



Summary Report

The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers

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Produced by:

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)

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- Ashley Arredondo, Accreditation Coordinator, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service
- Brett Batchelor, Training Coordinator, North Central Texas Council of Governments
- Jenet Sullivan, Accreditation and Compliance Coordinator, Cedar Park Police Department
- Kelle Hall, Secretary (Texas NENA), Communication Manager Highland Park Department of Safety
- Kristi Fogleman, President Elect (Texas APCO), Training Coordinator, Montgomery County Emergency Communication District
- Michael Fernandez, Administrative Support Manager, San Antonio Police Department
- Michele Racca, Director of Public Safety Communications, Odessa Public Safety
- Mike Wisko, Agency Chief, Texas Commission on Fire Protection (TCFP)
- Pam Frisk, Immediate Past President (Texas NENA), 9-1-1 Senior Training and Public Education Specialist, CAPCOG/CAECD
- Shantelle Oliver, Immediate Past President (Texas APCO), Support Services Manager, North Texas Emergency Communications Center
- Tina Chaffin, Training Specialist, Training 9-1-1 Heroes
- Tracy Pulley, Communications Supervisor and Training Coordinator, City of Irving Police Department

Many individuals hold one or several of the following certifications as part of continuing their professional development endeavors and demonstration to the profession: ENP [Emergency Number Professional], RPL [Registered Public-Safety Leader], or CPE [Certified Public-Safety Executive].

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senate Bill 496, passed by the Texas Legislature during the 88th Regular Session, assigned the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE; the Commission), in consultation with the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) to conduct a study on potential improvements to current training provided to Texas 9-1-1 emergency service call takers and dispatchers. These individuals are currently classified through licensure in the State of Texas as telecommunicators by the Commission and subject to minimum standards for licensure and continuing education requirements pursuant to Chapter 1701 of the Texas Occupations Code and TCOLE rules. In initiating the study, the following elements were considered:

- The effectiveness of current training provided to telecommunicators regarding communicating accurate information to law enforcement officers and first responders.
- Potential improvements to training offered to ensure telecommunicators are accurately identifying, classifying, and communicating important information to law enforcement officers and first responders.
- Evaluation of potential strategies for enhancing or expanding training for classification of information to law enforcement officers and first responders.
- Evaluation of the potential for adoption or expansion of continuing education training for telecommunicators.

The 9-1-1 emergency response system is the public's first point of contact in most emergency situations. This invaluable public system depends on trained, skilled, and exacting telecommunicators who are equipped to respond to a wide variety of emergency calls as efficiently as possible. Telecommunicators must possess key skills such as heightened multi-tasking, critical thinking, strategic decision-making, problem identification, adaptability, emotional control, and analytical analysis. To effectively handle incoming calls, a telecommunicator must utilize proper and efficient questioning and listening techniques, coupled with a professional demeanor and a strong personal desire to provide effective services. This ensures the telecommunicator is able to screen calls for priority of response and/or routing to the appropriate agency as their role is primarily centered on information processing to include obtaining, evaluating, and disseminating various types of public safety-related information.

Telecommunicators are often referred to as the calm voice in the dark by the public, yet they also serve a crucial role for first responders. Telecommunications operators quickly determine the type of emergency, its location and the response needed, and then relay that situational and safety information in a timely manner to the appropriate law enforcement and emergency

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response personnel in the field. The 9-1-1 emergency response system is currently wrestling with challenges in training and continuing education, staffing and turn over/vacancy rates, coupled with wellness, mental health, and resilience considerations of emergency service call takers and dispatchers.

Training, which is designed to provide foundational knowledge and skills that cumulatively build through expanded course offerings and continued education and professional development endeavors, is a performance improvement tool. Training typically establishes standards and proficiencies and serves as a measurement and evaluation mechanism. When used properly with on-the-job training, coaching, and mentorship, it can also help bridge the gap between the actual level of performance and the desired or expected level of performance. While a telecommunicator's role carries a heavy responsibility and exact level of attention to detail for emergencies, there are not universal or mandatory national guidelines for training and current training for TCOLE-licensed telecommunicators is not inclusive of other disciplines such as fire or emergency medical services (EMS).

Multiple career paths exist in the 9-1-1 emergency response system. Primary roles typically include telecommunicators, supervisors, managers, trainers, administrators, and technicians in the realm of operations, administration, radio systems, telephony systems, CAD, and GIS. The study focuses on the role of telecommunications officers in the 9-1-1 emergency response system.

The working group for this study was recruited by contacting entities throughout the State of Texas to seek a range of experience among selected or nominated individuals. In addition to recruiting efforts, multiple individuals volunteered for the effort as they tracked the initial concept, wording, and subsequent passage of Senate Bill 496. The working group is comprised of a diverse group of experienced telecommunicators with practical and technical experience from across the State of Texas to ensure that there was an expansive knowledge of desired competencies of the profession, the evolving needs of the industry, a detailed understanding of current training requirements and offerings, and the needs for update, enhancement, or expansion of training offered. The telecommunications professionals involved in this study represent agencies of various sizes, geographic locations, and types of shifts. These subject matter experts are experienced and passionate about the mission to elevate and bring awareness of the telecommunication profession to others as well as improvements that can be made to enhance and expand the curriculum associated with training endeavors.

The following study report will outline the primary themes discovered, positive indicators for the telecommunicator profession, and recommendations for both immediate and long-term improvement as final outcomes of the study. It is possible that subsequent advances in

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technology and/or changes in legislation, regulations, and applicable rules may precede or supersede any of the listed recommendations provided as part of the study report.

BACKGROUND

The mission of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), as a regulatory State agency, is to establish and enforce standards to ensure that the people of Texas are served by highly trained and ethical law enforcement, corrections, and telecommunications personnel. TCOLE sets policy, approves rules and procedures formulated by the Executive Director and staff, and takes formal disciplinary actions against licensees on the recommendation of the Executive Director and state Administrative Law Judges. TCOLE first established telecommunicator training standards in January 1988.

Texas Occupations Code §1701.001 defines a telecommunicator (telecommunications officer) as a “person acknowledged by the commission and employed by or serving a law enforcement agency that performs law enforcement services on a 24-hour basis who receives, processes, and transmits public safety information and criminal justice data for the agency by using a base radio station on a public safety frequency regulated by the Federal Communications Commission [FCC] or by another method of communication.”

The Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) was created by the 70th Texas Legislature to implement and administer 9-1-1 services throughout the State of Texas. At the time of creation, certain 9-1-1 emergency communications districts (ECD) and 9-1-1 Municipal Emergency Communication District (MECD) were providing 9-1-1 service within their boundaries. In order to provide 9-1-1 service to all citizens of Texas, the CSEC implemented service to the remainder of the state with a program administered through the twenty-four Regional Planning Commissions (RPC). The current State of Texas 9-1-1 Services Entities can be found in Appendix B: State of Texas 9-1-1 Services Entities.

Effective September 2019, the 86th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1090. The bill, authored by Representative Cecil Bell, Jr., amended Texas’ Government Code 421.095 by including “an emergency response operator or emergency services dispatcher who provides communication support services for an agency by responding to requests for assistance in emergencies” into the state’s definition of a first responder. Signing this bill into law resulted in Texas becoming one of the first states to reclassify its 9-1-1 telecommunicators and include these individuals as first responders alongside peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel. Overall, this update in verbiage impacted four Texas statutes:

- Acquired and Traumatic Brain Injury training (Section 1701.264, Occupations Code)

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- Reportable diseases confidentiality (Section 81.046, Health and Safety Code)
- Discrimination against first responders' right to sue (Section 451.0025, Labor Code)
- Liability for emergency care (Section 74.151, Civil Practice and Remedies Code)

Since the reclassification of 9-1-1 telecommunicators occurred, there have been three updates to the initial TCOLE licensure training curriculum which increased the hours and expanded the scope of the materials.

Individuals seeking to obtain a basic telecommunicator license must meet certain prerequisites: be 18 years of age, meet TCOLE hiring standards, and possess a Personal Identification Number (PID). Individuals must also have a current, nationally recognized Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification from a provider such as the American Heart Association and the American Red Cross with practical scenarios for adult, infant, and AED. Texas Occupations Code §1701.003 does not prevent an employing agency from establishing qualifications and standards for hiring telecommunicators that exceed the Commission's minimum standards.

To achieve initial TCOLE licensure, an individual must take and successfully pass the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) which serves as a baseline for law enforcement telecommunicator training requirements in the State of Texas. Following completion of the course and successful reporting to TCOLE, the individual must pass the TCOLE licensing exam. Licensure serves to hold telecommunicators to the same standards as peace officers and jailers.

A TCOLE training unit runs from September 1st of odd-numbered years through August 31st of the following odd-numbered year. An example would be the unit that individuals are currently in: 09/01/21–08/31/23. TCOLE training requirements for telecommunicators for each two-year training unit includes a minimum of 20 hours of training to include Cardiac Emergency Communications (#786).

TCOLE offers proficiency certificates for telecommunicators with the following levels: Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, and Master. Each proficiency certificate has specific requirements that are governed by Commission Rules §221.1 and §221.3. Specifics for the requirements and courses required (with allowable equivalent courses listed) can be found in Appendix C: TCOLE Proficiency Certification Requirements.

Of note, there is no duty to achieve licensure within the fire or emergency medical services (EMS) arena for individuals serving in a telecommunications officer role. While this study report may not be able to directly influence outcomes for individuals within these arenas or other disciplines, consideration of their role, contributions, and the overall interconnectivity and interoperability

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of 9-1-1 emergency response system regardless of discipline origination was a factor as it is not differentiated or readily apparent to the public when a call for assistance is placed. To the caller, the telecommunications officer answering the call is the first responder and lifeline to meet their need(s) and they deserve the same quality of care and response regardless of the discipline origination and the size (e.g. small, medium, or large) or location (e.g. rural, major metropolitan) of the responding entity.

STUDY FOCUS

In conducting this study, the working group focused on:

1. Identification of the percentage of 9-1-1 call takers or dispatchers that are not licensed in the State of Texas (either by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement [TCOLE] or other state regulatory agency).
2. Discussion of whether all individuals should be licensed who serve as 9-1-1 telecommunicators, specialists, or emergency call takers and what type or level of licensure should be required.
3. Evaluation of the efficacy of the temporary TCOLE telecommunications operator license process, whether the one-year period is appropriate, and whether there is a benefit to having individuals receive training and complete licensure before acting in a 9-1-1 call-taker capacity.
4. Review of the current Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) curriculum and recommendations for revision and expansion of scope.
5. Review of telecommunicator continuing education requirements and the potential of enhancing or expanding continuing education training offerings.
6. Discussion of access for individuals across the State of Texas for both initial licensure and continuing education training.

METHODOLOGY

The working group convened over a series of virtual collaborative working sessions to review, discuss, and dissect each focus statement outlined above in the Purpose section of this study report to elicit feedback and determine and refine the outcomes and recommendations. In some cases, work, research, and taskings occurred by/for the working group members between

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sessions to obtain and analyze the desired information to contextualize the information as part of the study.

The study analysis consisted of a review of existing rules and requirements, basic licensing course materials and subsequent topics/courses required as a telecommunicator completes each TCOLE proficiency certificate level, and processes of those across the State of Texas who are serving as 9-1-1 emergency services call takers or dispatchers without being licensed or subject to TCOLE licensure. The review of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) training materials included notation of suggested revisions for consideration as well as the necessary and/or suggested updates to continuing education training requirements. Resources reviewed included, but are not limited to:

- The Federal Communications Commission 9-1-1 Master public-safety answering point (PSAP) Registry.
- Phone inquiry sampling across the State of Texas to obtain information on licensure and the level of awareness of the need for TCOLE licensure.
- Outreach sampling to determine personnel assigned to 9-1-1 emergency response services, services offered by the responding entity, and the ratio of licensed emergency call takers to non-licensed across disciplines that may serve in the telecommunications officer role.
- Phone inquiry with Councils of Government, 9-1-1 districts, and Municipal Emergency Communications Districts (MECD) to gather information on PSAP assignments, if known, as well as secondary PSAPs for areas that utilize call centers outside a main 9-1-1 center.
- Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) training materials.
- Continuing education course offerings and training requirements.
- Outreach sampling of 9-1-1 emergency response personnel outside of the licensing requirements of TCOLE to determine hours of training required for assignment as a telecommunications officer and any suggestions for required training.

FOCUS STATEMENTS



Identification of the percentage of 9-1-1 call takers or dispatchers that are not licensed in the State of Texas (either by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement [TCOLE] or other state regulatory agency).

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An outreach survey of approximately 200 respondents was solicited by the working group concerning total personnel assigned to 9-1-1 emergency response services and services offered by the responding entity. Evaluation of the responses resulted in the consensus that virtually all individuals serving in a telecommunications role, either as a firefighter, emergency services personnel (EMS), or a civilian, require no licensure by their respective governing body except for those that transmit criminal justice data and are therefore currently subject to TCOLE licensure. Most of the responses confirmed that because they are not under the purview of current legislation and oversight by TCOLE, they do not follow the same requirements or may not have the same expectations and standards, and have no desire to pursue TCOLE Basic Telecommunicator licensure. With these individuals not subject to the TCOLE licensure process, Texas is not regulating or overseeing a large part of the current 9-1-1 emergency response services that are part of the overall system.

9-1-1 telecommunicators and dispatchers are often considered or classified as a clerical role to fill within an organization due to their work in a PSAP. This stems from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' Standard Occupation Classification System of Public Safety Telecommunicators as a clerical occupation, alongside secretaries and commercial dispatchers such as those for trash collection services. While states are currently unable to directly change this federal classification, individuals can express support to different organizations, stakeholder groups, and Congress. States can also take action towards localized reclassification efforts by introducing and subsequently passing legislation to reclassify their 9-1-1 telecommunicators as first responders alongside peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel. Texas successfully implemented this legislation through House Bill 1090, effective in September 2019, ensuring that telecommunicators have access to the same services and protections as other positions historically classified as first responders.

Yet, the working group believes that the State of Texas can continue setting the precedent and elevate the reclassification effort further for the profession. The current definition of "telecommunicator" as defined in Texas Occupations Code §1701.001 is narrow in scope as it can lead to inadvertent limitations impacting the training needs of telecommunicators who are employed at non-governmental agencies and the verbiage is law enforcement centric. It is recommended by the working group that the definition be changed to include other disciplines that participate in the 9-1-1 emergency response system (e.g., fire or emergency medical services [EMS]). A number of states currently utilize the verbiage of "public safety telecommunicator" instead of "telecommunicator."

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As part of the recommendation that the State of Texas make the verbiage change so that additional disciplines can be represented, the current term of “telecommunicator” should be changed to “emergency communication specialist (ECS)” or “emergency communications professional (ECP).” While this terminology has not been universally adopted into state-level legislation across the US, the terminology is starting to take hold as part of the overall telecommunicator reclassification effort. Examples of other state terminology utilized in legislation to support the transition from “telecommunicator” to more expansive verbiage includes:

- Idaho utilizes the terminology of “emergency communications officer” (ID SB 1028).
- Kansas utilizes the terminology of “911 call center public safety telecommunicators” (KS SB 40).
- Maryland utilizes the terminology of “9-1-1 specialists” (MD SB 0284).
- Nevada utilizes the terminology of “emergency dispatcher or call taker” (NV AB492).
- Oregon utilizes the terminology of “emergency dispatcher or 9-1-1 emergency operator” (OR SB 507).
- Pennsylvania utilizes the terminology of “911 dispatcher” (PA HB 1459).
- West Virginia utilizes the terminology of “emergency telecommunicator” (WV HB 4123).

The State of Texas itself utilizes the phrasing of “emergency response operator or emergency services dispatcher” in House Bill 1090. The working group believes that the verbiage included in this bill further supports the necessary terminology and verbiage change needed. By changing the verbiage in Texas Occupations Code §1701.001, the State of Texas will establish the foundation for any individual who may answer a telecommunications call, regardless of discipline, and provide an avenue for properly accounting of all individuals who serve in the capacity of a 9-1-1 call taker or dispatcher in the State of Texas.

The working group acknowledges that a change to verbiage in this code would have cascading impacts to other codes, rules, and instances where “telecommunicator” is used.

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A further consideration is that the State of Texas cannot accurately track or report the number of 9-1-1 call takers or dispatchers in the State. This is due to the fact that a portion of the population serving in this role is not currently subject to TCOLE licensure. As such, there is no way to 1) determine which entities are using the protocols and best practices associated with the 9-1-1 emergency response system, to include the principles of emergency medical dispatch and 2) determine if they have the correct equipment and resources while taking 9-1-1 calls. The working group recommends that implementation of a tracking or reporting structure be implemented to look at both considerations.

In December 2003, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) began collecting data to build a registry of public safety answering points (PSAPs). According to the FCC, there are 736 registered PSAPs in the State of Texas. Of those, 59 are designated as a secondary PSAP, which receives calls transferred from a primary PSAP. This includes multiple EMS and fire departments, as well as several backup or alternate centers. While secondary PSAPs are not answering the initial 9-1-1 call, they are still processing the calls and sending first responder resources to locations in the same way as a primary PSAP. In addition to this, there may be some departments/agencies/entities that are not currently registered as a PSAP. Due to an unknown number of entities that are not currently registered, the overall numbers of PSAPs reported likely does not accurately represent the true response efforts in the State of Texas. The working group recommends implementing reporting mechanisms to ensure registrations occur regardless of discipline and location.

The working group made contact with multiple agencies identified as PSAPs to gather information on specific processes utilized across the State of Texas. Contacts were made with Councils of Government, 9-1-1 Districts, and Municipal Emergency Communications Districts (MECD). While these government agencies had accurate listings of their primary PSAPs, few of them had information regarding secondary PSAPs or if secondary PSAPs are even utilized for their area. The discussion revealed that there is a need and opportunity to determine how many entities are using secondary PSAPs and how many agencies in the area are not registered and considered PSAPs. Examples of entities that may be missed or not tracked include higher education (i.e., universities and colleges), water districts, hospitals, and school districts.

Many PSAPs reported handling multi-disciplinary responses such as police, fire, and EMS. When PSAPs did not report handling all three primary emergency response functions, the working group reached out to the secondary PSAPs to obtain information specific to their response. During these inquiries, several (i.e., fire department and EMS dispatch agencies) confirmed that they did not participate in TCOLE licensing or training

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mandates. The individuals serving in a telecommunications role in these agencies reported that they typically possess specialized licensing or certifications specific to their response discipline. Telecommunicators affiliated with a fire department who process calls for service on a secondary basis (when compared to other duties) did not see the integration with a TCOLE law enforcement-based certification or licensure as a gap that needed to be filled although they acknowledged there may be benefits to incorporating concepts into the training. Many in the other disciplines cited that even if they wanted to participate in the State of Texas mandated training for licensed telecommunicators, that these opportunities were not typically available to them due to not being affiliated with a law enforcement agency. All individuals that the working group spoke to that are not currently subject to licensure expressed a desire for enhanced and expanded training opportunities while holding a firm resolve that there should not be any unfunded mandates related to training of their staff.

The inquiries and resulting discussion with the primary and secondary PSAPs not affiliated with law enforcement and their associated responses, only further illustrates the need for the “telecommunicator” verbiage change. Beyond the verbiage change, the responses show that there is an opportunity for awareness and expansion of training to include 1) a focus of the curriculum to what each discipline needs to know and deems as critical information and how each discipline operates to improve interoperability functions between disciplines and 2) an equivalent non-licensing version of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080). By introducing a non-licensing version of the course, certain prerequisites such as meeting TCOLE hiring mandates and possessing a TCOLE PID would no longer be required to register and attend the course.

Note: The true realized need for a non-licensing version of the #1080 course would be dependent on the actions taken following the submission of this study report to include: 1) if any legislative wording change(s) results in a change to the individuals subject to the licensure and 2) an update to the content of the current Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080).



Discussion of whether all individuals should be licensed who serve as 9-1-1 telecommunicators, specialists, or emergency call takers and what type or level of licensure should be required.

In keeping with the recommendation to update the verbiage in Texas Occupations Code §1701.001 to be more expansive and include other disciplines that participate in the 9-1-1 emergency response system (e.g. fire or emergency medical services [EMS]), the overwhelming consensus of the working group is that all individuals should be licensed

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in the State of Texas. If the verbiage is not updated, it leaves too much of a gray area for individuals and entities to claim that the license process does not apply to them, even when it may actually apply to them per Texas Occupations Code §1701.001 as it currently stands.

If licensing is implemented for all 9-1-1 call takers or dispatchers in the State of Texas, regardless of discipline, the question that would likely arise is “Who would the other disciplines be licensed under as they do not typically fall under the purview of TCOLE?”. Should this fall under the respective governing body for each discipline or under TCOLE if the initial licensure training and continuing education requirements are adequately adjusted and/or expanded for all disciplines? Ideally there would be a standardized curriculum that serves as a baseline for the foundation of all individuals who may be taking an emergency call, regardless of discipline, and based on job task analysis and minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the position.

With the implementation of the background check requirements for telecommunicator license candidates per TCOLE Rule §217.1 and the attestation statement that the applicant has met all requirements for enrollment and licensure (Appendix D: TCOLE Law Enforcement Agency Checklist), the working group acknowledges that there has been an improvement with screening individuals who would be ineligible for taking emergency calls within the law enforcement discipline.

Some agencies who believe they are in gray area of Texas Occupations Code §1701.001 claim that if “TCOLE doesn’t know we exist, they can’t audit us.” Other agencies are relying on the hiring of individuals in the temporary licensure status per the provisions in Texas Occupations Code §1701.405, which only requires the individual to obtain the license “[no] later than the first anniversary of the date of employment.” These agencies are hiring individuals and maxing out the one-year allotment before moving to another individual in the temporary license status. The use of cycling through personnel in a perpetual temporary licensure status as an implied agency hiring practice is not the intent of Texas Occupations Code §1701.405. Many of these agencies may be operating in this manner due to the perception that it is either 1) cheaper or less cumbersome to hire temporary personnel than train and license the individual or 2) out of a fear that once sufficiently trained and licensed the individual may pursue employment at another agency.

While the possibility of trained staff leaving for other potentially higher paying positions is not unique to this position or profession, it is magnified due to high vacancy rates for telecommunicators. The 2024 National Emergency Number Association (NENA) *Pulse of*

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9-1-1 report states that 82% of respondents report that they cannot fill open telecommunications positions and 75% of respondents say they are unable to receive approval to open new headcount. The 2023 International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED) *America's 911 Workforce is in Crisis* report indicates "...the average vacancy rate in 911 centers across America was about 25% over [the] four-year period [of 2019 to 2022]—meaning that one in every four positions needed to be filled. This is about a five-point increase in the anecdotal number that industry experts used to cite before the COVID-19 pandemic. [W]hile 27% of centers reported no change in actual staffing levels over the last four years, 36% reported having fewer positions filled in 2022 than in 2019." Some law enforcement agencies reported utilizing officers who are willing and able to work overtime to fill the current gap and reduce the strain on the department.

While the working group did not reach a consensus on what type or level of licensure should be required beyond the current TCOLE licensure, the group acknowledged that there are factors to consider when determining and implementing a statewide licensure update such as budgetary considerations, availability of updated and focused curriculum and continuing education that meets the needs of all disciplines, distribution and availability of instructors and training opportunities throughout the State, as well as an appropriate and realistic implementation timeline.

The answer to the type or level of licensure would be informed by multiple contextual inputs that were beyond the tasking of the working group for this study report, to include but would not be limited to:

- Will all individuals be required to pass the same level of background check regardless of discipline?
- Can or how might the existing TCOLE proficiency certification framework be adapted to meet the needs of all disciplines in the 9-1-1 emergency response system?
- Will the job task analysis and minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) result in different outcomes for each discipline? How will this impact the curriculum and training needs?
- What are the 9-1-1 equipment needs to best serve the public well? How can we best identify and systematically address any current deficiencies?

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The Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) is currently 80 hours in length. Texas Occupations Code §1701.405 states that “at least 40 hours of telecommunication training as determined by the Commission” is required to employ a person to act as a telecommunicator. With any changes in licensure requirements that would impact all disciplines, there is an opportunity to rework the existing curriculum to be less law enforcement-centric and more applicable to telecommunicators across all disciplines. This consideration as part of implementing a licensure requirement change would have a direct impact on training time, resources, and budget requirements.

The working group also identified that there is an opportunity to implement more expansive changes related to the study report outcomes by naming a telecommunications director or chair. This individual can serve as a representative on TCOLE boards and at other important meetings and items that require stakeholder considerations and input. This individual would function similar to other licensed law enforcement positions within TCOLE and provide a valuable and more focused voice for the telecommunications profession in the State of Texas.



Evaluation of the efficacy of the temporary TCOLE telecommunications operator license process, whether the one-year period is appropriate, and whether there is a benefit to having individuals receive training and complete licensure before acting in a 9-1-1 call-taker capacity.

Texas Occupations Code §1701.405 requires that for a person to be employed and act as a telecommunicator, the person must:

- [have] at least 40 hours of telecommunicator training as determined by the commission;
- [be] at least 18 years of age;
- [hold] a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate; and
- [hold] a license to act as a telecommunicator or agrees to obtain the license not later than the first anniversary of the date of employment.

A person employed to act as a telecommunicator who has not obtained a license to act as a telecommunicator under this chapter may not continue to act as a telecommunicator after the first anniversary of the date of employment unless the person obtains the license.

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Temporary telecommunicator licenses expire one year from the date of appointment, or, upon successful completion of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) requirements and passing the state exam. Once an individual is reported by an agency to TCLEDDs for the successful completion of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) and successfully passes the state exam, the record of licensure is automatically generated. Per TCOLE Rule §219, an individual is allowed three attempts to pass the state exam. All attempts must be completed within 180 days from the completion date of the licensing course.

The working group affirms that the implementation and proper use of the one-year temporary licensure period as intended is a benefit to agencies and no change to the current process or time period are required. Agencies that hire and provide an initial orientation to the agency policies and procedures, expectations, and support through on-the-job training, coaching, and mentorship of calls and mental health, wellness, and resiliency concerns even before the individual may complete their initial licensure best set up their staff members for success as a telecommunicator. This should be adopted as the expectation and standard of practice to best support the telecommunicator in their multi-faceted response role within the organization while serving the public.

The one-year time allotment is appropriate and proactive agencies typically report that their goal is to have their personnel through the training within a six-month time period to ensure any necessary remediation and retesting can be completed well before the possibility of the individual's temporary licensure expiration. The 2024 National Emergency Number Association (NENA) *Pulse of 9-1-1* report states that 46% of respondents cite training of new hire employees in the telecommunications role takes between four and nine months to complete. A focus on completing the licensure requirements within six to nine months should be adopted as the expectation and standard of practice to best serve the public as the 9-1-1 emergency response system.

While the current process and legislatively required time period providing temporary licensure status are sufficient, it is recommended that TCOLE outline and publish best practices and procedures regarding the use of the one-year temporary licensure time period allotment. The capture of this information was beyond the tasking of the working group for this study report; however, these best practices and procedures can be leveraged from a survey of those agencies and entities that routinely achieve a high pass rate on the state exam. A launching point of the survey can review and determine how the different agencies and entities have implemented onboarding, training, and continuing education of their telecommunications officers across different sized organizations and locations throughout the State. The working group believes that in

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many cases these agencies and entities meet and supersede all requirements to proactively set up their personnel and organization for success in responding as the public's first point of contact in emergency situations.

Note: The efficacy of the temporary TCOLE telecommunications operator license process is indirectly linked to the quality and timeliness of the delivery of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) course.



Review of the current Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) curriculum and recommendations for revision and expansion of scope.

The Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) is currently 80 hours in length. Texas Occupations Code §1701.405 states that “at least 40 hours of telecommunication training as determined by the Commission” is required to employ a person to act as a telecommunicator. Training for the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) is currently authorized by TCOLE training standard as an in-person event or an online event with advanced written approval by TCOLE. These delivery methods are appropriate based on the needs and widespread locations of agencies and telecommunicators throughout the State of Texas.

Since the reclassification of 9-1-1 telecommunicators as first responders occurred in September 2019, there have been three updates to the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) curriculum which increased the hours and expanded the scope of the materials. Telecommunicators should be able to articulate the roles and responsibilities of their position as it relates to the stakeholders, public, and community they serve and be equipped to classify, process, respond, and diffuse emergency situations from a wide-variety of callers. The current Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) covers the following topics:

- Introduction to the telecommunicator profession, roles and responsibilities, and ethics
- Communication resources, confidentiality, and interpersonal communications
- Emergency communications technology
- Basic call processing techniques and radio communications
- Legal and liability concepts and issues
- Stress management and critical incident stress, health, and wellness

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- Demographics and dimensions of diversity
- Crisis communications for persons with mental illness, suicidal persons, family violence, stalking, sexual assault, trafficking, hostages, and explosive or suspicious packages

While the overall changes have been beneficial, the working group does not feel that the needs of telecommunications officers entering the profession are truly being met or that the current training fully encompasses the entry-level telecommunicator's professional training needs and growing demands. The training still retains a heavy influence on peace officer needs, with little understanding or linkage of verbiage or protocol to the needs of fire departments, emergency medical services, or other entities that may serve as a telecommunicator within a PSAP.

An itemized listing of proposed changes required to the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) curriculum was not part of the working group's charge under Senate Bill 496, but rather a cursory listing of potential changes that can be further explored. Members of the working group believe each element of the current Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) should be critically reviewed and tied to job task analysis and minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the day-to-day response operations required of the position.

The working group noted that the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) involving public safety telecommunicators is an example of an item that can be pared down within #1080 to the information immediately necessary for telecommunicators to complete their day-to-day job taskings. Context and a general overview of how the industry has evolved to support individuals across different demographics and abilities is beneficial but does not necessitate significant time allotment within the overall curriculum or state exam test questions. There are other elements within the current content, such as OMNIXX, that can be removed from the curriculum.

Areas that the working group noted for consideration as either an addition as an introductory topic or through revision and expansion within the initial #1080 licensure training curriculum include liability, critical incidents, mental health/wellness/resiliency and the mental preparation of/for telecommunications personnel, active shooter and active attack situations, civil disturbances and domestic violence, swatting calls, and trauma-informed call processing.

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The working group recommends that a training review committee be established following this study report. The purpose of the training review committee would be to initiate the review and revision of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) to 1) more appropriately reflect the needs of those serving in the telecommunicator role and 2) expand to meet the needs of all telecommunicators, regardless of discipline, to serve as a baseline for the foundation of all individuals who may be taking an emergency call. Changes to the curriculum should be driven by data obtained from job task analysis and minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the position.

Student-centered facilitated learning and problem-based learning concepts are contemporary adult education models that empower learners to think critically, problem-solve, challenge assumptions, be innovative and creative, integrate theory with practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop viable solutions to job-related problems and challenges. The State of Texas has an opportunity to capitalize on these advancements as part of incorporating changes into the #1080 course while ensuring student comprehension, increasing student retention of knowledge and skills, enhancing overall job performance and capabilities, and developing career confidence.

Similar training review committee undertakings have occurred for other courses governed by TCOLE standards and TCOLE licensing courses with success. When the training review committee can critically evaluate the content, flow, and applicability of content and activities and skill training and demonstrations, the license candidate, the organization, and the general public are elevated and better served as a whole. The committee can also leverage more specific and targeted surveys and input from their constituents and community feedback to ensure that telecommunications operators can creatively problem solve and answer the complex issues they face in their day-to-day response operations.

As part of reviewing the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080), the training review committee may be able to identify topics and activities that would be eligible for splitting out of the current #1080 course requirements. This would allow for adjustment to the existing course topics and hours breakdown so that proper and sufficient coverage of the topics can be tied to the day-to-day response operations required of the position. The re-tooled Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) would remain as the initial course requirement and condition of licensing per Texas Occupations Code §1701.405.

The #1080 course could then be followed by a field training format or styled in-person training event of a suitable duration per the identified topics from the training review

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committee. The format and delivery of the subsequent training would provide an opportunity for supporting instructional activities and exercises to encourage creative problem solving in alignment with checklists, policies, and procedures. The performance evaluations associated with this training event would ideally expand beyond written tests and include more coaching- and mentoring-styled feedback opportunities as a result of scenario-based role-playing events. The training event would ideally utilize self-reflection to promote intrinsic development of the individual along with the frameworks and skills to set them up for success for mental health, wellness, and resiliency as part of their day-to-day response operations.

A training event for telecommunications officers following the #1080 licensure course and formulated in this manner would bridge a common gap in tactical communication application so that individuals can more readily adjust and adapt their approach, eliminate challenges, and avoid obstacles as they maneuver in and out of different environments while responding from another location behind a console and primarily through a headset. The field training format or styled in-person training event would likely be better classified as one of the initial continuing education courses that a telecommunicator should take within a specified time parameter following the completion of the #1080 course.

As part of conducting the study, the working group indicated that there have been intermittent reports that the state exam test questions did not necessarily cover or match the content in the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080). TCOLE affirmed that a comparison of the curriculum and the state exam test questions had been done independently and ahead of the study commencement and that the two datasets were in alignment. TCOLE confirmed that they conduct periodic comparison and auditing of each licensing course to ensure alignment is maintained across curriculum and state exam test questions.



Review of continuing education offerings and requirements as well as the potential of enhancing or expanding continuing education training offerings and requirements.

The Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) serves as a baseline for the telecommunicator training requirements in the State of Texas and as a foundation for all individuals who may take an emergency call. As previously outlined, there are actionable steps to take to improve and enhance the initial licensure curriculum so that it better fits the current and future needs of those serving as telecommunications officers.

Compliance with continuing education programs for telecommunicators is in accordance with Texas Occupations Code §1701.352:

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- Before the first anniversary of the telecommunicator’s employment, 24 hours of crisis communications (TCOLE #2120) must be provided.
- A state agency, county, special district, or municipality that appoints or employs a telecommunicator shall provide training to the telecommunicator of not less than 20 hours during each 24-month period [TCOLE training unit] of employment that includes:
 - telecommunicator cardiopulmonary resuscitation as described by Section 1701.3071(a-1); and
 - other topics selected by the Commission and the employing entity.

As stated previously, Texas Occupations Code §1701.352 does not include fire departments, EMS agencies, or other non-governmental entities that function in a secondary PSAP capacity.

TCOLE Rule §217.3 outlines the legislatively required continuing education courses for license holders and reiterates that telecommunicators shall complete at least 20 hours of continuing education to include cardiopulmonary resuscitation training.

TCOLE offers proficiency certificates for telecommunicators with the following levels: Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, and Master. Each proficiency certificate has specific requirements that are governed by Commission Rules §221.1 and §221.3. Specifics for the requirements and courses required (with allowable equivalent courses listed) can be found in Appendix C: TCOLE Proficiency Certification Requirements. The proficiency certificates provide a generalized framework for continuing education; however, the working group believes that changes can be made to the listed requirements when a course listed is not legislatively mandated.

In reviewing the TCOLE proficiency certificates for telecommunicators, the working group initially recommended removing Cultural Diversity (#3939) from the listing of courses as it is not required for telecommunicators based on the wording of Texas Occupations Code §1701.352. This course was recently remastered and subsequently published by TCOLE in July 2024. A cursory review of the course indicates that the course may be more applicable to the telecommunications profession or adapted to a more telecommunications-centric focus to better assist individuals with interacting and communicating with others while responding from another location behind a console and primarily through a headset. The working group recommends a more comprehensive review be conducted by the training review committee following the

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proposed work on the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) to determine the applicability and possibility for customization or refinement.

Spanish for Law Enforcement (#2109) is another course that the working group recommended be re-examined. The current focus of the course is for a law enforcement response and at a minimum should be adapted to meet telecommunicator's needs. As the State's demographics shift, the number of languages spoken in Texas households is growing and evolving. While Spanish may cover most of the Texas households that speak a language other than English at home, changing immigration patterns are increasing the number of other foreign languages spoken in the State and telecommunicators should be prepared to identify and respond. By contextualizing the demographics and language needs within the telecommunication officer's response area, agencies can better provide suitable training and resources to meet the communication and response needs of their local community. The working group recommends that 1) Spanish for Law Enforcement be adapted to Spanish for Telecommunicators and 2) other language courses be considered by the training review committee following the proposed work on the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080).

The Texas Occupations Code §1701.003 does not prevent an employing agency from establishing qualifications and standards for training telecommunicators that exceed the Commission's minimum standards. The working group recommends that more explicit and targeted ongoing continuing education options be identified and outlined to better assist agencies and personnel determine what topics or areas of focus may be most applicable given the knowledge, skills, or abilities the individual desires to enhance or expand as part of the TCOLE training unit. In addition, the working group recommends that agencies adopt a higher hour of training requirements per training unit, when possible, to better meet the development and support needs of the telecommunicator so that they can better serve the public through their response.

Expanding continuing education training opportunities for telecommunications officers will prove beneficial for incidents as the profession evolves, new threats to responders become known, as new technology emerges, and the types of calls change in context and priority (e.g. active shooter and active attack situations, wildfires, domestic violence, or sexual assaults) as they are better equipped to communicate, respond, and debrief and manage critical incident stress resulting from these situations.

Many tenured telecommunicators in the State of Texas who were either 1) performing the duties of a telecommunicator and serving under permanent appointment on and before September 1, 1987 (per Texas Occupations Code §1701.405) or 2) have been

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licensed since this date but have not been directly involved in training initiatives for current license candidates have not necessarily stayed abreast of the curriculum contained within the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) as it has evolved over the years. It is recommended that after the #1080 curriculum is revised per the recommendations contained within this study report, that an awareness or refresher training be prepared for those individuals who previously completed TCOLE #1080 or #1013 (predecessor to #1080) or who are exempt from the current requirements.

Similar to having licensed peace officers complete the legislative update course for every TCOLE training unit (pursuant to TCOLE Rule §218.3; current TCOLE reporting number is #3188), some members of the working group reported that they are 1) aware of agencies implementing this as part of their telecommunicator continuing education plan or 2) have already implemented this within their own agency as a telecommunicator continuing education. The working group recommends the adoption and inclusion of legislative update to help telecommunications personnel stay abreast of the Texas legislative changes that impact and may factor into the larger overall 9-1-1 emergency response system and first responder network.



Discussion of access for individuals across the State of Texas for both initial licensure and continuing education training.

While the delivery methods for initial licensure are appropriate and in alignment with the TCOLE methods approved for use for training deliveries, the working group believes that more in-person training opportunities are required throughout the State to meet vacancy and throughput needs. When in-person training is offered locally as a closed-type enrollment to meet an agency or entity's specific need and timeframe, neighboring or partner agencies are not always made aware of a potential training opportunity that their personnel can attend. Training events can often be delayed until a class size is large enough to deem it worthy of an instructor(s) resource allocation and time investment. This can result in a delay in the availability of training opportunities for license candidates, further pushing them into the possibility of running out of time on the one-year time temporary license period allotment.

Limitations to availability of in-person initial licensure training opportunities at a reasonable cost to an agency who is unable to host or sponsor a training event with instructors from their organization is a realized challenge, especially for those in remote, rural, and underserved areas or small agencies. Larger metropolitan areas reported that they open their Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) training to secondary PSAP employees (e.g., EMS dispatchers) when there are additional student seats

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available in the training event. An additional consideration related to in-person training is that, even when an event is made available to other agencies to attend, and potentially offered as reduced or no-cost, students may not actually show up for the training event. The ability to attend in-person initial licensure training at another location or in a different region may be impacted by emergent agency staffing needs or shortages among other individualized personal and professional considerations. Neither factor is necessarily unique to the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) offering. Although the #1080 course is a longer duration course at 80 hours, similar sentiments have been expressed and reported for other trainings scheduled for remote, rural, and underserved areas.

The cost of in-person training encompasses more than just the wages of attendees and any instructors from an agency; it also includes the cost of the course itself (when applicable) and any additional training-related expenses such as travel, incidentals, and other costs associated with the training event. These costs are not unique to any organization's training of personnel or specific to law enforcement agencies or first responders. Rather, the costs associated with training each telecommunicator for initial licensure can vary widely from year to year based on where an in-person training is held in relation to the agency location itself.

There are limited resources available for pre-planning the location and schedule of in-person initial licensure training opportunities. Most initial licensure training opportunities are not disclosed or circulated to other agencies and there is not a central listing or repository of in-person training opportunities that an agency can utilize for planning purposes. In most cases, agencies may need to reach out directly to neighboring agencies and regional contacts when a need for training presents itself to individually determine the availability of offerings. This can become a time-consuming process when balancing other duties and priorities within a call center. The working group recommends the creation of a portal or other repository where training opportunities and details can be listed.

Online initial licensure training is currently delivered through a sequential content mastery format in alignment with the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080). Activity interactions and formative assessments are included to provide feedback to the student and to ensure that each student masters each section or learning domain area material before moving on to the next learning domain and potentially more complex material. The online training delivery method is beneficial for many telecommunicator candidates; however, it may not be suited to all learners. Many agencies have an unwritten expectation that the telecommunicator candidate will complete the course

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work while working on shift and balancing and taking calls for service. This approach to working through and completing the online course does a disservice to the student and employing organization in that it does not allow the individual to focus on the concepts being presented in the same manner that the student would if he/she attended an in-person training. When a student is allowed to participate in the online course in the manner as it is intended, without other work-related duties (e.g. balancing and taking calls while in the online course), they can more readily focus on the training materials and internalize the concepts and skills with the intent to far exceed the minimum passing standard instead of doing just enough to successfully complete the online course and be eligible to take the state exam.

Agencies and PSAPs reported that there are minimal resources and funding streams available to support training beyond initial licensure. Agencies expressed growing concern for the continuing education component of the telecommunicator profession and the role it would play for the dynamic and adaptable responses required at present and in the future. Beyond the courses listed in the TCOLE proficiency certificates for telecommunicators, agencies must generally seek out and identify external sources of training or develop training to fulfill a specific need within the agency. There are typically limited resources and funding options available for planning the location and schedule of continuing education training opportunities. As with the basic licensing course, agencies may need to reach out directly to neighboring agencies and regional contacts when a need for training presents itself to individually determine the availability of offerings. APCO International and NENA offer a variety of courses that are typically fee-based offerings. Within Texas, the North Central Texas Emergency Communications District (NCT9-1-1) offers a limited variety of classes to those outside of NCT9-1-1 telecommunicators at this time.

When working to address the continuing education course offerings, agencies should attempt to utilize local resources and partnerships to train for the specific needs of the community and partnering agencies. This assists with building partnerships and relationships across all disciplines and prepares agencies for the ability to handle large or multi-jurisdiction response requirements. Telecommunicators within the traditional law enforcement realm can benefit from taking continuing education classes on topics related to telecommunicators in hospitals, higher education (e.g., University or Collegiate), fire, emergency services, and private security entities.

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POSITIVE INDICATORS

Positive indicators within the current telecommunicator profession, framework, legislation and rules, and processes and procedures indicate the following:

- The one-year time allotment is appropriate for the temporary licensure period pursuant to Texas Occupations Code §1701.405. Proactive agencies typically report that their goal is to have their personnel through the training within a six-month time period. A focus on completing the licensure requirements within six to nine months should be adopted as the expectation and standard of practice to best serve the public as the 9-1-1 emergency response system.
- There are agencies who have achieved a high pass rate on the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) state exam. Best practices and procedures can be leveraged from a survey of these entities who have proactively implemented onboarding, training, and continuing education of their telecommunications officers across different sized organizations and locations throughout the State.
- Online and in-person training events are valued by TCOLE-licensed telecommunicators. Many agencies spoke highly about the available course offerings while suggesting that additional courses be added to the continuing education list to create a more robust program. There was a generalized satisfaction with the current list of courses available and agencies appreciated that Texas Occupations Code §1701.003 does not prevent them from establishing qualifications and standards for telecommunicator training that exceeds the Commission's minimum standards.
- Online training is critical to adequately fulfill the training needs for locations in Texas that are not able to send their personnel to an on-site training facility. The flexibility for an agency to be able to offer the course while an individual works at a 9-1-1 console and can pause the learning to assist with call-taking requirement is seen as a benefit. This also increases the probability that licensed telecommunicators can attend ongoing continuing education training events.
- TCOLE affirmed that a comparison of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) curriculum and the state exam test questions had been done independently and ahead of the study commencement. TCOLE confirmed that the two datasets were in alignment and that they conduct periodic comparison and auditing of each licensing course to ensure alignment is maintained across curriculum and state exam test questions.

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KEY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT

The following are key observations and recommendations for immediate improvement based on the findings and outcomes of the focus statements. Recommendations may require varying levels of effort or resources to implement the desired change.



Establish a training review committee to initiate the review and revision of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080). Key objectives of the review committee would encompass ensuring that the curriculum 1) more appropriately reflects the needs of those serving in the telecommunicator role and 2) expands to meet the needs of all telecommunicators, regardless of discipline.



Conduct a job task analysis for telecommunicators to determine minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the day-to-day response operations required of the position. Findings should inform the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) as well as possible tracks for the continuing education requirements.

Job task analysis can be more broadly conducted for telecommunications disciplines beyond law enforcement if terminology is updated in Texas Occupations Code §1701.001.



Conduct a focused review and revision of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) by the training review committee and applicable stakeholders. The curriculum should serve as a baseline for the foundation of all individuals who may be taking an emergency call. Changes to the curriculum should be driven by data obtained from job task analysis and minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the position.

Learning domains and topics for removal, addition, and enhancement should be examined along with identification of appropriate time to spend in the updated topics along with the overall time allotment for the re-tooled #1080 course.

Items for consideration include liability; critical incidents; mental health, wellness, and resiliency; and the mental preparation of telecommunications personnel, active shooter and active attack situations, civil disturbances and domestic violence, swatting calls, and trauma-informed call processing.

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Student-centered facilitated learning and problem-based learning concepts should integrate theory with practice so that learners can apply knowledge and skills to prepare them for developing viable solutions to job-related problems and challenges.

Identification of topics or activities that may be eligible for splitting out of the current #1080 course requirements may also be a consideration. The re-tooled Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080) would remain as the initial course requirement and condition of licensing per Texas Occupations Code §1701.405. The #1080 course could then be followed by a field training format or styled in-person training event of a suitable duration per the identified topics. The field training format or styled in person training event would likely be better classified as one of the initial continuing education courses that a telecommunicator should take within a specified time parameter following the completion of the #1080 course.



Outline and publish best practices and procedures regarding the use of the one-year temporary licensure time period allotment.

Proactive agencies typically report that their goal is to have their personnel through the training within a six-month time period. A focus on completing the licensure requirements within six to nine months should be adopted as the expectation and standard of practice to best serve the public as the 9-1-1 emergency response system.



Following the publication of a re-tooled Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080), prepare an awareness or refresher training for those individuals who previously completed TCOLE #1080 or #1013 (predecessor to #1080) or who are exempt from the current licensure requirements.

This would ensure common training across the telecommunicator population.



Rework the TCOLE proficiency certificates for telecommunicators. Two primary considerations include:

- Potential removal of Cultural Diversity (#3939).

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- The course is not required for telecommunicators based on the wording of Texas Occupations Code §1701.352.
- The recent 2024 publication necessitates a more comprehensive review to determine the applicability and possibility for customization or refinement.
- Potential removal of Spanish for Law Enforcement (#2109).
 - The current focus of the course is for a law enforcement response and at a minimum should be adapted to meet telecommunicator’s needs.
 - Other language courses be considered by the training review committee. Contextualizing the demographics and language needs of the response area will better meet the communication and response needs of the local community.



Adopt and include the legislative update course as part of required telecommunicator continuing education. If not formally added to the TCOLE proficiency certificates for telecommunicators, agencies can implement this locally to help telecommunications personnel stay abreast of the Texas legislative changes that impact and may factor into the larger overall 9-1-1 emergency response system and first responder network.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT

The following are key observations and recommendations for long-term improvement based on the findings and outcomes of the focus statements. Recommendations may require varying levels of effort or resources to implement the desired change.



Change the definition in Texas Occupations Code §1701.001 to include other disciplines that participate in the 9-1-1 emergency response system (e.g., fire or emergency medical services [EMS]). The current term of “telecommunicator” should be changed to “emergency communication specialist (ECS)” or “emergency communications professional (ECP).”

State-level legislation across the US concerning terminology is starting to take hold as part of the overall telecommunicator reclassification effort. The State of Texas itself utilized the phrasing of “emergency response operator or emergency services

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dispatcher” in House Bill 1090 (86R). The change supports the perspective that all telecommunications individuals should be licensed in the State of Texas.



Identify and outline more explicit and targeted ongoing continuing education options to better assist agencies and personnel determine what topics or areas of focus may be most applicable given the knowledge, skills, or abilities the individual desires to enhance or expand as part of the TCOLE training unit.

Continuing education options should not necessarily be law-enforcement centric but encompass a wide range of perspectives. Telecommunicators within the traditional law enforcement realm can benefit from taking continuing education classes on topics related to telecommunicators in hospitals, higher education (e.g., University or Collegiate), fire, emergency services, and private security entities.

Expansion of courses and topics included for continuing education avoids re-using the same training for each TCOLE training unit as telecommunications officers attempt to keep their license active.

Where possible, an agency should adopt a higher hour of training requirements per training unit beyond the minimum required 20 hours.



Prepare an equivalent non-licensing version of the Basic Telecommunicator Licensing Course (#1080). By introducing a non-licensing version of the course, certain prerequisites such as meeting TCOLE hiring mandates and possessing a TCOLE PID would no longer be required to register and attend the course. This ensures alignment with #1080 and access of information and training for an audience that would not otherwise be able to utilize the resource.



Create a portal or other repository where training opportunities and details can be listed for 9-1-1 call takers or dispatchers in the State of Texas. Continuing education training event opportunities can be listed separately, or easily identified and sorted from, initial licensure training events to assist with planning and scheduling of events.

An accurate and comprehensive listing will reduce the need for each agency or entity to individually contact others to determine the availability of offerings. A comprehensive

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listing can limit the amount of time spent coordinating training when balancing other duties and priorities within a call center.



Implement tracking and reporting of 9-1-1 call takers or dispatchers in the State of Texas.

An accurate listing of call takers or dispatchers will help 1) determine which entities are using the protocols and best practices associated with the 9-1-1 emergency response system and 2) determine if the individuals and agencies have the correct equipment and resources while taking 9-1-1 calls.



Implement reporting expectations and mechanisms to ensure PSAPs are properly registered regardless of discipline and location.

An accurate listing of PSAPs will ensure that all departments/agencies/entities are accounted for and so that the true response efforts in the State of Texas can be accurately represented.



Name a telecommunications director or chair serve as a representative on TCOLE boards and at other important meetings and items that require stakeholder considerations and input. This individual would function similar to other licensed law enforcement positions within TCOLE and provide a valuable and more focused voice for the telecommunications profession in the State of Texas.

CONCLUSION

The 9-1-1 emergency response system is the public's first point of contact in most emergency situations. This invaluable public system depends on trained, skilled, and exacting telecommunicators who are equipped to respond to a wide variety of emergency calls as efficiently as possible. Telecommunications officers must possess key skills communication and decision-making skills to effectively and professionally handle incoming calls with efficient questioning and listening techniques and a strong personal desire to provide effective services.

A number of initiatives will be necessary to build upon the existing Texas telecommunicator licensing framework and improve and enhance the telecommunications officer workforce. Evaluation, creation, and implementation of updated and/or new curricula for the profession are

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among the necessary steps outlined for improvement to achieve a higher level of service for our first responders and the public and the communities within Texas that telecommunications professionals serve.

The emergency call-taking and other services that a telecommunicator provides continues to grow and evolve. While the baseline is set by The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), it is important to have those who have served in the capacity of telecommunicator help move the initiatives forward to keeping training updated and abreast of changes to the field to ensure that the best possible training is provided to grow and develop those serving in the emergency service field.

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■ APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

Alternate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). A PSAP typically designated through agreements between two or more municipalities to provide coverage for callers and receive calls when the primary PSAP is unable to do so due to capacity or technical issues.

Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO). An organization of public safety communications professionals offering professional development, technical assistance, advocacy, and outreach.

Certified Public-Safety Executive (CPE). A certification designed for managers, supervisors, agency executives, or others whose work and life experiences have motivated them to learn the necessary skills to successfully lead organizations within the complex and ever-changing environment in which public safety agencies and communications professionals operate.

Consolidated Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). A facility where multiple public safety agencies choose to operate as a single 9-1-1 entity.

Councils of Government (COG). Voluntary organizations of local governmental entities that coordinate programs and services to address needs that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Texas has 24 COG regions. A listing of the COGs can be found in Appendix E: Texas Regional Councils of Governments, and the areas they include and contact information can be found on the Texas Association of Regional Councils website.

Emergency. A condition or circumstance in which any individual is or is reasonably believed by the individual making a call or requesting assistance to be in fear of imminent assault or in which property is or is reasonably believed by the individual making the call or requesting assistance to be in imminent danger of damage or destruction. Defined by Texas Penal Code 42.062.

May also be defined as the occurrence or imminent threat of damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from an extraordinary natural or man-made cause. Defined by Texas Occupations Code §1701.405.

Emergency Number Professional (ENP). A certification that establishes the comprehensive body of knowledge for Emergency Number Professionals. Promotes a standard of competence for Emergency Number Professionals that will be recognized and accepted by the 9-1-1 profession, government agencies, the business community, and the general public.

National Emergency Number Association (NENA). A not-for-profit corporation established to serve as a networking source while promoting research, planning, and training initiatives.

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Personal Identification Number (PID). A unique computer-generated number assigned to individuals for identification in the TCOLE electronic database.

Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). A PSAP to which 9-1-1 calls are routed directly from the 9-1-1 Control Office.

Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). An entity responsible for receiving 9-1-1 calls and processing those calls according to a specific operational policy. Three of the classifications are included and referenced in this study: primary, secondary, and alternate.

Regional Planning Commission (RPC). 9-1-1 Entities that are grantees under a current contract for 9-1-1 Service with the Commission on State Emergency Communications. Defined by Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 771.078.

Registered Public-Safety Leader (RPL). A certification designed for individuals interested in developing a solid foundation of management and supervisory skills necessary for successful PSAP operations.

Secondary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). A PSAP to which 9-1-1 calls are transferred from a Primary PSAP.

TCLEDDS. The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Data Distribution System. A custom web-based software application designed for exclusive use by the Texas law enforcement community to electronically transfer data so that TCOLE can collect, track, and distribute the most up to date licensee information. It also collects and tracks law enforcement credentialing information required by the State of Texas legislature, including a licensee's service/employment history, personal history, training/education history, and awards history such as licenses and certifications.

Telecommunicator. A person acknowledged by the commission and employed by or serving a law enforcement agency that performs law enforcement services on a 24-hour basis who receives, processes, and transmits public safety information and criminal justice data for the agency by using a base radio station on a public safety frequency regulated by the Federal Communications Commission [FCC] or by another method of communication. Defined by Texas Occupations Code §1701.001.

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APPENDIX B: STATE OF TEXAS 9-1-1 SERVICE ENTITIES

Emergency Communication Districts	Regional Planning Commissions																																								
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Abilene-Taylor Co. 9-1-1 District 2 Austin Co. Emergency Communications District 3 Bexar Metro 911 Network District 4 Brazos Co. Emergency Communications District 5 Calhoun Co. 911 Emergency Communications District 6 Cameron Co. Emergency Communications District 7 Capital Area Emergency Communications District 8 Denco Area 911 District 9 El Paso Co. 911 District 10 Emergency Communications District of Ector Co. 11 Galveston Co. Emergency Communications District 12 Greater Harris Co. 911 Emergency Network 13 Gulf Coast Regional 9-1-1 Communications District 14 Henderson Co. 911 Communications District 15 Howard Co. 911 Communications District 16 Kerr Co. Emergency 911 Network 17 Lubbock Co. Emergency Communications District 18 McLennan Co. Emergency Assistance District 19 Medina Co. 911 District 20 Midland Emergency Communications District 21 Montgomery Co. Emergency Communications District 22 North Central Texas Emergency Communications District 23 Potter-Randall Co. Emergency Communications District 24 Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District 25 Smith Co. 911 Communications District 26 Tarrant Co. 911 District 27 Texas Eastern 911 Network 28 Wichita/Wilbarger 9-1-1 Communications District 	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>AACOG</td> <td>Alamo Area</td> <td>MRGDC</td> <td>Middle Rio</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ATCOG</td> <td>Ark-Tex</td> <td>NRPC</td> <td>Nortex</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BVCOG</td> <td>Brazos Valley</td> <td>PBRPC</td> <td>Permian Basin</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CBCOG</td> <td>Coastal Bend</td> <td>PRPC</td> <td>Panhandle</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CTCOG</td> <td>Central Texas</td> <td>RGCOG</td> <td>Rio Grande</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CVCOG</td> <td>Concho Valley</td> <td>SETRPC</td> <td>South East</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DETCOG</td> <td>Deep East</td> <td>SPAG</td> <td>South Plains</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ETCOG</td> <td>East Texas</td> <td>STDC</td> <td>South Texas/Laredo</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GCRPC</td> <td>Golden Crescent</td> <td>TCOG</td> <td>Texoma</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HOTCOG</td> <td>Heart of Texas</td> <td>WCTCOG</td> <td>West Central</td> </tr> </table>	AACOG	Alamo Area	MRGDC	Middle Rio	ATCOG	Ark-Tex	NRPC	Nortex	BVCOG	Brazos Valley	PBRPC	Permian Basin	CBCOG	Coastal Bend	PRPC	Panhandle	CTCOG	Central Texas	RGCOG	Rio Grande	CVCOG	Concho Valley	SETRPC	South East	DETCOG	Deep East	SPAG	South Plains	ETCOG	East Texas	STDC	South Texas/Laredo	GCRPC	Golden Crescent	TCOG	Texoma	HOTCOG	Heart of Texas	WCTCOG	West Central
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Municipal Emergency Communication Districts																														
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Note: 9-1-1 service in the incorporated portion of Dallas County is provided by Municipal Emergency Communications Districts, including the City of Dallas, or pursuant to the North Central Texas Emergency Communications District's Regional 9-1-1 Plan for four municipalities. *9-1-1 service in the unincorporated portion of Dallas County is provided by the Dallas County Sheriff's Department under Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 772, Subchapter E.


Contact: Kelli Merriweather, Executive Director at (512) 305-6938 or kelli.merriweather@csec.texas.gov

Effective: 9/1/2021

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for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers**

APPENDIX C: TCOLE PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Basic Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart



TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

Basic Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart
Commission Rules 221.1, 221.3

Requirements
an active license or appointment
1 or more years of service
AND (within the last six (6) months)

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
3812	TDD/TTY for Telecommunicators (within the last six (6) months)	412	TDD/TTY D.E.
		396	TRS & Emergency Technology
		397	Deaf Culture
		398	Crimes Against People with Disabilities
		399	Understanding ASL & Use of Interpreters
		400	Emergency Management for People with Disabilities
		401	Effective TTY Call Processing
		402	ADA Laws and Regulations

AND

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
1013	Basic Telecommunicator Certificate Course	1080	2019 Basic Telecommunicator Course
1999	Personnel Orientation (submitted by dept. if appointed after 1.01.2014)		
2120	Crisis Communication Telecommunicator (if appointed after 12.01.2011)	420	Crisis Communications D.E.
		1080	2019 Basic Telecommunicator Course
3720	Telecommunications Field Training (if reported after 6.1.2004)		

OR

COURSES	
1080	2019 Basic Telecommunicator Course
1999	Personnel Orientation (submitted by dept. if appointed after 1.01.2014)
3720	Telecommunications Field Training (if reported after 6.1.2004)

Once ALL requirements have been met the system updates your file.

CRT 04.004 Basic Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Chart 9.1.2019 Page 1 of 1

Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers

Intermediate Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart



TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

Intermediate Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart Commission Rules 221.1, 221.3

Requirements

- an active license or appointment
- Basic Telecommunicator Certificate
- 2 years of service
- 120 hours of training

AND (within the last six (6) months)

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
3812	TDD/TTY for Telecommunicators (within the last six (6) months)	412	TDD/TTY D.E.
		396	TRS & Emergency Technology
		397	Deaf Culture
		398	Crimes Against People with Disabilities
		399	Understanding ASL & Use of Interpreters
		400	Emergency Management for People with Disabilities
		401	Effective TTY Call Processing
		402	ADA Laws and Regulations

AND One course from each category or the equivalent, once during career.

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
Cultural Diversity			
3939	Cultural Diversity	394	TCOLE Learning
		39393	DPS Cultural Diversity - Online
		3737	New Supervisor's Course (first time supervisor only)
Ethics			
3920	Ethics in Law Enforcement	3925	Ethics for Law Enforcement D.E.
Crisis Communications			
2120	Crisis Communications Telecommunicators	420	Crisis Communications Telecommunicators D.E.
		1080	2019 Basic Telecommunicator Course

Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers

Spanish		Equivalent	
2109	Spanish for Law Enforcement	2110	Spanish for Law Enforcement D.E.
		2111	Spanish for Law Enforcement Test-Out
		22109	Spanish for Telecommunicators
		34003	Spanish for 911/Dispatch-On Patrol
		34001	Spanish for Law Enforcement-On Patrol

Once ALL requirements have been met the system updates your file.

**Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training
for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers**

Advanced Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart



TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

Advanced Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart
Commission Rules 221.1, 221.3

Requirements

- an active license or appointment 221.1
- Basic Telecommunicator Certificate
- Intermediate Telecommunicator Certificate
- 4 years of service
- 240 hours of training

AND (within the last six (6) months)

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
3812	TDD/TTY for Telecommunicators (within the last six (6) months)	412	TDD/TTY D.E.
		396	TRS & Emergency Technology
		397	Deaf Culture
		398	Crimes Against People with Disabilities
		399	Understanding ASL & Use of Interpreters
		400	Emergency Management for People with Disabilities
		401	Effective TTY Call Processing
		402	ADA Laws and Regulations

AND One course from each category or the equivalent, once during career.

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
Cultural Diversity			
3939	Cultural Diversity	394	TCOLE Learning
		39393	DPS Cultural Diversity - Online
		3737	New Supervisor's Course (first time supervisor only)

Ethics		Equivalent	
3920	Ethics in Law Enforcement	3925	Ethics for Law Enforcement D.E.

**Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training
for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers**

Crisis Communications		Equivalent	
2120	Crisis Communications Telecommunicators	420	Crisis Communications Telecommunicators D.E.
		1080	2019 Basic Telecommunicator Course

Spanish		Equivalent	
2109	Spanish for Law Enforcement	2110	Spanish for Law Enforcement D.E.
		2111	Spanish for Law Enforcement Test-Out
		22109	Spanish for Telecommunicators
		34003	Spanish for 911/Dispatch-On Patrol
		34001	Spanish for Law Enforcement-On Patrol

Once ALL requirements have been met the system updates your file.

**Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training
for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers**

Master Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart



TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

Master Telecommunicator Proficiency Certification Requirements Chart
Commission Rules §221.1 and 221.3

Requirements

- an active license or appointment 221.1
- Basic Telecommunicator Certificate
- Intermediate Telecommunicator Certificate
- Advanced Telecommunicator Certificate
- 8 years of service
- 500 hours of training

AND (within the last six (6) months)

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
3812	TDD/TTY for Telecommunicators (within the last six (6) months)	412	TDD/TTY D.E.
		396	TRS & Emergency Technology
		397	Deaf Culture
		398	Crimes Against People with Disabilities
		399	Understanding ASL & Use of Interpreters
		400	Emergency Management for People with Disabilities
		401	Effective TTY Call Processing
		402	ADA Laws and Regulations

AND One course from each category or the equivalent, once during career.

COURSES		EQUIVALENT	
Cultural Diversity			
3939	Cultural Diversity	394	TCOLE Learning
		39393	DPS Cultural Diversity - Online
		3737	New Supervisor's Course (first time supervisor only)

Ethics		Equivalent	
3920	Ethics in Law Enforcement	3925	Ethics for Law Enforcement D.E.

Crisis Communications		Equivalent	
2120	Crisis Communications Telecommunicators	420	Crisis Communications Telecommunicators D.E.
		1080	2019 Basic Telecommunicator Course

Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers

Spanish		Equivalent	
2109	Spanish for Law Enforcement	2110	Spanish for Law Enforcement D.E.
		2111	Spanish for Law Enforcement Test-Out
		22109	Spanish for Telecommunicators
		34003	Spanish for 911/Dispatch-On Patrol
		34001	Spanish for Law Enforcement-On Patrol

Once ALL requirements have been met the system updates your file.

Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers

APPENDIX D: TCOLE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY AUDIT CHECKLIST

TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT		
<u>Law Enforcement Agency Audit Checklist</u>		
Employee:		PID:
New Licensee	180 Days or Less Break in Service	More Than 180 Day Break in Service
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal History Statement (PHS) <input type="checkbox"/> F-5R (filled out, signed & dated) <input type="checkbox"/> National Decertification Index (NDI) <input type="checkbox"/> BCF (Required for appts on or after 1/1/22) <input type="checkbox"/> L-2 (drug screen/medical exam for PO's & Jailers. Drug screen only for telecommunicators.) <input type="checkbox"/> L-3 (psychological evaluation) <input type="checkbox"/> DPS/FBI Fingerprint Return* <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of Citizenship <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of Education <input type="checkbox"/> Military Discharge (DD-214) <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Copy of Court Disposition** <input type="checkbox"/> Official record of annual firearms qualification within the last 12 months. (Applies to Peace Officers only) <input type="checkbox"/> L-1 / L1-T (sign & notarize pages 1 & 2. Don't submit until <u>ALL</u> the required documents listed above are in place)	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal History Statement (PHS) <input type="checkbox"/> F-5R (filled out, signed & dated) <input type="checkbox"/> National Decertification Index (NDI) <input type="checkbox"/> BCF (Required on or after 1/1/22) <input type="checkbox"/> CCH (TCIC-NCIC) <input type="checkbox"/> Military Discharge (DD-214) <input type="checkbox"/> Certified copy of court disposition** <input type="checkbox"/> Official record of annual firearms qualification within the last 12 months. (For peace officers only) <input type="checkbox"/> L-1 / L1-T (sign & notarize pages 1 & 2. Don't submit until <u>ALL</u> the required documents listed above are in place)	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal History Statement (PHS) <input type="checkbox"/> F-5R (filled out, signed & dated) <input type="checkbox"/> National Decertification Index (NDI) <input type="checkbox"/> BCF (Required for appts on or after 1/1/22) <input type="checkbox"/> L-2 (drug screen - required for <u>all</u> licensees) <input type="checkbox"/> L-3 (psychological evaluation) <input type="checkbox"/> CCH (TCIC-NCIC) <input type="checkbox"/> DPS/FBI Fingerprint Return* <input type="checkbox"/> Military Discharge (DD-214) <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Copy of Court Disposition** <input type="checkbox"/> Official record of annual firearms qualification within the last 12 months. (Applies to Peace Officers only) <input type="checkbox"/> L-1 / L1-T (sign & notarize pages 1 & 2. Don't submit until <u>ALL</u> the required documents listed above are in place)

All documentation must be in place prior to submitting the L-1 form. Failure to properly complete and document all pre-appointment requirements listed above is a violation of state law punishable by fine (up to \$1,000 per day, per violation) and/or imprisonment (see TOC 1701.507 and 553).

The BCF form must be electronically submitted and approved BEFORE an L-1 form is entered in TCLEDDS. Otherwise, the L-1 form will be rejected.

*Fingerprint check requests should be submitted through F.A.S.T. for faster and more secure service, but DPS will still accept a 10-print card by mail. Use of a Live Scan fingerprinting system requires preapproval from Texas DPS. To set up a F.A.S.T. account, contact DPS at 512-424-2365, choose option 6. To validate your agency's Live Scan contact DPS at livescan@dps.texas.gov.

**A certified court disposition is required for any criminal charge listed on a CCH including class B misdemeanors and above, or any class C misdemeanor arrest, charge, indictment, or ticket stemming from a family violence incident.

ALL AUDITABLE DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE KEPT TOGETHER IN A SECURE BUT EASILY ACCESSIBLE FOLDER SEPARATE FROM PERSONNEL FILES OR OTHER UNRELATED DOCUMENTS. THE FILE MUST BE RETAINED FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE (5) YEARS AFTER TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR REGIONAL TCOLE FIELD AGENT.

Law Enforcement Agency Audit Checklist (Rev. 2-22-24)

Summary Report: The Effectiveness of Current Training and Potential Improvements to Training for 9-1-1 Emergency Service Call-Takers and Dispatchers

APPENDIX E: TEXAS REGIONAL COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS

