*\* Note to user:*

*- Sample itinerary for a PSAP when planning a tour by an elected official*

**PSAP Tours with Elected Officials**

**Plan Your Itinerary**

**Why Host a Tour of Your PSAP?**

There is no better way to understand the important role that 911 plays in the public safety system than to spend a few hours watching the dedicated people who answer the calls for help from your community 24 hours a day.

Many of the elected officials who make decisions about how 911 is funded and governed, both at the local and national level, would benefit from experiencing even an hour in a PSAP. While planning for a visit from an elected official may seem daunting, a few simple steps, can help plan a meaningful visit that will bring attention to the challenges that exist for the 911 community. In addition, a successful tour can create a lifetime advocate for 911.

1. **Schedule the Visit**

If the elected official instigates the tour request, identify a single point of contact to serve as a liaison with the official’s staff. Ensuring a single contact can prevent confusion in scheduling details and provides confidence to the official’s staff that the tour will be a good use of the elected official’s time.

If the PSAP instigates the tour request, first research protocols to ensure it is appropriate to reach out to an official to request a visit. If the PSAP can request a visit, be sure to do so using the appropriate method.

Elected officials, such as members of congress, state officials and county commissioners, often receive requests for appointments through their schedulers or staff. As these individuals often have busy schedules, you may need to follow up on the initial request through phone or email a few times. Look up contact information for the city, county or state official or their office [online](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials).

**Should staff persons attend?**

If the elected official is unable to visit the PSAP but suggests that someone from his or her staff attend instead, do not be disheartened, and take advantage of the opportunity. This person will serve as a great resource in advocating 911 issues for you directly to the official. Members of the staff often counsel lawmakers on issues such as public safety and can help raise awareness of 911 issues within the official’s agenda.

**Timing the Invitation and Visit**

While it is beneficial to host a tour anytime of the year, consider inviting officials for a tour during April, which is National 911 Education Month. Linking the tour date with a milestone awareness event such as that month will help generate a sense of urgency for scheduling a visit. Referencing National 911 Education Month in your invitation and in all media materials may help to generate more interest in the visit, both by the official and the media.

1. **Plan the Itinerary**

The official’s staff or scheduler may request a more detailed schedule of events for the PSAP tour and what it will include. By creating an itinerary, you are able to set realistic expectations for the official, prepare your staff and secure any necessary resources to ensure that the visit goes as planned. This visit should prove worthwhile and meaningful for both your PSAP and the official.

**Sample PSAP Tour Itinerary**

1:00 – 2:00 pm Lunch and/or meeting with [name of PSAP manager/tour guide] and [name of third-party supporter like the local police chief/sheriff, state 911 administrator or other industry expert who is supportive of advancing the state’s 911 services]

2:00 – 2:15 pm Break

2:15 – 2:45 pm Tour of operations headquarters and dispatch center – photo op with local media

2:45 – 3:15 pm Meet with dispatchers, staff, and review technology

3:15 – 4:15 pm Sit alongside PSAP call-takers

**Make the Most of the Experience:**

* **Choose a busy time for 911 calls.** To provide your visitor with the most well-rounded experience of a PSAP tour, it is best to select a time in which you usually receive a high volume of calls for a variety of situations.
* **Identify and prepare staff members to interact with the official.** Well before the tour, select a call taker, dispatcher and supervisor/manager who have an exemplary service record and who are well spoken and comfortable around those not familiar with 911 services. Brief them on the purpose of the visit, the objectives for both the PSAP and the official, and share a few talking points for when they meet with the official.

1. **What Should You Say?**

Your key objective during the PSAP tour is to educate your elected official or staff person about how federal and/or local legislation (as appropriate for the official’s title) impacts your service and efforts to advance 911 systems. Your official is also interested in learning about the issues that are important to you.

**Develop Your Message.** It is important to develop your message regarding how legislation and regulations affect your local PSAP and 911 service. Be prepared to tell your unique story in a clear and succinct manner that avoids industry terms and jargon or requires insider knowledge of 911 issues.

* **Profile your service.** Develop a one-page overview of your operation, including the types of services offered, area served, number of employees, years of service, local innovations, and partnerships with local public safety, public health and health care organizations.
* **Emphasize impact on the community.** Explain how your service benefits local constituents and your contributions to society such as education at schools, senior centers and businesses.
* **Gather local statistics.** Research and share statistics about your community, such as population, average number of calls per day/week/month/year, local socioeconomic status, etc.
* **Share the impact of legislation and policies.** Describe the impact of federal policies on your service and the official’s constituents. Some policies that might be discussed are Next Generation 911 (NG911) planning and implementation, location accuracy, MLTS challenges, cybersecurity concerns and plans, as well as governance and how 911 collaborates with other public safety agencies and leaders.

Be prepared to explain the current challenges for 911 and your local solution.

* **Review the concepts of NG911.** Share both local and national progress toward an IP-based system of 911. Educate the official about the nature of 911 services and the need to update technologies to meet the needs of the community.
* **Relate the concepts of NG911 to the local community.** Share the history of your region or PSAP’s previous efforts to upgrade 911 services and discuss how the transition to NG911 is the same or different that previous challenges. Provide specific information about what progress has been made toward NG911, what steps remain and what resources are needed to successfully implement NG911.
* **Address any other important issues.** While the future of 911 is important, it is also appropriate to highlight other challenges that the official’s support may help mitigate.

*Note: Be sure to tailor the conversation to the issues that the particular visitor can have an impact on. Speaking about Federal funding needs to a City councilmember may not be the best use of his or her time, however, talking about the need to engage local 911 leaders in local emergency planning discussions may be appropriate. Be aware of the official’s voting record and positions regarding public safety issues.*

**Deliver Your Message.** Be sure to wrap your talking points about local 911 issues into the conversation throughout the day.

* **Begin with an introduction.** When the official or staff person arrives, introduce the individuals that they will be meeting during the visit.
* **Thank the member or staff person.** Be sure to give thanks to the visitor during the beginning of his/her visit and for their time that day and for previous support of 911 services.
* **Review the visit itinerary.** Provide an outline of what to expect for the day, appropriate protocols and safety procedures, and sign any necessary release forms or documentation.
* **Follow Up.** After the visit, write a thank-you letter to the official thanking them for their time and participation. This letter is a good opportunity to recap some of the local 911 issues and topics discussed during the visit, and to follow up on any action items or requests. The PSAP visit may be the first step in establishing a relationship with the elected official. Following up through appropriate channels may result in actions that support the PSAP in the future.

1. **Media Coverage**

An elected official visiting a PSAP is a great opportunity for media coverage focused on both the official’s good work and to lend a voice to important local 911 issues. While organizing the visit with the official’s office or staff, be sure to discuss making arrangements with local newspapers or TV stations. The official’s office may have already made arrangements with media, but if not, inquire about this. News stories about the local impact of federal legislation affecting emergency communication elevate the status and urgency of the issues.

**Get Ready to Invite Local Media**

* **Determine logistics.** Make arrangements for a location, time, date, speakers and reception area for media. Ensure that there will be a photographer and videographer onsite to document the visit.
* **Prepare materials for media.** You will need to compile a list of local media including newspapers and TV, as well as local bloggers and online news sites and write a press release and media advisory.
* **Contact media.** Email the press release to print and online media one to two weeks before the event to allow time for sufficient coverage. The day after emailing the press release, follow up with a call to the reporter asking if they received the press release and/or media advisory and recounting the main points. About one week before, provide the media advisory to local broadcast media and follow up to request brief coverage of the event.

Confirm that the media source will be in attendance, gather their contact info and thank them for their time.  
  
If a local broadcast reporter typically covers public safety issues, reach out to him directly and check interest in a larger broadcast story about local 911 issues, including the official’s visit.

*Note: Media personnel are very busy, and the local perceptions of the elected official may impact the media’s interest of the PSAP tour. Try to pique the media’s interest in participating in the tour by offering a unique perspective on local 911 services, a link to current issues, or to a particular event such as April as 911 Education Month or National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. Be sure to ask the elected official’s staff if he or she will be available to take any questions from the media.*

1. **Day of Visit**

As you prepare for the official’s visit to your PSAP and go through your itinerary, it’s important to reiterate your key messages and talking points throughout the day to foster support for your issues. While *you* are very familiar with the issues faced by your PSAP and local 911 service, there are great resources that further explain the critical issues for 911 at a national that you can provide the official with as a leave-behind.

* [National Emergency Number Association Text-to-9-1-1 Resources](http://www.nena.org/?page=textresources)
* [Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials Resources](https://www.apcointl.org/resources.html)
* [Federal Communications Commission Text-to-9-1-1](https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/what-you-need-know-about-text-911)
* [National 911 Program Resources](https://www.911.gov/documents_tools.html)
  + [NG911 for Public Safety Leaders](https://www.911.gov/project_ng911publicsafety.html)
  + [Text-to-9-1-1](https://www.911.gov/documents_tools/TextTo911.html)
  + [Next Generation 9-1-1 Video](https://www.911.gov/ng911movie.html)
* [National Conference of State Legislatures 9-1-1 Legislation Tracking Database](http://www.ncsl.org/research/telecommunications-and-information-technology/state-9-1-1-legislation-tracking-database.aspx)

1. **Follow Up**

* Send thank you cards or emails to the elected official and their staff or office (whoever helped coordinate their visit). Include any pictures that were taken during the visit.
* Send pictures of the news conference to local media.
* Monitor media for coverage of the visit and save any articles or TV spots to help promote future visits. The PSAP visit may be the first step in establishing a relationship with the elected official. Following up through appropriate channels may result in actions that support the PSAP in the future.