

# 2004 MCSA Telecommunicator Training Standards

## DRAFT

### I. Basic Telecommunicator Standards (Pre-Service or During First Year of Employ)

Below are the recommended minimum basic training standards for full and part-time public safety Telecommunicators or Dispatchers in Massachusetts. These standards are proposed by the Massachusetts Communications Supervisors Association (MCSA) and replace the MCSA 2001 standards. These standards have been generally adopted in the MCSA/SETB Dispatch Academy curriculum.

These standards proscribe the amount and types of training that MCSA recommends for various classifications of public safety telecommunicators/dispatchers either prior to initial service or during the first year of hire. They also can apply to veteran dispatchers who may need or wish to take certain modules to round out their knowledge or skills.

The basic standards have been established in 4 areas, each matching one of the four main job roles occupied by public safety telecommunicators or dispatchers in PSAPs, secondary PSAPs, fire alarm offices, university police dispatch centers, or various other specialized dispatch centers throughout the state. For example, Standard A describes the basic training types and amounts recommended by telecommunicators in combined centers who take 911 calls and dispatch for police, fire, and EMS. Standard D, on the other hand, is for those telecommunicator/call takers that only take 911 calls but do not dispatch public safety resources.

Telecommunicator/dispatchers can achieve the basic training standards either in one pre-service continuous Dispatch Academy block (much like the training model used by local or state police and by many fire departments) or by taking modules throughout the first year of employ as time and budget permits. It is widely recognized that many smaller agency PSAPs simply cannot afford to spare telecommunicator/dispatchers for a full-5-week Academy program and may need to sequence various modules throughout the first year of employ. In the case of this sequenced, modular approach, there will be a need for certain basic modules early in the period of initial employment. The selection of the initial modules needs to be agency-specific but must be governed by regulation (e.g., the SETB requires certain training prior to answering 911 calls) or practical considerations (e.g., the 40-Hour Basic Public Safety Telecommunicator course and certification is highly recommended and the EMD course is required for agencies that use EMD).

#### A. Standards for Telecommunicators who take 911 calls and dispatch police, fire and medical services

- 40 Hour Basic Public Safety Telecommunicator course and certification
- 16 Hour Massachusetts E911 course and certification
- 8 Hour CPR certification
- 24 Hour EMD course and certification
- 12 Hours CJIS LEAPS Full Access certification
- 32 Hours Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Simulations
- 16 Hours Basic Police Dispatch course and certification
- 24 Hours Basic Fire Dispatch course and certification
- 8 Hours Basic Criminal Law for Telecommunicators
- 4 Hours Hazardous Materials and WMD Incident Management
- 4 Hours Suicide Prevention
- 4 Hours state & specialized resources
- 192 Hours -last day of class committed to graduation total hours 200

Comment: Course hours equals 5-week Dispatch Academy

## **B. Standards for Telecommunicators who take 911 calls and dispatch police only**

40 Hour Basic Public Safety Telecommunicator course and certification  
16 Hour Massachusetts E911 course and certification  
8 Hour CPR certification  
20 Hours CJIS LEAPS Full Access certification  
32 Hours Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Simulations  
16 Hours Basic Police Dispatch course and certification  
8 Hours Basic Criminal Law for Telecommunicators  
4 Hours Hazardous Materials and WMD Incident Management  
4 Hours Suicide Prevention  
4 Hours State & Specialized resources  
8 Hours Introduction to Fire Dispatch  
160 Hours Total - last day of class committed to graduation total hours 168

## **C. Standards for Telecommunicators who take 911 calls and dispatch fire and medical services**

40 Hour Basic Public Safety Telecommunicator course and certification  
16 Hour Massachusetts E911 course and certification  
8 Hour CPR certification  
24 Hour EMD course and certification  
32 Hours Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Simulations  
24 Hours Basic Fire Dispatch course and certification  
8 Hours Fireground Operations and Incident Management  
4 Hours Hazardous Materials and WMD Incident Management  
8 Hours Introduction to Police Dispatch  
4 Hours Introduction to Criminal Law for Telecommunicators  
4 Hours Suicide Prevention  
4 Hours State & Specialized resources  
Total 176 plus - last day of class committed to graduation total hours 184

## **D. Standards for PSAP Telecommunicators who take 911 calls but do not dispatch**

40 Hour Basic Public Safety Telecommunicator course and certification  
16 Hour Massachusetts E911 course and certification  
8 Hour CPR certification  
24 Hour EMD course and certification  
32 Hours Emergency Call Handling Techniques and Simulations  
16 Hours Introduction to Police and Fire Dispatch  
4 Hours Introduction to Criminal Law for Telecommunicators  
4 Hours Suicide Prevention  
144 Hours Total plus-- last day of class committed to graduation total hours 152

## **E. Variations in Standards for Special Needs**

Variations in modular aspects of the standards may be appropriate for specialized public safety dispatchers such as CMED dispatchers, EMS or ambulance dispatchers, university police dispatchers, MEMA and other speciality dispatchers, etc.

## **F. Agency-Specific Training and Standards**

For new personnel, all agencies will require additional training in various major areas that need to be conducted in a local classroom environment and/or as part of on-the-shift training. In particular, training is required in the operation of local technical systems and equipment such as Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems, Police/Fire/EMS Records Management systems, Fire Alarm and Alerting systems, Radio consoles, and Security alarm systems. In addition, training will be required in many local operational rules, protocols and procedures. Finally, local or agency personnel offices may require dispatchers to attend municipal or state employee training classes of various kinds.

## **G. Certification by National Organizations or Vendors**

Various national dispatcher organizations and private companies offer dispatch courses and certifications. For example, APCO offers a Basic Telecommunicator Course which many PSAPs and the MCSA have used for many years. Three or four organizations or vendors offer EMD courses and certifications that have been adopted as an integral part of handling medical calls in many PSAPs. The MCSA remains neutral on the use of a particular organization or vendor's certification program, leaving the choice to local agencies or the Dispatch Academy curriculum.

## **H. Part-time Telecommunicators/Dispatchers**

It is recommended that part-time telecommunicator/dispatchers meet the same training standards as full-time dispatchers. While part-time dispatchers may work less than 20 hours each week, when they are working they typically perform the same duties as full-time dispatchers.

In those cases where part-time dispatchers do not perform the full range of full-time dispatcher duties, it is recommended that they be trained to their level of need.

## **I. Communications Training Officers**

MCSA recommends that agencies consider the creation, development, and as-needed use of experienced sworn or non-sworn dispatch personnel as telecommunications/dispatcher training officers. These personnel can be invaluable to the development of new dispatchers and they can bring

## **J. Education Standards**

MCSA recommends that all dispatchers have at least a high school diploma or GED-equivalent.

In addition, given the increasing reliance by PSAPs on computer systems of many types, MCSA recommends that all telecommunicators have or obtain a typing speed of 30 words per minute as measured by a typing test (whether generic or dispatch-typing specific).

## **K. Notes**

- The 40 Hour Basic Telecommunicator certification should be either APCO or equivalent.
- In agencies with an EMD program, at least one supervisor should have completed an EMD quality assurance program.
- The 20 Hours of CJIS/NCIC training will be supplemented by follow-on OJT using an agency's local CJIS terminal and the CJIS Manual
- The 32 hour call handling module should include, but not be limited to, topics on customer service, dispatcher liability, professionalism, stress management, language line access, and sensitivity training.

Abbreviations:

APCO- Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, International

CJIS- (Mass.) Criminal Justice Information System (operated by MA. Criminal History Systems Board)

NCIC- National Crime and Information Center (operated by FBI)

EFD- Emergency Fire Dispatch

EMD- Emergency Medical Dispatch

PSAP- Public Safety Answering Position (the place where 911 calls are answered)

SETB- Statewide Emergency Telecommunications Board

## **II. Telecommunicator In-Service Training and Continuing Education Standards**

MCSA recommends that all full-time and part-time dispatchers receive yearly in-service training and/or continuing education. This training should be conducted in a variety of topics based on the operational requirements and overall training plan of local agencies as well as the certification status of local telecommunicators.

MCSA recommends a minimum of 16 hours of off-console training each year for every telecommunicator/dispatcher. To accommodate the staffing needs of PSAPs, this training would ordinarily be scheduled in manageable blocks or modules throughout the year.

### **A. Maintaining Dispatcher Certifications Through Continuing Education**

Various modules that comprise the Basic Training Standards do or can require annual or bi-annual recertification. Examples of these modules are CPR, EMD, and the CJIS modules.

It is also recommended that MCSA work with the SETB to develop a telecommunicator re-certification program. This might be a 8-hour program to cover such areas as silent call, TTY, new technology, customer service, etc.

### **B. Addressing Topical Needs of Public Safety**

Every year, an agency may have a different local need for in-service training based on the introduction of new equipment (e.g., new CAD, different 911 phone system, new radio system console, additional CJIS functions, etc.), new procedures (e.g., legal requirements, agency dispatch policy change, startup of EMD program, etc.), or a change in the mission of the PSAP/dispatch center (e.g., dispatching for a new service or new community). Further, the general public safety situation in an area or the entire state may require a certain type of training in a particular year (e.g., WMD, Incident Command, etc.).

MCSA recommends that topical needs be carefully tracked and integrated into the in-service training program. In particular, careful coordination is needed between developments in new police, fire, and EMS procedures and the training of dispatchers needed to understand and support field personnel as these changes occur.

### **C. General Approaches to In-Service Training**

To accomplish in-service training effectively the following is one approach. Certification-linked training could be held each month in different regions of the state at staggered hours, for example from 08:00 to 12:00 and from 18:00 to 22:00. Making training available at different hours accommodates personnel on different shifts.

These modules would be four hours in length and the course content will be drafted from the list of continuing education certifications listed below. The times, topics and locations of the classes would be published well in advance so local agencies would be able to schedule personnel accordingly.

### **D. Including Dispatchers in Police or Fire In-service Training Classes and Exercises**

Most local police and fire agencies schedule a variety of in-service training classes throughout the year. Some of these classes are of particular value to telecommunicators/dispatchers. An added benefit of including dispatchers in police and fire classes is the greater understanding of the needs and perspectives of responders and vice-versa.

### **E. In-Service Training Topics and Courses**

The following is a partial list of in-service training topics.

- Domestic Violence Call Handling
- Suicidal Call handling
- Call Triaging & Management
- TTY & Massachusetts Relay Service
- CJIS & CORI training (of many types)
- Harassment & Sexual Harassment training
- Preparation for Court Testimony
- Typing & Multi-tasking
- Area Familiarization & mapping, or map reading
- Handling Aircraft incidents
- Handling Hazardous Materials incidents
- Handling Railroad incidents
- Handling Mass Casualty Incidents
- Incident Command
- Statewide Fire Mobilization plan
- Interpersonal Relations & Team Building
- Computer Aided Dispatch information entry requirements
- Air Medical requirements and landing zones
- Quality Assurance & Improvement programs
- Crime Scene Management
- Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other Ancillary Services
- Handling Motor Vehicle Pursuits
- Canine resources and Tracking Protocols
- Press Release and Media Handling
- Police Ride-alongs
- Handling Bomb Threats
- Handling Watercraft Emergencies
- Fire Department & EMS Familiarization
- Violent Crimes/ Home Invasion/ Car Jacking
- School Violence/Workplace Violence
- Hate Crimes
- Handling Hostage Negotiations & Situations
- Initiating Phone traces & Other Phone Security Issues
- Handling Animal Complaints
- Environmental police vs animal control officer duties
- DPW, Utility contacts
- Fire Marshal contacts
- State Police contacts
- State Police Airwing or National Guard RAID training
- Massachusetts Emergency Management resources
- Critical Incident Stress Management
- Stress Management
- Warrant Extracts

### **III. Dispatch Supervisor and Dispatch Center Management Standards**

MCSA recommends basic and yearly continuing training of dispatch supervisors.

In the case of Basic Training, MCSA recommends that new Supervisors receive special Line Supervisor training upon their appointment or promotion to the position of supervisor (or into some types of supervisory roles).

### **New Line Supervisors Standards**

Completion of all Basic Telecommunicator Standards plus up-to-date Continuing Education certificates, plus:

8 Hour Basic Line Supervision course

8 Hours Quality Assurance and/or Quality Improvement Training

### **New Dispatch Center Directors/Managers**

Completion of all Basic Telecommunicator Standards plus up-to-date Continuing Education certificates, plus:

16 Hours of Leadership and/or Management training (different subjects including Budgeting, Project Mgt, Hiring, Personnel Management, etc.)

## Appendix A

### Organizations to Review and Comment on Draft MCSA Dispatcher Standards

MCSA Members  
SETB Staff  
SETB Training Committee  
SETB Standards Committee  
Mass Police Chiefs  
Mass Fire Chiefs  
Major City Chiefs  
MPA  
PFFM  
APCO Atlantic  
MCOA  
WMEM  
MMA  
EOPS  
Other: