

State of 911

Webinar Series

State of 911 Webinar FAQ: Workforce Evolution & Statewide 911 Recruitment Campaigns

January 9, 2024

The following answers are provided by:

- Tina Buneta, Director, Aurora 911, Aurora, Colorado

How do you work schedules around employees that are under union contract?

We are not a union shop. I think it is important to educate and gain union buy in. It would be tragic for a union to be the reason people depart the job!

How did you get buy in from your current employees to bringing in laterals at a higher rate? I had a huge push back from my staff when we tried to implement this and ended it due to the morale issues it was causing.

We created a compensation structure that also elevated tenured people, so while laterals are coming in hiring than entry level, everyone is compensated by the same calculations of EET (Education, Experience, Time in Position).

Tina, can you talk more about scheduling flexibility?

We meet our people where they are, so when life happens, we work with them to either change or reduce working hours. Sometimes it is temporary, sometimes not. We have retained good employees by changing their schedules when their only other option would have been to resign. In return, they tend to step up and volunteer when they can, and it becomes a reciprocal benefit. We are also in the process of over-hiring, in order to build a buffer for this very reason.

How do you navigate union contracts when it comes to financial incentives, etc?

We are not a union shop. It is important to engage unions to educate and gain buy in so that they do not inadvertently become the reason people leave the profession.

Can you speak more to your philosophy of flexible scheduling, and how your team bids for schedules, vacation time, etc.?

Aurora911 establishes and bids for a permanent schedule and annual leave based on seniority. However, we do have a number of employees who have come forward with conflicts or limitations to their availability due to a number of reasons. We evaluate these circumstances on a case by case basis, working with the employee to identify the win-win which eliminates or reduces the conflict and also supports the department. An accommodation to an employee does not result in arbitrarily changing another employee's schedule, which I recognize is an easier benefit for a larger center and trickier for smaller centers. Sometimes, the answer lies with two or more employees working out a voluntary modification that benefits everyone. This approach is the best solution for smaller centers, and I encourage leaders to allow employees to lead the discussion of schedule structure and flexibility in smaller groups. Aurora911 also welcomes requests from full-time employees to reduce total weekly hours, or to reduce to part-time, or even to a variable hour status (which works like a temporary employee and sometimes still provides benefits at a reduced rate). We have found that by meeting our people where they are and helping them be agile in their life has greatly reduced attrition. In fact, many of the employees we have worked with have volunteered to return to full-time when their life situation improved. The bottom line here is that we will move mountains to support and retain good people, and that begins with engaging them and getting to the root cause of issues. Sometimes, employees with chronic tardiness or absences may actually have a personal life conflict that they are keeping to themselves. By listening to them and involving them in problem-solving, we have seen employees dramatically improve their attendance issues, and actually become some of our most reliable team members.

Regarding "stay" bonuses, do you know of information out there about the average # of years when offered, amount, and effectiveness?

Aurora911 does not practice "stay" bonuses for the sake of longevity. However, in 2021, we did offer a one-time retention bonus of \$8k as a way to express gratitude to our team for all they had endured through 2020 and 2021. Our method for rewarding performance and longevity is:

- Merit-based annual increases and high-performance bonuses: Annual increases are determined by a calculation of overall performance rating and where an employee is positioned in their salary scale based on longevity. This is more accurate and equitable than doing an across the board increase. For example, 5% of entry-level is a lot less of an increase than 5% at the top of the range, so we evaluate total dollar amounts and make it equitable to performance rating. Ratings are calibrated by our executive team to ensure equal application of ratings. Also, by scaling the increase to performance, we eliminated the issue of an employee doing the bare minimum receiving the same increase as an employee who

contributes at a high level. High-performance bonuses are awarded to employees who make notable contributions to the team, whether it is being on an implementation team, a special project, or perhaps they actively contribute to maintaining a positive and inclusive work environment. The bonuses can range from \$100 to \$4000, depending on the level of contribution and impact on the team or the city as a whole.

- Referral Bonuses: When an employee refers a candidate, and they make it through backgrounds and report for duty, we give the referring employee a \$1000 bonus. We trust our employees to refer people they believe will be a good fit for the team.

In conclusion, I would never entertain giving an employee money for simply remaining employed, nor would I offer a large signing bonus. Every team member should be present because they really want to be here. By tying bonuses to merit and contribution, it sends a message of valuing the positive behaviors that help to keep a team healthy, resilient, and focused on our mission and taking us to the next level. Essentially, what we invest in our team, is what we receive in return!

The following answers are provided by:

- Pokey Harris, Executive Director, and Angie Turbeville, Eastern – 911 Regional Coordinator, North Carolina 911 Board

Are you able to report on the number of hires from the campaign to see what sources were the most effective?

Due to the various and diverse hiring procedures across the state, the number of hires from the campaign cannot be determined. From the 32,000+ clicks to the 125 NC PSAPs recruitment webpage, the interest in the job was evident.

Is there a plan to repeat the recruitment campaign?

The statewide multimedia recruitment campaign started in December 2023 and will go through June 2024. There are plans to continue the campaign in the next fiscal year.

Have they or do they intend to follow up with PSAPs to determine if the recruitment campaigns have resulted in higher staffing rates?

The Board continues to do outreach to the PSAPs to gain the effectiveness of the campaign. The PSAPs are sent surveys and personal interviews are conducted at local and state meetings.

Is anyone doing statewide or pooled training?

Some PSAPs in the state are using the local community colleges to provide the required certification training such as Basic Telecommunicator or Emergency Medical Dispatch. Both of these certifications are a requirement per legislation in NC. The idea of statewide training or pooled training is something to be considered for the future.

The following answers are provided by:

- Dana Wahlberg, Director, Emergency Communication Networks, and Veronica Marshall, Public Information Officer, Minnesota Department of Public Safety

How much did you say the total campaign cost?

\$650k

Is there a plan to repeat the recruitment campaign?

There is strong desire from the PSAP community to do a round 2 - We should meet to discuss what that would look like.

Have they or do they intend to follow up with PSAPs to determine if the recruitment campaigns have resulted in higher staffing rates?

Anecdotally, there has been positive feedback from the PSAPs regarding the effectiveness/ROI from the campaign. In round 2, we should include some metrics to track this.

Is anyone doing statewide or pooled training?

Currently, there is no statewide coordination of PST training (legislation for PST training and certification will likely be introduced in the upcoming legislative session). I don't think that pooled training is occurring at the local/regional level. There was some talk of it in the metro but I'm not sure that it went anywhere.

Where do I go to get recruiting videos done like Minnesota's?

We worked with our contracted vendor for this - <https://linnihanfoy.com/>.