health and wellness. Finding ways to support and train those serving in this critical role is vital to the health of the PSAP, and a critical step in addressing the widespread issues of staffing and retention. Development of training and leadership skills is vital to ensure the effectiveness of PSAP operations and bolster a positive culture within the agency. Notably, one in ten respondents indicated that PSAP culture was the top challenge faced by their PSAP, and trainers, supervisors, and managers play a key role in promoting a positive culture.

Factors such as staffing levels and budget constraints may directly contribute to the limited availability of training, ongoing education, and professional development opportunities. However, it's imperative to allocate greater funding towards ensuring comprehensive training for all 9-1-1 telecommunicators, starting from their initial training phase. In comparison to 9-1-1 cohorts nationwide, the current survey indicates relatively scarce opportunities for training and professional growth. Insufficient training for new recruits can result in heightened levels of stress and anxiety, ultimately leading to attrition. Telecommunicators in California would greatly benefit from increased training opportunities to bolster their skills, benefiting both the PSAP and the workforce.

While salary and management were identified as the top challenge facing PSAPs by nearly three-quarters of the survey, stress and mental health was the most frequently endorsed reason why respondents believe their co-workers elect to leave the PSAP. Specifically, 74% of respondents cited stress and mental health as a strong contributor to employee attrition. Consistent with other 9-1-1 surveys, symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress were significantly elevated when compared to the general population and consistent with other 9-1-1 surveys from across the country. PSAPs that have EAPs specific to public safety and/or vetted lists of mental health professionals available to employees were marked by overall better mental health. These practices should continue or be adopted by PSAPs that do not currently have these resources available to employees. Further, employees who received initial training in stress management and resilience reported overall better mental health. It is critical that trainees and early career telecommunicators are provided the opportunity to learn about signs and symptoms of poor mental health and encouraged to identify proactive stress management strategies in their early career. This is critical, as the data reveals that the number of outside personal stressors experienced by employees directly impacts mental health. These stressors become more numerous as employees enter mid-life and mid-career, as they may have growing commitments to childcare, elderly care, or care of partners, as well as accumulating physical health concerns. It is imperative that PSAPs acknowledge and address the stress associated with the job and provide adequate training and resources for employees. Without such efforts, the staffing and retention crisis in California is likely to continue.

A notable finding in the current survey is the prevailing sense among respondents that there is limited optimism for change in their PSAPs, with a majority indicating a lack of openness to change. Interestingly, employees in PSAPs deemed less receptive to change exhibited statistically poorer mental health compared to those in more adaptable environments. Several factors may contribute to PSAPs' resistance to change, including limited time for strategic planning amid

widespread understaffing and mandatory overtime. Effecting cultural change requires ongoing dedication and resources, which can be challenging when fundamental needs aren't met, and leadership teams lack adequate training and preparation. This challenge may be particularly pronounced for trainers and supervisors, who play pivotal roles in both the well-being and functionality of the PSAP. Amidst heightened stress levels and uncertainty, organizations may inadvertently foster problematic workplace behaviors, resulting in interpersonal tensions and negative workplace dynamics. The data underscore the urgent need for change to secure the future of this essential workforce. Without significant reforms, the departing workforce in California will not be adequately replaced by a trained and proficient incoming generation.

4.2 Summary of Key Findings of the PSAP Survey

Results of the PSAP survey reveal that the majority of PSAPs report making active attempts to address challenges posed by staffing, turnover, training, and poor work-life balance. These efforts are described throughout this report. Given the survey size, it is difficult to determine which of these efforts have been most effective in reducing vacancies and turnover, particularly when a particular effort was reported by only one or two PSAPs. Yet, the report provides an overview of the commitment and creativity that many PSAPs in California are using to inform new policies and procedures that other PSAPs may consider adopting.

Despite these efforts, 10 PSAPs (16%) reported staffing percentages below 69% and 18 PSAPs (28%) reported staffing percentages between 70% or 79%. While these numbers may not be immediately striking, it suggests that five to eight employees are doing the work and covering the shifts that should be allocated to ten employees in over 40% of the PSAPs in the survey. This represents a staffing crisis amidst a 24/7 industry that relies on swift and efficient decision-making among call-takers/dispatchers. Employees who are over-taxed and exhausted due to high workload and excessive overtime hours are more likely to make errors that may have critical consequences.

While many of the statistical comparisons were nonsignificant, several findings emerged to inform recommendations. To begin, PSAPs that are using technology enablement to reduce workload on call-takers/dispatchers and/or create efficiencies reported fewer changes in staffing levels, less voluntary overtime, and less mandatory overtime. PSAP leadership may be hesitant to introduce additional technology to their agency, but the data suggests that integration of technologies such as phone trees may reduce workload and staffing levels that can result in less overtime need.

There was a significant association between on-the-job training hours and the percentage of trainees who complete training. PSAPs reporting the fewest and most on-the-job training hours had the lowest percentage of trainees who complete. It is possible that trainees working in PSAPs that require the fewest on-the-job training hours may feel ill-prepared to work independently (or that they will be ill-prepared to work independently) and attrit before they are asked to do so. Trainees in agencies with the most on-the-job training hours may become frustrated and impatient with the training process and elect to leave the industry prematurely.

Finally, there was evidence that PSAPs requiring initial mental health training for trainees had lower voluntary overtime hours, lower vacancy rates, and a higher percentage of applicants who complete training. One possible explanation is that PSAPs that require such training have more resources to allocate to trainees, leading to higher retention of trainees, and more overall resources in their agency, which reduces the need for overtime and reduces vacancies. Another explanation is that trainees exposed to early mental health training may be more robust to the rigors of training, which results in lower vacancy rates in centers, and thus less need for overtime among employees.

Though the survey was relatively small and represents a slice of PSAPs in California, the results of the study reveal that the 9-1-1 industry in California is marked by a staffing crisis in which call-takers/dispatchers are working excessive hours in understaffed agencies. The efforts to address the staffing and retention crisis are diverse but coming up short. Results of the current project suggest that an emphasis on integrating new technology to relieve burden for non-crisis calls, training for management, transformation of current training practices, and initial training in resilience and mental health should be considered top priorities to begin addressing the crisis.

4.3 Final Recommendations for Improving Staffing Practices

Effective staffing practices are essential for maintaining the optimal performance and sustainability of personnel, particularly in the critical and ever-changing field of 9-1-1 Call Takers and Dispatchers. Although a vast array of issues were identified in the survey, there are potential solutions that could address a majority of these challenges. By addressing current challenges and implementing best practices throughout the state, California PSAPs can make significant improvements in recruitment, retention, and overall employee satisfaction. The following recommendations will ultimately result in improved employee retention, job satisfaction and the mental health of the telecommunicators.

1. **Address Short Staffing and Overtime Demands:** Addressing short staffing and overtime issues in a 9-1-1 center requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving recruitment, retention, scheduling practices, and operational efficiency. The PSAPs should implement strategies to alleviate short staffing, such as hiring additional personnel or redistributing the workload. Set limits on overtime hours to prevent burnout and ensure adequate rest periods for employees.

Recruitment and Hiring are among the biggest impediments in operating the 9-1-1 Center. To assist with this, PSAPs should implement targeted recruitment campaigns to attract qualified candidates. Competitive compensation for skilled telecommunicators could aid in recruitment, where retention bonuses and performance incentives could assist with retention.

To retain experienced call takers and dispatchers, the most effective strategies for enhancing employee satisfaction and retention include offering ongoing training and career development opportunities, promoting a healthy work-life balance, providing flexible scheduling options, implementing mental health and wellness programs, and establishing employee recognition initiatives.

Lastly, operational efficiency plays a part in employee retention. Ways for a PSAP to improve their day-to-day operations include utilizing advanced technology and automation to streamline workflows, regularly reviewing and updating SOPs to ensure they are efficient and effective, and optimizing resource allocation by ensuring that shifts are adequately staffed, and resources are used efficiently.

2. **Improve Compensation and Benefits:** An overall increase in pay for 9-1-1 telecommunicators to reflect the demanding nature of their work. Consider salary initiatives and recognition for longevity in their jobs. Enhance benefits packages to include comprehensive healthcare coverage, mental health support, and wellness programs.
3. **Improve Mental Health Support:** Mental health resources for 9-1-1 telecommunicators are crucial given the high-stress and often traumatic nature of their work. There are several initiatives that can be utilized to improve how a telecommunicator handles stress management and overall enhance their mental health.

PSAPs need to establish mental health resources and support services specifically tailored to the needs of 9-1-1 telecommunicators and provide specialized training programs that address the unique challenges they face. These programs should include crisis call protocols, managing stress, coping with traumatic incidents, self-care, resilience-building and recognizing the signs of burnout and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Having access to counseling services, peer support groups, and stress management programs would greatly benefit the PSAP staff.

It is also critical for leadership in a PSAP to provide mental health support to their staff. Supervisors and managers must be trained to recognize signs of distress in their team members and provide the appropriate resources and support.

PSAPs, with their leadership, should conduct regular wellness check-ins with their staff to identify potential mental health issues and stressors and provide support or intervention. The PSAPs should provide telecommunicators with resources for self-care such as relaxation techniques, healthy coping strategies and access to a quiet room when needed.

By prioritizing the mental health and well-being of 9-1-1 telecommunicators, PSAPs can create a supportive work environment that enhances staff morale, retention rates, and ultimately, the effectiveness of emergency response services

4. Training and Education:

The state could assist in establishing more standardized training protocols for Call taker, dispatcher and supervisor training. While many organizations have their own training requirements, there's room for improvement by including the State of California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Public Safety Dispatchers' Basic Course. Currently the PSAPs across the state have varied programs which include a wide variety of on-the-job training hours which show a correlation to how many trainees make it through the initial training programs according to the responses in the survey.

PSAPs should develop a management training program to assist PSAP leaders with management skills, how to conduct effective adult learning, essential communication, and mental health and wellness.

Increase opportunities and incentives for continuing education for front-line and management staff and additional training for those interested in advancing into leadership positions.

Mental health awareness, stress management, and wellness should be a mandatory part of a PSAP's initial training program in order to thoroughly prepare call takers and dispatchers for the stressors of these positions.

5. Enhance Management and Work Culture: Provide training and support for managers to improve their leadership skills and create a positive work environment.

Improve employee engagement and retention by teaching teams the fine art of communication, but also commit to creating an inclusive experience where everyone feels safe to participate and develop communication channels for employees to voice concerns and suggestions for improvement. Lack of awareness and lack of communication about perceived issues and even systems already in place and available were recurring themes in the surveys.

Implement conflict resolution strategies and team-building activities to improve interpersonal relationships among staff members. Address any underlying issues contributing to conflicts and promote a culture of collaboration and support.

6. **Invest in Ongoing Training and Professional Development:** Offer opportunities for ongoing training, education, and professional development to enhance the skills and knowledge of 9-1-1 telecommunicators and management staff that goes beyond the day-to-day training. Provide financial incentives or career advancement pathways for those who pursue additional training and certifications or are looking to advance their career positions in the PSAP.

Attending state and national conferences can offer valuable training opportunities and enable networking with other 9-1-1 telecommunicators and administrators. This allows for the observation of how other Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) operate and what they offer to their staff, providing insights that could enhance practices in California.

7. **Implement Work-Life Balance Initiatives:** Implement policies and initiatives to promote a healthy work-life balance, such as flexible scheduling options, paid time off, and family-friendly benefits and events.

Making sure telecommunicators have comfortable workspaces, a clean work environment and well-equipped breakrooms, as well as a quiet space to go when they need to decompress from a stressful event helps telecommunicators manage the demands of their job.

8. **Support Employee Recognition and Appreciation:** Recognize and appreciate the hard work and dedication of 9-1-1 telecommunicators through regular acknowledgment, rewards programs, and celebrations of milestones and achievements. This aims to boost morale, enhance job satisfaction, and promote a positive work environment by recognizing the dedication, skill, and professionalism of these essential workers.

The goals of employee recognition include acknowledging excellence by recognizing telecommunicators who demonstrate exceptional performance, professionalism and dedication, improve job satisfaction and morale, and encourage best practices.

Recognition could be as simple as a certificate for Call Taker/Dispatcher of the Month, or a public acknowledgement through social media or newsletters. There can also be tangible rewards offered such as gift cards or extra time off should budgets allow.

9. **Allow Regular Feedback and Evaluation:** Conduct regular surveys and feedback sessions to assess employee satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. Use this feedback to continually refine policies and initiatives to better support the needs of 9-1-1 telecommunicators.

PSAP administrators need to be continually monitoring the pulse of their operation. Establishing mechanisms for their staff to be able to voice their concerns or share feedback or suggestions is crucial. This could include a quarterly staff survey which could be anonymous, if necessary, suggestion boxes, focus groups, or regular staff meetings. It is important to provide regular updates on the actions taken in response to the feedback and the progress made on addressing specific concerns.

PSAPs can use the feedback from these interactions to assist in refining existing policies and developing and implementing new initiatives where it makes sense to do so. This gives the telecommunication staff a sense of value and ownership in their PSAP. By establishing a proven communication process, the PSAP can create a robust feedback loop that continuously enhances the work environment and supports the needs of 9-1-1 telecommunicators, leading to improved job satisfaction and overall service quality.

10. **Conduct Duty Statement/Job Description updates:** In 2020 California reclassified 9-1-1 Call takers and dispatchers as First Responders. In order to stay aligned with the nationwide effort to recognize telecommunicators as first responders, California PSAPs must update job descriptions to accurately reflect the roles and responsibilities of these professionals. It's crucial to depict the critical duties of call takers and dispatchers in today's complex emergency communications environment. Neglecting to update these descriptions may result in discrepancies in recruitment, candidate selection, hiring practices, training, and retention, potentially undermining the efficiency of emergency communications.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA), National 9-1-1 Program, put together a working group of 9-1-1 professionals to develop a toolkit for PSAPs. The goal of this toolkit is to provide public safety answering point (PSAP)/emergency communications center (ECC) leaders and decision-makers with a framework to help ensure job descriptions, training programs, and operational documents adequately reflect the evolving expectations of the public safety telecommunicators especially as it relates to reclassification. The toolkit, "Developing a Public Safety Telecommunicator Job Description" can be found at the following link:

https://www.9-1-1.gov/assets/N9-1-1-Program_BLS_Toolkit_Job-Description_07JUNE2022_Final.pdf

By implementing these solutions, PSAPs can work towards creating a supportive and sustainable work environment for 9-1-1 telecommunicators, ultimately improving employee well-being and the quality of emergency response services.

4.4 Future Directions for Continued Staffing Optimization

Standardizing training protocols for 9-1-1 telecommunicators is essential for enhancing future staff optimization. As the demands on emergency communication centers continue to grow, having consistent and comprehensive training standards ensures that all telecommunicators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively. Although many PSAPs in California have some training protocols in place, telecommunicator training could be greatly enhanced by including the State of California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Public Safety Dispatchers' Basic Course. This could assist with standardized training protocols, promote uniformity in response procedures, reduce errors, and improve the overall quality of service. Additionally, it helps in developing a well-prepared and confident workforce, which is crucial for handling the high-stress environment of emergency communications. By implementing standardized training protocols, California PSAPs can improve employee performance, attract quality candidates, enhance retention rates, and ensure the optimal functioning of their staff.

Initial Training:

Initial training for call takers/dispatchers is a critical component of their early career in public safety. While many organizations have their own training requirements, there's room for improvement by including the State of California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Public Safety Dispatchers' Basic Course. According to survey respondents, only 44% of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) mandate this training before dispatchers work independently, indicating that it's not universally required by agencies.

The Public Safety Dispatchers' Basic Course is compulsory for dispatchers employed by agencies participating in California's public safety dispatcher program. It spans 120 hours, segmented into 14 Learning Domains covering fundamental topics essential for effective performance in emergency communications centers. This course equips students with the skills, knowledge, and professionalism necessary for their roles.

There are several reasons why dispatchers in California should undergo POST training:

1. **Standardization:** POST training ensures consistent and standardized training statewide, fostering a high level of professionalism and competency across all agencies.
2. **Legal Compliance:** California Code Regulation 1018 mandates completion of the Public Safety Dispatchers' Basic Course for dispatchers in participating agencies, ensuring legal compliance.
3. **Skill Development:** POST training equips dispatchers with essential skills and knowledge, including emergency protocols, communication techniques, and stress management.

4. **Public Safety:** Well-trained dispatchers play a vital role in public safety by accurately assessing emergencies, dispatching resources, and providing crucial information to first responders, potentially saving lives.
5. **Professionalism:** POST training emphasizes professionalism, ethical conduct, and values such as integrity and accountability, maintaining public trust and adherence to high standards.

Overall, POST training is indispensable for California dispatchers, ensuring they possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and professionalism to effectively serve their communities and contribute to public safety. Details and costs for the course can be found at <https://post.ca.gov/public-safety-dispatchers-basic-course>. The cost varies depending on the location.

Management Training:

The survey highlights a need for more training opportunities for Managers, which can be addressed by the POST Dispatch Center Manager course. This 24-hour interactive course is designed for newly promoted or assigned 9-1-1 Communications Managers, offering essential tools, skills, and knowledge for success. It emphasizes adult learning styles, hands-on experience, leadership development, policy exploration, and personal wellness.

The course starts with welcome sessions, introductions, and classroom logistics. It covers leadership styles, communication, conflict resolution, team dynamics, personnel management, 9-1-1 technology, fiscal management, and policy development. Participants will also learn about professional resources, wellness planning, and presentation skills. The course concludes with a final assessment and provides evaluations and certificates.

By completing the course, participants will gain practical experience, enhanced leadership abilities, and a comprehensive understanding of managing a 9-1-1 communications center.

Appendices

Complete Call taker/Dispatcher Survey Questions

A.1 CA Call Taker/Dispatcher 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 California 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)
Call taker
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 voluntary 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 was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing
40. I felt I was close to panic
41. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything
42. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person
43. I felt that I was rather touchy

44. 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)
45. I felt scared without any good reason
46. I felt that life was meaningless
Section 3: Training
A. Initial Training
47. What initial training programs did you receive before beginning independent work? (check all that apply)
Classroom Training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
Calltaking Protocol Training
Fire Dispatch Training
POST Standards Training Program (120 hours)
On The Job Training (OJT) with another telecommunicator
Other/Specialized training (please specify)
48. During your initial training, how many hours, on average, did you receive training for each of the programs listed below? (fill in hours next to each)
Classroom Training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
Calltaking Protocol Training
Fire Dispatch Training
On The Job Training (OJT) with another telecommunicator
Specialized training (please specify using the Add Additional Details link above)
49. Was there training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your initial training?
B. Continuing Education
50. How many hours of continuing education are you required to complete annually?
51. 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)

Fire Dispatch Training
On The Job Training (OJT) with another telecommunicator
Specialized training (please specify)
52. 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)
53. Are you required to take training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your continuing education?
54. 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.)
Other (please specify)
55. 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)
56. Are there cross-training opportunities available to you to learn additional skills/disciplines?
B. Supervisor Training
57. How many hours of continuing education are you, as a supervisor, required to complete annually?
58. 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)
59. 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)
60. 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)
61. Are you required to take training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your continuing education?
62. 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.)
Other (please specify)
63. 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)
64. Are specialized training tracks offered for career progression or skill enhancement? If Yes, please specify.
Section 4: Retention
A. Retention Strategies
65. Are there retention programs in place at your PSAP?
66. Can you obtain any special recognition or awards programs for exceptional performance or tenure?
67. Does your PSAP have any financial incentives, such as retention bonuses, to existing employees? If Yes, please explain.
68. Retention programs are effective in promoting employee satisfaction and retention.
69. 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)
70. What retention efforts would you find most appealing?
B. Employee Engagement
71. Does your PSAP assess employee satisfaction and engagement?
72. Has your PSAP implemented any measures to improve work-life balance and reduce stress among staff members? If Yes, please explain.
73. 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
74. 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?

A.2 CA PSAP Survey

Section 1: Staffing
A. Demographics
1. PSAP Name
2. What disciplines does your center dispatch? (check all that apply)
EMS
Fire
Police
Other (please specify)
3. Is your PSAP managed by a civilian or sworn employee? If Both, please describe using the Additional Details field below.
4. Is your PSAP 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])
B. Metrics
5. What is your average total daily call volume, including ALL inbound calls (9-1-1, 10-digit, admin, ring down, etc.)?
6. Enter the number of CAD incidents per year.
a.2020
b.2021
c.2022
C. Current Staffing
7. What is the current Call taker/Dispatcher vacancy rate? (Note: this field auto calculates based on the values entered below)
a. How many Call taker/Dispatchers are you budgeted to employ?
b. How many Call taker/Dispatchers do you currently employ?
8. What is the annual turnover percentage of Call taker/Dispatchers 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
9. Place the number of Call taker/Dispatchers 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
10. Do you currently have a mandatory overtime policy in place? If Yes, please provide the details using the Additional Details field below.
11. On average, how many hours of voluntary overtime is <u>one</u> Call taker/Dispatcher working monthly?
12. On average, how many hours of <u>mandatory</u> overtime is <u>one</u> Call taker/Dispatcher working monthly?
13. How much did you pay in overtime in your last fiscal year?
D. Hiring Process
14. On average, how many Call taker/Dispatchers do you hire annually?
15. Do you offer per diem/ part-time positions? If Yes, please answer questions a., b. and c. below.
a. How many part-time positions do you have? Note: If you combine part-time and per diem, please enter the total in this question and place a 'O' 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?
16. Do you offer job sharing at your PSAP?
17. Does your PSAP have any minimum education requirements prior to hiring (i.e. HS Diploma/GED, Bachelors, etc.)? If Yes, please describe using the Additional Details field below.
18. Do employees with a technical/college degree receive a higher compensation for their educational level?
E. Job Rotation & Flexibility
19. What is the minimum number of Call taker/Dispatchers per shift? (If not applicable please enter 0)
a. Day
b. Overlap
c. Evening
d. Night
20. What is the current shift schedule for Call taker/Dispatchers (hours/day/week)?
21. Is your scheduling and rotation part of a union-negotiated process?
22. How are scheduling bids handled at your PSAP? How are assignments made?
23. Are there policies in place to address scheduling preferences?
24. Does the PSAP offer remote work options for Call taker/Dispatchers?
F. Staffing Costs
25. In the <u>current</u> fiscal year, what is your <u>budgeted</u> personnel salary costs (not overtime) for Call taker/Dispatchers?
26. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what were your <u>actual</u> personnel salary costs (not overtime) for Call taker/Dispatchers?
27. In the <u>current</u> fiscal year, what is your <u>budgeted</u> overtime costs for Call taker/Dispatchers?
28. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what were your <u>actual</u> overtime costs for Call taker/Dispatchers?
29. In the <u>current</u> fiscal year, what is your <u>budgeted</u> personnel benefits costs for Call taker/Dispatchers?
30. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what were your <u>actual</u> personnel benefits costs for Call taker/Dispatchers?
31. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what was the average cost of benefits for <u>one</u> Call taker/Dispatcher?

Section 2: Training
A. Initial Training
32. What initial training programs do new Call taker/Dispatchers receive before beginning independent work? (check all that apply)
Classroom Training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
Calltaking Protocol Training (i.e. EMO, EFD, EPD or other protocols)
Fire Dispatch Training
POST Standards Training Program (120 hours)
On The Job Training (OJT) with a Certified Training Officer (CTO)
Specialized training (please specify)
33. During initial training, how many hours of each training program below does a new Call taker/Dispatcher receive? (Fill in hours for each. If not applicable, please enter 0)
a. Classroom Training (Agency SOPs, Policies, etc.)
b. Calltaking Protocol Training (i.e. EMO, EFD, EPD or other protocols)
c. Fire Dispatch Training
d. On average with a Certified Training Officer (CTO)
e. Specialized training
34. At what point in your initial training/employment does a Call taker/Dispatcher complete the POST Standards training? (If not applicable please enter NA.)
35. Do you have or require training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your initial training?
36. Do you have a formalized training program that meets minimum training guidelines suggested by national 9-1-1 Organizations?
37. What percentage of Call taker/Dispatchers successfully complete the initial training?
38. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what was the average cost to initially train <u>one</u> Call taker/Dispatcher?
B. Continuing Education
39. How many hours of continuing education are Call taker/Dispatchers required to complete biannually?
40. What types of continuing education are offered to Call taker/Dispatchers? (check all that apply)

PSAP Technology Training
Protocol
Stress Management
Health & wellness
Other (please specify)
41. 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/CTO)
Other (Please specify)
42. Do you have or require training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your continuing education?
43. What opportunities for professional development do you offer Call taker/Dispatchers? (check all that apply)
Attend state conference(s)
Attend national conference(s)
Obtain Professional certifications (i.e. ENP, RPL, etc.)
Other (please specify)
44. Which, if any, of the following training programs are offered to Call taker/Dispatchers who show interest 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
On the Job Training (OJT)

Certified Training Officer (CTO) Training
Other (please specify)
None
45. Are there cross-training opportunities available to Call taker/Dispatchers to learn additional skills/disciplines?
46. Are there specialized training tracks offered to Call taker/Dispatchers for career progression or skill enhancement? If yes, please specify using the Additional Details field below.
47. In the <u>previous</u> fiscal year, what was the average annual cost for continuing education of <u>one</u> Call taker/Dispatcher?
C. Supervisor Training
48. How many hours of continuing education are supervisory staff required to complete biannually?
49. What types of continuing education are offered to supervisory staff? (check all that apply)
PSAP Technology
Protocol
Stress Management

Health & wellness
Other (please specify)
50. Are supervisors 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)
CTO Training
On the Job Training (OJT)
Other (please specify)
51. 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/CTO)
Other (please specify)
52. Do you have or require training in stress management, resilience, and/or wellness as part of your supervisory staff's ongoing training?
53. What opportunities for professional development do you offer supervisory staff? (check all that apply)
Attend state conference(s)
Attend national conference(s)
Obtain professional certifications (i.e. ENP, RPL, etc.)
Other (please specify)
54. Which, if any, of the following training programs are offered to supervisory staff who show interest 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
On the Job Training (OJT)
Other (please specify)
55. Are there specialized training tracks offered to supervisory staff for career progression or skill enhancement? If Yes, please specify using the Additional Details field below.
56. In the <u>previous</u> 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
57. Are there regular debriefing sessions or support mechanisms in place for Call taker/Dispatchers after handling critical incidents?

58. Are there strategies in place to identify Call taker/Dispatcher fatigue and/or burnout?
59. Do you offer an employee assistance program (EAP)?
60. Does your PSAP/department have an EAP program specific to public safety personnel?
61. 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
62. What recruitment channels do you primarily use to reach potential candidates? (check all that apply)
Jurisdiction/agency careers page
Mainstream job boards (i.e. Indeed, Monster, ZipRecruiter, etc.)
9-1-1 job boards (i.e. NENA, APCO)
Social media (i.e. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
Local events
Others (please specify)
63. Do you have a dedicated recruitment team or individual responsible for attracting new personnel? If Yes, please specify how many staff using the Additional Details field below.
64. Are there any partnerships with local organizations, colleges, or military programs to source potential candidates? If Yes, please explain each program and its effectiveness using the Additional Details field below.
65. How do you promote the unique aspects and benefits of working at your PSAP to potential recruits?
66. What activities or strategies do your PSAP use to determine staffing needs?
67. What long-term strategies do you have in place to address staffing shortages and maintain a stable workforce?
68. Are there any upcoming changes or innovations you plan to implement to attract and retain staff? If Yes, please describe using the Additional Details field below.
69. Which recruitment sources have been most effective in attracting qualified Call taker/Dispatcher candidates? (check all that apply)
Jurisdiction/agency careers page
Mainstream job boards (i.e. Indeed, Monster, ZipRecruiter, etc.)

9-1-1 job boards (i.e. NENA, APCO)
Social media (i.e. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
Local events
Others (please specify)
70. What recruitment strategies have you implemented that have been successful in attracting new Call taker/Dispatchers?
71. What financial incentives, such as signing bonuses, do you offer to new and existing employees?

72. How much does it cost to onboard one new employee prior to training (Hiring Process)?
73. On average, how many applications are received for <u>one</u> recruitment?
74. On average, how many eligible applicants are there from the applications for interview?
75. On average, what percentage of the eligible applicants pass the background check?
Section 5: Retention
A. Retention Strategies
76. What retention strategies are in place for Call taker/Dispatchers?
77. Are there any special recognition or awards programs for exceptional performance or tenure? If Yes, please explain.
78. Which of the following are the main reasons cited by Call taker/Dispatchers for leaving their positions? (check all that apply)
Financial (Salary, benefits)
Cost of living
Commute
Stress / mental health
Management
Relocation
Retirement / Early Retirement
Others (please specify)
79. What financial incentives, such as retention bonuses, do you offer to existing employees?

80. On average, what is the total cost of incentives offered to Call taker/Dispatchers (per year)?
B. Employee Engagement
81. How do you assess employee satisfaction and engagement within your PSAP?
82. Have you implemented any measures to improve work-life balance and reduce stress among staff members? If Yes, please describe using the Additional Details field below.
83. How do you gather feedback from your call-takers and dispatchers about their 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)
None
84. Have there been instances where you've modified recruitment or retention strategies based on employee feedback or changing needs? If Yes, please describe using the Additional Details field below.
85. 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 using the Additional Details field below.
Section 6: Technology & Resources
A. Technology & Resources
86. Does your PSAP currently use any technology enablement to reduce the workload on Call taker/Dispatchers or create efficiencies (i.e. artificial intelligence, machine learning, call path processes, etc.)? If Yes, please describe using the Additional Details field below.
87. Have you evaluated or do you plan to evaluate specific technologies that would reduce workload or create efficiencies for Call taker/Dispatchers? If Yes, please explain what technologies and your potential efficiencies are using the Additional Details field below.