



## **911 Professional Career and Supports Transform911 Convening, March 2, 2022**

**During this convening session, workgroup chairs presented details of the following recommendations:**

1. Ensure recognition of 911 professionals as public safety professionals
2. Reintroduce 911 and 911 professionals to the American public
3. Invest in workforce development and inclusive hiring processes
4. Take active measures to foster the career development and workplace retention of fully successful 911 professionals

**This document contains anonymous feedback from session attendees on the given questions following this presentation, conducted through the Mentimeter website. We suggest citing this document as “Public feedback during Transform911’s Alternative First Responders workgroup convening session on March 2, 2022.”**

**For additional information or inquiries, visit [transform911.org](https://transform911.org), email us at [transform911@uchicago.edu](mailto:transform911@uchicago.edu), or follow us on Twitter @T911HealthLab.**

# The SOC goes back to sample in 2024 – any suggestions to ensure accurate info is submitted?

Understanding that 911 pros resolve emergency situations by talking people through them - reducing need of other responders on site.

Clarify the training for 911 vs 988 - and how they should interact

A sample job description with key words to help rewrite job descriptions would be helpful

The federal government should act faster! Congress should ensure 911 professionals are classified as first responders this session!

Can Continual Education be included for those that have been dispatchers?

Encourage a national definition of the job, while encouraging each communications center to adjust their job descriptions.

In-depth job task studies need to be conducted so that the federal government understands the true scope of work done by public safety telecommunications and support staff.

engage with all current and future federal infrastructure 'rebuilding' funding

Job descriptions that focus on the assessment processes and use of critical judgment and decision-making skills

# The SOC goes back to sample in 2024 – any suggestions to ensure accurate info is submitted?

The need for retirement benefits to reflect the burn out and trauma that this career takes. Which may mean shorter careers and early retirement.

formalized mental health support for 911 pros - ensure we can take care of those folks!

Is it true that 911 dispatchers must pass a polygraph and cannot use pot as that is a federal crime, though it is not a crime in many states? This is a limit to the job pool

This shouldn't fall solely to the ECCs.

Collect data on flexibility used in response to COVID to create proof-of-concept of adaptations that can be made in the job role.

Analyze the real work and identify the true skills, competencies that it takes to do the job and push that forward

anticipate that there are industry players building businesses on deskilling the work of 911 with algorithms etc.

Perhaps states if they have any oversight could require better job descriptions. Also, is there another opportunity to provide information to the SOC? It seems that evaluating individual job descriptions would be inefficient.

The public should be involved in ensuring that 911 professionals are accurately classified.

# The SOC goes back to sample in 2024 – any suggestions to ensure accurate info is submitted?

An outreach campaign w/in the 911 industry to get centers to update their job descriptions. It's typically an archaic document that people don't spend a lot of time or thought on.

Can dispatchers suggest how to categorize calls for data purposes?

This topic should be a session in every industry conference!

An overreaching industry job description could be developed and provided to the SOC.

Incentives to increase new candidates and career changers (loan forgiveness, secondary education pathways, signing bonuses or referral bonuses)

Knowing differences between training/dispatcher certification programs across states, and helping them carry over

The volume of calls works against being able to address (e.g. deescalate) particular problems .

Create a national 911 pro workgroup with work with JTA researchers to ensure types of work and tasks are accurately capture and vetted with the actual workforce

Congress and the public should be help advance reclassification



# What should be done that hasn't been done?

Find funding to cover the increase cost for the local agencies.

Action by Congress

Support 911 professionals through public campaign

Getting city mayors and county commissioners involved in the plea to congress. Not sure how they convene... Maybe this group can present at those conferences?

Increase positive representation in film/tv. Maybe a documentary?

Engage recent infrastructure bill efforts

Educate the public about how 911 works, who answers the call, and how professionals are recruited, hired, and trained

Consider how we can engage peers at the dispatch level to help with call processing and response.

Reduce oversight by other public safety responders to 911 processes. There can be a conflict of interest and unintended affects to overall processes due to lack of familiarity with 911 principles.

# What should be done that hasn't been done?

federal funding....especially link to mental illness

Convene regional standing committees that consist of community colleges and local civil service administrators to better define training to job requirements.

Stories, stories, stories. That's what people remember. From both the 911 professional and recipient/client perspective. With a diverse array of community members

Increase collab with behavioral health advocacy organizations (national/state and local) as they work towards improvement in crisis response systems - this s/be part of their advocacy

Professions have educational and degreed bases, licensure, protections. Do 911 call accepters have these?

The marketing campaign should both explain what 911 pros do and help support reclassification as well as help support the employment pipeline

Look at/map the ways that similar true public interest efforts such as 911 have been derailed in the past or elsewhere

Catalogue all the narratives that are circulating about why 911 is bad, wasteful, etc etc.

National recruitment efforts that educate the public on the profession and how rewarding and challenging the career is.

**TRANSFORM** 911

# What should be done that hasn't been done?

Target the populations who are not already in the choir

Help educate the public as to when to use 911 and not to!

Collaborate with our public safety responders to highlight our efforts to successfully support response to high profile events.

Look at how 911 has worked well for the public - but also focus on when 911 has failed to provide access to care and how the system can be improved

Ensure the public knows the technological capabilities and limitations of 911 - locally and nationally

# When you hear “marketing campaign,” what comes to mind?

We need to use culturally appropriate and sensitive (e.g. people of different races and nationalities have vastly varying issues with 'crisis', '911', law enforcement' and 'mental health'. One campaign message does NOT fit all. We cannot treat this I

... We cannot treat this like any other marketing campaign.

add to community parades, like ambulance, police, and fire commonly are part of

Something that is overly scripted or obnoxious that next to no one retains the information.

Spots like recruitment ads for the military.

Professions are based on values, ethics, training, licensure, etc. Marketing is for selling objects or promoting people - not professions.

National campaign in high schools and colleges about career opportunities

Something like NPR “Throughline” might be an appropriate venue for treating the subject with nuance, history, and sensitivity

Short quick bursts of information Most public will not watch a documentary and I'm not sure how many listen to NPR



# When you hear “marketing campaign,” what comes to mind?

Multilingual and multicultural ads.

Marketing should be a balance between adjusting the product and promoting the product. Marketing can't be separate from job design, or it is only advertising.

911 is the most universal engagement with emergency services for residents. It is a potential hot-button issue that would get broad support. In Oakland CA, there are a tremendous number of comments about 911 (because of understaffing)

National advertisement that 911 professionals are needed. That states are now recognizing the importance of the job and how it is changing and evolving.

Social media engagements, 911 Prof TikToks, Instagram infographics, etc.

Raising awareness.

Use icons, people, authorities that speak to the audience. Eg. an elder, church leader, strong character speaking to people of different genders and identities (e.g. Ru Paul vs. John Wayne to the LGBTQI community).

Using voices/stories of current 911 professionals

We utilize traditional media too much in my opinion when we know mobile is in the majority of people's pockets. Social Media <<< go where people play.

# When you hear “marketing campaign,” what comes to mind?

When using media we need punch-in-the-nose appropriate approaches. Not sleepy, boring, fact-filled messaging that people forget in seconds.

"School House Rock" -type PSA

variety - different campaigns for different purposes.  
(recruiting, educational, awareness, etc)

# What elements should be included or considered in a national marketing campaign?

Community colleges, high school trade schools

Post-military connection...seems combat veterans would fit well

Proactive. refresh and breaks, especially after extremely hard call...refer to ;Empathy Epidemic book on same in healthcare

measure and share the real cost of 'not acting' or 'not acting well'

# What are your thoughts on building a community or technical college track?

This is an excellent idea!

Get into high schools as well to raise awareness

These are great ideas! (Dr. Amy Watson will be key here.) Also, peers would be a great addition to the potential workforce too. Gotta solve some background check problems though. For examples, Olympia, WA police have recently hired former felons to co

Having such a track in either a career center or a community college is desperately needed. Unfortunately, I have no knowledge of one in operation.

Graduates of such programs should receive tuition reimbursement or tuition waivers if they go into the field

Wake Tech Community College in Raleigh, NC has a Public Safety Education Campus that serves the whole state.

Should teach autonomy and independent assessment of calls to get beyond the clerical level.

I've been involved in a couple of different efforts to build 911 programs at community colleges. Someone needs to do a survey of those efforts and compile success stories.

technical schools have had these tracks before and were not successful, lack of interest, used as L&I retraining, students couldn't pass background - how do you make it different, successful



# What are your thoughts on building a community or technical college track?

There are several in Florida. 911 call takers must be certified in Florida after receiving 232 hours of training.

Agree with high school involvement as well. This could be incentive to go to college for some kids.

This would make the entry level accessible.

911 Pros should be offered opportunities for instruction

Definitely include in-person visits and talks from people sharing their lived experience with 911, 988, and other crisis response. Especially people with mental health crisis experiences.

just heard a piece on NPR about how airlines are increasing the diversity and number of pilots and other professionals -- combination of tuition reimbursement and other things. worth looking into

This is difficult as there are limited employment opportunities that would support this education/technical track. Good idea... but difficult to implement and support actual hiring in the profession.

This would be great to help support career advancement and promotion

They should be based in colleges that also specialize in mental health and social services.

# What are your thoughts on building a community or technical college track?

It is a great idea - It should be a part of track that supports essential workers

988 based on Valiant experience is actually tele-medicine. Is this reasonable for 911 call takers?

Develop more resources where students have a mobile-accessible field guide they can use to stay up to date on approaches.

The overall concept is good, especially for areas that don't have funds for in-house classroom training but there are skills and strengths that cannot be assessed or honed in a classroom.

It should include practicums, internships, and job career opportunities

high school guidance counselors are vital to this!

Some employers have found that entry-level workers are much less familiar with telephone communication than in the past and have implemented training for new hires. The shift to texting / messaging may influence attitudes toward 911 pro careers.

Online training track would be helpful to support 911 pros scheduling demands

Information and techniques for trauma informed responses.

# What are your thoughts on building a community or technical college track?

National Science Foundation has some amazing grants available to Community Colleges developing workforce if there is some technical connection, such as equipment, etc

Its a long shot--but perhaps reach out to the first lady's office. Even though she didn't get full tuition reimbursement for Community Colleges, this might be an initiative she would be excited about.

Develop question/answer tree mobile apps to help non-practitioners determine what to do quickly e.g. triaging the need, immediacy, what to say and do to help stabilize the person temporarily until help arrives.

classrooms (whether virtual or in person) should simulate real call-taking and dispatching environments and practices

it should include spending time in communities and hearing from community leaders. Outreach to get students from most impacted communities

get philanthropy to pay to develop curriculum and underwrite a few sites for implementation

partnerships with agencies like fema or emergency response in the federal space that might have training they can share?

Online training needs to be highly interactive for people to actually learn from it. There is a lot of online "accountability certification" that is not learning. Don't skimp on design for learning.

Maintain a sustainable library practitioners can utilize to stay abreast of best practices on a timely basis --- e.g. not 5-10 year old textbook practices that might have worked then but, may not be the best approach today.

# What are your thoughts on building a community or technical college track?

Ensure curricula comports with best practices and standards - beyond minimum standards

are there other countries who might have experience building these kinds of community training? thinking sweden...countries that have minimized public safety issues?



# Do you have related experience or knowledge of where these might already be in place?

Pay, less mandatory overtime, mental health support, more decision-making engagement

# What practices or elements related to employee wellbeing should be included in our recommendations?

Remote work.

Acknowledge burnout and staff being stretched too thin

More flexible work arrangements. Ability to trade shifts. PTO pool instead of separate vacation and sick time. Child care and elder care support. Involve employees in work process development.

Resilience training, EAPs, mental health and peer support

911 professionals need more support. Staffing shortages result in forced overtime, not having breaks. It's a stressful job and greater opportunities for support day-to-day and over the course of the career are needed

Predictable scheduling so folks can balance with childcare

Required accessibility to mental health services that support public safety trauma related specifically. There is rarely a clinician available that can help with 911 trauma exposure. This is critical to maintaining the wellbeing of our 911 pros

Access to councilors and mental health professionals specialized in the trauma received on the job.

This is not a typical career. Trauma exposure is extremely high. We need extended holiday time for employees, consistent and free mental health support (on-demand 24/7/365 ability to get help in person/chat/phone/zoom), and 1st class break rooms.

# What practices or elements related to employee wellbeing should be included in our recommendations?

Multiple career exit and entry points; BENEFITS for part-time employees too

Mandated standards with a required number of well being hours for each 911 professional.

Really paying attention to who feels they belong and who doesn't. Racism, sexism and other bias can really hide in lots of places and must be addressed.

We should move away from time being the key performance indicator for all but calls involving an crime or medical/fire emergency in progress - to allow 911 pros to take their time to assess the nature of the call and determine the best response

Implement debriefing processes after difficult/challenging calls to allow employees to process, vent, and learn

Provide sufficient paid time off similar to fire departments that helps employees step out of the stress for periods of time.

Mental health support standardly offered for 911 pros

Ensure training environment and curriculum fits the nature of the job

Childcare support is huge especially for a female-dominated essential industry during a pandemic

# What practices or elements related to employee wellbeing should be included in our recommendations?

Revise 911 call processing standards to encourage expanding call interviewing timelines. This is in support of gathering more information and dispatching appropriate services.

We need to ramp up these solutions quickly because the build up of Covid-related traumas have yet to hit the nation as a whole collectively. People cooped up for a couple years are going to 'pop' sooner or later.

Encourage retirement guidelines that support the ability to retire at an earlier age if desired.

Ensure that vacations and restorative practices are regularly applied for all 911 professionals

Especially graveyard child care. The wellbeing of the 911 pros family supports their wellbeing.

Encourage exercise facilities at comm centers. Physical and mental wellbeing is improved by exercise.

If possible, allow employees to participate with the other first responders in post crisis calls to be a part of the bigger team, to learn the outcome, and have a cross agency team to connect to

The military provides childcare as they know it's critical to their workforce success

Can take a page from other union represented titles. For example, train operators are generally relieved from duty following an accident to address trauma. May be helpful to mirror such contractual protections.