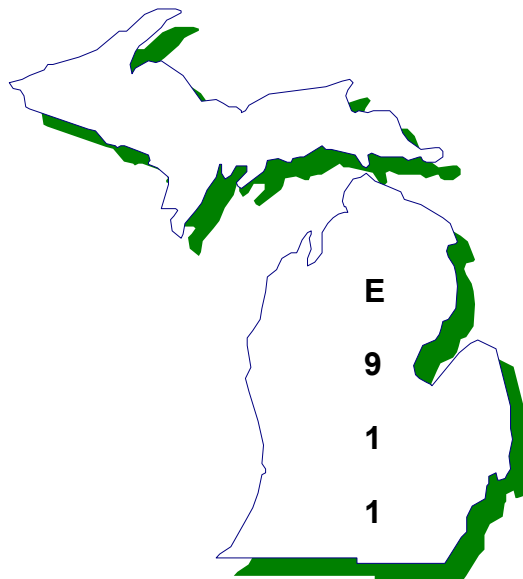


A Recommendation for
Minimum Telecommunicator Training Standards
in the State of Michigan



Compiled and Presented by the
Dispatcher Training Standards Workgroup
as adopted by the Emergency Telephone Service Committee

December 11, 2007

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I. Summary

Public Act 78 was enacted in 1999. This Act created a statewide 9-1-1 dispatcher training fund in Michigan through a one and a half-cent distribution of the wireless 9-1-1 surcharge. Since the inception of that fund the Emergency Telephone Service Committee (ETSC) has established a program of oversight for the training funds. Oversight of the fund includes; an application and distribution process, allowable and disallowable fund use criteria, recommendations to the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) on the certification of courses, and Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) accountability.

In March 2005, with the framework for a statewide program established, the ETSC Dispatcher Training Subcommittee brought forth a calling from the 911 community for the exploration of minimum basic training standards for telecommunicators in Michigan. The pursuit of this concept was approved with the passage of an ETSC resolution of support. Also included in this resolution was a future goal of telecommunicator certification. It was recognized and readily acknowledged that dispatch centers and PSAPs receiving and processing 911 calls in Michigan are the gateway to all comprehensive public safety services. Additionally, many of these dispatch centers and PSAPs provide access to other non-emergency services and resources that are essential and valuable to the various communities serviced by these centers.

With this concept in mind, a workgroup (Appendix A) was formed within the ETSC Dispatcher Training Subcommittee to research and develop for the Dispatcher Training Subcommittee, a curriculum recommendation of minimum standards for 911 telecommunicators, for the State of Michigan.

Members of the workgroup chosen to work on this project were selected from various backgrounds and levels of responsibility within the framework of the 911 community. In order to keep focus on the task at hand, the workgroup was restricted to members representing the three layers within a typical PSAP or dispatch center. Those representatives included two first line telecommunicators, two first line supervisors, and two PSAP center managers/directors. Facilitating the workgroup was the chairperson of the Dispatcher Training Subcommittee. The Michigan 911 State Administrator also played an instrumental role in providing input and perspective to the workgroup.

II. Background and Justification

Presently, there are no minimum standards for basic telecommunicator training in Michigan. Two exceptions exist. In the first exception, if an agency is connected to the Michigan Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN), an operator of this system must have completed the 16 hour Basic LEIN Certification Course (State of Michigan requirement). In the second exception, if an agency has opted to perform emergency medical dispatching (EMD), its telecommunicators must be certified in that discipline through an approved certification program of study.

This lack of a minimum training standard is in stark contrast to the other partnerships within the public safety arena that do have minimum training standards; police, fire service, and EMS.

In the past several years, and unquestionably in the post-September 11 era, the public has come to not only expect, but to demand a higher level of service from all components of the public safety field. This expectation of service is no less for telecommunicators. In some instances it is greater. As stated, calls to a PSAP are the gateway to all other public safety services. These public expectations serve as one justification for the establishment of minimum basic training standards.

A second justification for the establishment of minimum training standards is the ability to guarantee uniformity of basic training across all regions of the state. While conducting compliance reviews on PSAPs and collecting data on their operations, both the ETSC's Certification Subcommittee and Dispatcher Training Subcommittee have taken notice of the inconsistent levels of training among the PSAPs. Currently, there is no assurance that the amount or type of training given to a telecommunicator at one agency or department is consistent with what is taught or instructed to a counterpart employed by a different agency or department. The amount and types of training are left to the subjective decision of the PSAP or dispatch center manager as opposed to an objective and measurable standard applicable to all. Following this same thought process is the lack of or inconsistency in training beyond what is initially obtained or provided when a telecommunicator is newly hired.

Public Act 249 of 2006 extended the sunset clause of the current 911 statute. Furthermore, the Act mandated the Michigan 911 State Administrator to make a recommendation to the legislature in regard to 911 training. The recommendation made in the report on November 9, 2006, fully supports the ETSC's position that minimum training standards be developed (Appendix D).

III. Project Description

The Dispatcher Training Standards Workgroup was established with the intent of collecting and evaluating information and data as it pertains to core job tasks (Appendix B) and skills (Appendix C) performed by telecommunicators, as well as reviewing existing standards being used throughout the United States. This extensive collection of available information was used to construct the foundation for an 80-hour basic telecommunicator tract.

During the course of researching this project an additional recommendation was identified. The Emergency Telephone Service Committee should explore and secure enhanced jurisdiction in the 911 community through the establishment of rule promulgation authority. By obtaining this control, it would allow for greater ease in the establishment of rules and standards as well as the ability to uniformly and consistently enforce those standards. Additionally, with this jurisdiction comes the ETSC's obligation to review and approve training courses.

IV. Recommendations

The workgroup makes three proposed recommendations for training. The first recommendation is for a Communications Training Officer (CTO) program. The second is for a basic telecommunicator course applicable to newly hired telecommunicators. The final recommendation is for a continuing education program. All courses would need to be ETSC approved in order to meet compliance with the training standards set forth.

Recommendation for Communication Training Officer Program

It is recommended that a PSAP implement an ETSC approved communications training and evaluation program. A CTO program is an organized, systematic, and consistently administered period of formal on-the-job training and evaluation with the ultimate goal of producing a knowledgeable and proficient telecommunicator who is capable of working in a singular capacity.

This type of program produces competent telecommunicators capable of providing a full range of technical skills in a consistent manner with minimum supervision. This type program standardizes procedures, training, and evaluation in an objective format. By identifying performance deficiencies as they occur, it allows for discovered shortcomings to be corrected in a timely manner. This type program also permits documentation of the type and quantity of training received thereby reducing the potential for negligent retention.

Recommendation for Telecommunicator Training

Training of telecommunicators in areas such as EMD (seen as a “best practice”), LEIN, and other federal, state, or locally required training will be in addition to Modules 1 and 2 and will be the responsibility of the employing agency. This applies whether the telecommunicator is a new hire or has previous experience.

The recommendation for telecommunicator training is for an 80-hour tract divided into two 40-hour modules. Anyone hired at a primary PSAP as a telecommunicator after [TBD] should be in compliance with the following:

MODULE 1 –

The first module is comprised of curriculum consisting of a minimum of 40 hours. This training would be completed within 18 months of date of hire.

It is recommended that newly hired telecommunicators attend a 40-hour basic telecommunicator course within 18 months of their hire date. An example of one such course is the APCO 40-Hour Basic Course (Appendix E) or any equivalent basic course that is consistent with the recommendations outlined in this report and closely resembles this type training course. This module of training would include but not be limited to, the following topics:

- Overview of Public Safety (Police – Fire – EMS)
- Telecommunicator Roles and Responsibilities
- Legal Aspects
- Interpersonal Communications
- Public Safety Technologies
- Telephone Techniques
- Call Classification
- Radio Communications
- Stress Management

MODULE 2 –

The second module is comprised of curriculum consisting of a minimum of 40 hours. This will be completed within 24 months of being newly hired, and again would apply only to telecommunicators hired after [TBD]. This module of training will be dedicated to the following areas of instruction and must include a minimum of 8 hours of instruction in each of the following areas:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Domestic Violence | 8 hours |
| • Suicide Intervention | 8 hours |
| • 911 Liability | 8 hours |
| • Stress Management | 8 hours |
| • Homeland Security Elective | 8 hours ¹ |

Recommendation for Continuing Education Training

For continuing education training it is recommended that following completion of the first 24 months of employment that telecommunicators receive a minimum of 24 hours of ETSC approved continuing education training every 24 months, with this cycle continuing throughout their employment.

V. Closing

Each Michigan PSAP is responsible for the training of its individual employees. In addition, PSAPs are charged with keeping and maintaining training records as well as providing training documentation to the State 911 Office. Statewide minimum training standards serves to establish consistency in the training necessary to perform the job responsibilities of a telecommunicator. This also insures that all telecommunicators, regardless of agency, receive a minimum level and amount of training.

The tracking of training records through the State 911 Administrator’s Office serves to insure that training received by telecommunicators is accurately recorded and documented.

¹ Either an ETSC or FEMA approved course that relates to the telecommunicator role in homeland security preparedness.

Finally, the development of minimum statewide uniform training standards is in the best interest of the public that is served by our state's 911 centers and serves to enhance the delivery of public safety services in Michigan. By developing a statewide benchmark of training standards, not only do we serve to strengthen the competency of telecommunicators, we provide for the acceptance and enhancement of the professionalism of this essential public safety field.

Appendix A – Workgroup Members

Dispatch/PSAP Telecommunicators:

Philip J. Nowacki – Pittsfield Township Department of Public Safety

Susan Thompson – Michigan State Police, East Lansing Operations

Dispatch/PSAP First Line Supervisors:

Rosemary P. Yenshaw – Livingston County Central Dispatch

Laura Peeples – Macomb County Sheriff's Office

Dispatch/PSAP Managers:

Christina Russell – Oakland County Sheriff's Office

Kathy Castiglione – Bloomfield Township Police Department

Emergency Telephone Service Committee:

Michael Moorman – Michigan State Police Troopers Association, Inc.
Chair, ETSC Dispatcher Training Subcommittee

Harriet Miller-Brown – Michigan Department of State Police
State of Michigan 911 Administrator

Appendix B – Telecommunicator Essential Job Tasks

1. Process calls received on all designated telephone lines.
2. Accurately record information provided by callers.
3. Question callers to determine location and nature of problem and accurately classify as an emergency or non-emergency call.
4. Simultaneously perform various tasks while in reception of multiple audio and visual sources (channels, talk groups, monitors, etc.). This includes answering multiple telephone calls for assistance and being able to quickly and effectively prioritize their call intake/call taking process. Effectively manage the process of simultaneous telephone calls and radio traffic from field personnel.
5. Determine in a timely manner the destination for referral of calls and complete the transfer with confirmation of its reception to the appropriate location. Initiate the call intake process of information needed for immediate dispatch.
6. Identify the jurisdictional responding agency and the priority of the call. Locate and dispatch the closest appropriate resource.
7. Document appropriate narrative data for dispatch. Document information received on an “open line” call. Continue to document traffic from field units into computer system or manual card system and update unit status as appropriate.
8. Provide updates on calls when applicable.
9. Maintain professional voice tone during emergency and non-emergency situations received by telephone and radio.
10. Receive and process all calls for service according to agency policies and/or procedures.
11. Communicate with citizens from various backgrounds and who vary in age, gender, and mental abilities, and may be under the influence of alcohol/drugs. Attempt to utilize foreign language interpreter service, as applicable when a foreign speaking individual calls for assistance in order to determine nature and location of problem.
12. Process information from citizens who cannot or will not provide appropriate and necessary information to initiate a call.
13. Receive calls transferred from other agencies and process.
14. Prioritize pending calls for service. Be cognizant and aware of potential duplicate calls or related calls.
15. Re-contact callers that are disconnected to determine nature and location of call or event in accordance with local protocol.
16. Operate TDD and TTY equipment in order to process calls from hearing or speech impaired individuals in need of service.
17. Possess and maintain knowledge of agency policies and procedures.
18. In accordance with local protocol, be able to advise citizens of actions to take during emergency and non-emergency situations.
19. Be able to refer or process internal complaints or requests for repair or service of agency equipment and systems.
20. Process and prioritize various information requests using local, state, federal, and international databases, in a computer environment.
21. Receive, document, and disseminate additional requests for information and resources.
22. Disseminate to other agencies, pertinent information via telephone, radio, computer, or other appropriate communication devices.
23. Monitor equipment alarms. Monitor other alarms from outside sources if applicable.
24. Coordinate, document, and track, the response of mutual aid resources.
25. Immediately respond to requests for back up units and dispatch according to local protocol.
26. Brief on-coming or relief personnel of shift activity and status of units according to local protocol.

Appendix C – Telecommunicator Skill List

Communications:

1. Ability to write and type legibly.
2. Ability to professionally and accurately communicate both orally and in writing.
3. Ability to read and understand written and electronic communication.
4. Ability to hear and comprehend information and sounds coming through a communication device.
5. Ability to speak with sufficient clarity in person or with a communication device.

Job Performance:

1. Ability to maintain composure and handle stressful situations.
2. Ability to act in a decisive manner using good judgment.
3. Ability to effectively prioritize situations and information, and make appropriate decisions based on the information received.
4. Ability to listen, act, and remain focused during stressful and non-stressful situations.
5. Ability to multi-task under a variety of circumstances.
6. Ability to maintain professional demeanor at all times.
7. Ability to adapt to new or unique situations.
8. Ability to perform work related requests and directives.
9. Ability to learn and apply new information and techniques.
10. Ability to testify in court in a professional manner.
11. Ability to learn jurisdictional boundaries as well as surrounding geography.

Judgment:

1. Ability to respect private and confidential information.
2. Ability to recognize when to self-initiate decision making while recognizing when to seek guidance and/or clearance from a supervisor.
3. Ability to detach from caller's emotions yet remain empathetic.
4. Ability and willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions and decisions.

Relationships with Others:

1. Ability to work cooperatively with supervisors and peers.
2. Ability to act in a mature and professional manner.
3. Ability to work in a team environment and support other team members.
4. Ability and willingness to accept criticism without reacting defensively, rationalizing mistakes, or blaming others.
5. Ability to adapt to a variety of internal and external work circumstances.

Initiative and Reliability:

1. Ability to show initiative in completing job tasks.
2. Ability to handle both task and people oriented duties.
3. Ability to evaluate previous incidents in order to improve performance.
4. Ability to manage personal stress.

Appendix D – P.A. 249 of 2006 Report Excerpt

Training Issue Overview:

Currently there are no minimum training standards for 9-1-1 dispatchers (telecommunicators) in the state of Michigan. Each PSAP is responsible for its own training levels, programs, and documentation for its telecommunicators.

On March 2005 the ETSC passed a resolution supporting the pursuit of minimum training standards for 9-1-1 dispatchers in Michigan. The chair of the Dispatcher Training Subcommittee named a work group¹ to research and make a recommendation through the ETSC's channels on minimum dispatcher training standards. The process of that work group has been time-intensive and involved reviewing the training requirements of other states², performing a base task analysis of 9-1-1 telecommunicators' duties, identifying the skills necessary to perform those duties, and identifying the training needed to develop those skills.

P.A. 78 of 1999 created a statewide 9-1-1 dispatcher training fund through a one and a half-cent distribution of the wireless 9-1-1 surcharge. Since that fund distribution began in 2001 over 4.6 million dollars has been distributed to Michigan PSAPs. The ETSC has established a strong record of conscientious oversight of the training funds including the distribution and application process, allowable and disallowed fund use, recommendations to MCOLES on the certification of courses, and PSAP accountability. The 2004 creation of the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office has further enhanced the ETSC's administration of the wireless training funds.

However, even with the availability of training funds, a program that encourages fund use, and a broad list of approved courses, it became evident through the 2006 application process that the wireless funds were not being used by a number of PSAPs in Michigan³. Furthermore, voluntary reporting to the State 9-1-1 Office on training policies indicate that there are inconsistencies across the state in regard to PSAP training policies and programs.

Prior to the recommendations required by P.A. 249 of 2006 in regard to the training of 9-1-1 personnel, the ETSC recognized the importance of 9-1-1 training and is firm in its position of the need for minimum training standards for 9-1-1 telecommunicators. To that end, the development of 9-1-1 telecommunicator training standards is in progress. Furthermore, the ETSC recognizes that program development, an implementation plan, funding, and administrative support must all be in place prior to the mandate of statewide 9-1-1 telecommunicator training standards. Based on those premises, the following legislative recommendations are being made:

¹ The work group, which is still active, consists of two dispatchers, two dispatch supervisors, two dispatch managers, the chair of the Dispatcher Training Subcommittee, and the State 9-1-1 Administrator.

² Based on inquiries made to other states, 14 states reported some type of minimum training requirement for dispatchers.

³ More than 90 PSAPs (accounting for 48% of the state's 9-1-1 telecommunicators) have spent their ETSC training funds with regularity (many supplement their internal training programs with additional funds from other sources). However, in 2006 51 PSAPs (accounting for 45% of the state's 9-1-1 telecommunicators) did not qualify for training funds as they still had unspent training funds remaining from the 2003, and in some cases 2002, distribution(s).

ETSC Legislative Recommendation on 9-1-1 Personnel Training:

- 1) **The ETSC should be granted the rule promulgation necessary to:**
 - a. Approve training courses funded through the statewide 9-1-1 (Tier One) surcharge
 - b. Develop, implement, and administer 9-1-1 dispatcher training standards, including:
 - i. Training curriculum for new dispatchers
 - ii. Requirements for continuing training of established dispatchers
 - iii. Reporting requirements of PSAPs regarding fund use and training of 9-1-1 personnel

- 2) **The future funding needs to include resources** for the State 9-1-1 Office to track and administer the 9-1-1 telecommunicator training program and the distribution of training funds. The calculations recommended in the Tier One funding mechanism recommendation are outlined in pages 3 - 4 of this report [*2006 Report to the Michigan Legislature*].

Appendix E – APCO Telecommunicator Training Standard

1. Roles and Responsibilities	4
2. Legal Aspects	2
3. Interpersonal Communications	6
4. Technologies	2
5. Telephone Techniques/Call Processing	7
6. Call Classification	8
7. Radio Communications	8
8. Stress Management	3
Total:	40 hours

Appendix F – Acronyms and Definitions

APCO: Association of Public Safety Communication Officials (APCO) is a not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to the enhancement of public safety communications. APCO exists to serve the people who manage, operate, maintain and supply the communications industry.

Communication Training Officer (CTO): A Communication Training Officer (CTO) instructs new employees in the roles and duties of the dispatcher, guides them through basic and critical skill development, documents instructional activity using standard daily observation reports, and evaluates the progress and success of the trainee. It is recommended the CTO be certified as a basic telecommunicator instructor by attending an ETSC approved communication training officer course.

Communication Training Officer Program: A course designed to instruct a person who has the roles and responsibilities of training new employees in the dispatch center. The course consists of 32-40 hours of classroom training and provides the student with knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively train, evaluate, and document the progress of the individuals they are training. Participants completing the course become certified as a communications training officer.

Certification Subcommittee: A subcommittee of the ETSC. The Certification Subcommittee serves to ensure requirements and deadlines defined in the 9-1-1 statute are met. This includes reviewing county 9-1-1 plans and confirming the plans are in compliance to receive funding through 9-1-1 mechanisms. The subcommittee also performs compliance reviews of counties to make recommendations on operational “best practices” and to ensure that expenditures of 9-1-1 funds meet the criteria established by the ETSC as “allowable” expenditures.

Dispatcher Training Subcommittee: A subcommittee of the ETSC. The Dispatcher Training Subcommittee serves to oversee the use and distribution of statewide dispatcher training funds. This includes the annual review of applications for training funds submitted by the PSAPs. The subcommittee works with MCOLES to evaluate training course instructors and content for course certification. The subcommittee may also conduct reviews of a PSAPs’ training funds usage and courses attended to facilitate compliance with the act. The subcommittee may identify dispatcher training issues and bring proposed solutions to the ETSC for consideration.

EMD: Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) is the process for taking requests for emergency medical assistance, identifying the nature of the request, and prioritizing the severity of the request based on the emergency medical dispatch agency’s local policies and procedures. This also includes dispatching the necessary resources, providing pre-arrival medical and safety instructions to callers, and coordinating the responding resources as needed.

EMS: Emergency Medical Service (EMS) provides early treatment to those in need of urgent medical care, and ultimately rapid transportation to an emergency department.

ETSC: The Emergency Telephone Service Committee (ETSC) was created within the Department of State Police to develop statewide standards and model system considerations and make other recommendations for emergency telephone services. The committee is comprised of 21 members. Six subcommittees within the ETSC focus on special interests, report to the ETSC, and make recommendations for the committee about action and policy issues.

LEIN: The Michigan Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) provides and maintains a statewide computerized filing system of accurate and timely documented criminal justice information readily available to all criminal justice agencies.

MCOLES: The Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) prepares and publishes mandatory minimum recruitment, selection and training standards for entry-level law enforcement officers in the state of Michigan and defines categories and classifications of in-service training received by Michigan law enforcement officers. The commission is comprised of 15 members. The commission sets these standards for traditional, municipal, county, and state agencies, as well as a variety of specialized agencies, such as tribal, railroad, airport, and park police. More than 600 law enforcement agencies that employ over 23,000 officers operate under commission standards.

Michigan State 9-1-1 Administrator: The office of state 9-1-1 administrator was created to assist in facilitating the activities of the ETSC, work with PSAPs and commercial providers to provide a high level of delivery of 9-1-1 service, and prepare and educate users with advancements in new technology.

TTY/TDD: TTY stands for Text Telephone. It is also sometimes called a TDD or Telecommunication Device for the Deaf. A TTY is a special device that lets people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired use the telephone to communicate, by allowing them to type messages back and forth to one another instead of talking and listening.

Telecommunicator: A person who is trained and employed in public safety telecommunications. The term applies to call takers, dispatchers, radio operators, data terminal operators or any combination of such functions in a PSAP.