



City of San Antonio

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Title: Briefing on San Antonio Police Department 911 Dispatch Center [Presented by William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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DEPARTMENT: Police

DEPARTMENT HEAD: William P. McManus, Chief of Police

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City-wide

SUBJECT: 911 Dispatch Center Briefing

SUMMARY:

The San Antonio Police Department’s Communications Center serves as the city’s Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and answers all emergency (911) and non-emergency (207-SAPD) calls in the city. Over the past five years, the number of emergency calls has more than doubled to 2.45 million calls (1.6M emergency, 853K non-emergency). During this time, the staffing levels in the PSAP have remained the same. Accordingly, answer times and abandoned rates have started to climb and the speed with which calls are answered has slowed. The SAPD has taken numerous steps to address this issue.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Responsibilities:

The Communications Center is responsible for answering all emergency and non-emergency calls in the city. In addition, this unit also oversees all SAPD communications related to radios, cell phones, and tablet PCs, and it manages the SAPDs Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) compliance, in concert with ITSD. The unit is

responsible for entering information such as court mandated protective orders, responding to open records requests for audio, and ensuring all Communications staff are trained properly. This includes new hire training, training existing staff on new issues (open carry, Shot Spotter, body cameras, etc.), and ensuring completion of all required training hours according to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) standards.

Performance:

One of the most common ways to measure performance in a Communications Center is to look at the grade of service (GOS) as defined by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA). The NENA standard for GOS requires that 90 percent of incoming emergency calls are answered in 10 seconds or less, and 95 percent of all calls in 20 seconds or less. In 2015, the SAPD Communications Center answered 53.3% of emergency calls within 10 seconds or less; the average answer time over the past three years has spanned 14-19 seconds.

Another measure is the abandoned rate, which is defined as the number of calls that hang up before being answered by a call taker. There is no set NENA standard for this; however, using the GOS standard, it's assumed that 5 percent of calls would take longer than 20 seconds, so 5 percent could conceivably be hung up before a call taker could answer. The SAPD Communications Center had a 22% abandoned rate in 2015, which has grown as the call volume continues to increase.

Communications Center - Calls Received, Abandoned and Grade of Service

<u>Year</u>	<u>911 In</u>	<u>911 Abnd</u>	<u>Avg. Grade of Service</u>	<u>Avg Answer Time</u>	<u>911 Abnd %</u>	<u>Non-E In</u>	<u>Non-E Abnd</u>	<u>Non E Abnd %</u>
2016 YTD	299,946	63,625	70.4%	17.66 sec	21.2%	168,719	33,022	17.5
2015	1,598,505	351,093	53.3%	19.12 sec	22.0%	853,382	415,763	48.7%
2014	1,375,267	276,419	53.3%	14.67 sec	20.1%	832,822	102,964	12.4%
2013	1,270,961	237,820	68.1%	14.34 sec	18.7%	873,252	79,335	9.1%

Staffing:

Over the past five years, the staffing in the Communications Center has remained relatively constant with 68 authorized call takers, 68 dispatchers, 28 expeditors, 12 supervisors, and some other administrative staff. During this time, the supervision of the center transferred from sworn officers to civilians and in 2013, a civilian manager was hired to lead the unit, followed by the hiring of an assistant manager. In 2015, the department recognized the need for a more robust management support structure to handle the needs of 191 staff, and in 2015, the department added an administrator and three more assistant managers. Those positions were filled in late 2015/early 2016.

The number of call takers has remained static at 68 full-time positions but in September 2015, 15 agency temporary call takers were authorized. These positions have proven difficult to fill, as many of the individuals hired through the temp agencies have not been able to pass the background check or complete the training.

The training process to bring on new hires is lengthy and 49% will not make it through the required background check and training process. The timeline from posting the job through background check, training, and one-the-job training is approximately 6 months. The SAPD is taking steps to try and reduce that time where possible. One such example includes obtaining a contract with a third-party vendor to conduct background checks.

Timeline to Hire Communications Center Employees



Hiring	Background Investigation	Education Required	Training	On the Job Curriculum
Post for 2-3 weeks	Psychological Evaluation	500 hrs	500 hrs	500 hrs
1 week to review Drug Test	Mark History Evaluation	NCIC/TCIC Full Access	120 hours of training	120 hours of training
1 week to interview	Criminal Record	Staffing	500 hrs	500 hrs
1 week approval	Provide Conditional Offer	Crisis Intervention Training	Administrative Directives	Unit SOPs
		General Manual		

ISSUE:

Actions taken to date:

To improve the GOS and reduce the abandoned rate, the SAPD has taken the following immediate steps, in concert with City Management:

1. Fifteen agency temporary call takers were authorized in September 2015. There are currently 7 on board and 8 more are planned for the planned 4/25/16 new hire class.
2. Thirty temporary (with full benefit) positions added for mid-year 2016, to be converted to full-time after approval.
 - a. Twenty-five of those are call takers, three are supervisors and two are training officers.
 - b. Postings have been made and offers have gone out.
 - c. Human Resources approved a plan to make offers to 1/3 more individuals than spaces, understanding that 49% will exit the process before completing the required background and training effort.
 - d. Expected class size for the planned 4/25/16 class is 38 full time call takers, 9 agency temporary call takers and 8 dispatchers.
3. Offered scheduled voluntary overtime to existing call takers, allowing trained staff to fill in the gaps during periods of high call volume (primarily B shift).
4. Temporarily moved 28 expeditors, whose job is to handle certain types of police reports over the phone, over to call taker duties. Expeditors are trained and licensed Telecommunicators and are capable of functioning in this role as 911 call takers. Expeditor duties have been transferred to light duty officers working in Public Safety Headquarters.
5. Initiated a contract with Berkshire Advisors, to do an analysis of the SAPD Communications Center. Results will be provided in 60-90 days and will analyze the current state of service, provide recommendations on how to meet the NENA standard, assess whether to break out emergency and non-emergency call taking, recommend an updated staffing model, and a plan for implementing the recommendations.

6. Initiating a contract with a third-party vendor to conduct background checks on all new hires.

ALTERNATIVES:

Keep the staffing at the same level without improving Grade of Service, Answer Time or Abandoned Call Rate.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Department recommends continuing all efforts to improve the grade of service in the SAPD Communications Center, and will return to City Council during the 2017 budget process with additional improvements as recommended by the consultant.