

# State of 911

## Webinar Series

**State of 911 Webinar FAQ:** Special Session: A Focus on Telecommunicator Mental Health and Wellness

August 29, 2023

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**The following answers are provided by:**

- Dr. Michelle Lilly, Lilly Consulting
- Kate Elkins, EMS/911 Specialist, NHTSA Office of EMS & National 911 Program

**For those who have decided against psychological screening at the hiring phase, why did you decide that? For Dr. Lilly, would you recommend reconsidering psychological testing/screening at other times (voluntarily) after hire/throughout career to assist employees?**

Having annual check-ins is a best practice, it normalizes seeking mental health and provides opportunities for sharing concerns they are having. It is a mistake to not do psychological screening at hiring but it is important to focus on resilience and screening that will be beneficial for the work.

**Are there any states that dedicate grant funding to mental health and wellness programs?**

There are a lot of grants for workforce wellness specific to healthcare but not sure what is available for first responders.

**Can you talk more about technostress and how you deal with it for positive outcomes?**

Recommend agencies prioritizing good communication about upcoming technology and job expectations. What the technology is and when it is coming as well as providing the necessary training to prevent increased stress.

**Is there a variation in the stress levels/findings of the 9-1-1 Specialists that work in a Regional 9-1-1 Center/PSAP vs. a dedicated County PSAP?**

We suspect that there will be variations between centers if there is a difference in the support provided. If the regional center has more resources for mental health and wellness as well as improved staffing and workplace conditions, then we would expect a difference.

**Have any ECCs provided breaks and equipment to exercise at the center during work? And has there been any statistical improvements? Seems like it could help.**

There are a lot of centers providing equipment for exercise and while we are not aware of data supporting this practice we have anecdotal reports of improve satisfaction with access to such.

**Communities have lot's of work that needs to be done besides 9-1-1, should we be examining a redesign of PSAP work roles to intentionally put more-off net time for our 9-1-1 professionals? There are examples in the military where ops center personnel have benefited from work roles beyond watch standing. This might also develop a better career continuum for 9-1-1 professionals as they qualify for leadership roles in other areas of Civic Services?**

Great question. There are opportunities for moving staff between tasks to give breaks between listening to calls and the radio and doing other important mission-driven work. The 911 center is being asked to do more and more so we would also caution that we have to be intentional and make sure we are equipping all the staff with the tools, training and resources they need to do the best work possible while maintaining their health.

**Where could we find the statistical information related to the study that is being use for this presentation?**

Please reach out to [Michelle@lilly-consulting.com](mailto:Michelle@lilly-consulting.com) for more information.

<https://www.911.gov/assets/LCC.NG911.PTSD.White-Paper.pdf>

**Do many PSAPs give time for this self-care?**

We are not aware of any national or state level data but encourage proactive self-care practices and training.

**So based on this (stories having beginning middle end) communication process, is not knowing outcomes of the calls part of the stress experience? (as they do not have an “end” to the story and can assume the worst?)**

Dr. Lilly is presenting about this at [Dare to be Great](#) conference in December 2023 and looking at the data. While outcomes impact mental health there are many intervening factors that can be protective or heighten risk for adverse outcomes.

**Does EMDR therapy help? I have an appointment this week to begin it for claustrophobia and I’m wondering if I should mention that my profession is 911.**

Yes, EMDR is one of the gold standard treatments for PTSD as determined by the VA.

**Is the research community able to discern the importance of stressors on the 9-1-1 community when deciding between us and sworn first responders? I have attempted to convince people of the need since 1989 without positive response. The mental health community has been far more liberal in their mindset.**

There is evidence suggesting that 911 telecommunicators have higher prevalence of PTSD than sworn police officers.

**Any statistics on just the normalization of openly talking about being in therapy or on a mental health related medication... Personally I found a lot are afraid of talking about it**

Normalizing talking about seeking care and managing mental health is important. There is stigma about talking about and seeking help however there are many communities that have reduced the stigma by having individuals who are well respected by their peers speak openly about help seeking and improving their mental health. However, there is no known data looking specifically at this topic.

**Is there any ability in the community of interest to create rotational assignments to help create the needed resilience with the workforce?**

There is no known state or national data looking at these impacts. Employees are most resilient when they have decisional control. If they are able to elect to rotate into roles they control they may reasonably see positive mental health effects.

**Are there any resources about organizational trauma?**

None that we are aware of.

**Can you send contact information to assist in this research?**

NHTSA National 911 Program: [ndtsa.national911@dot.gov](mailto:ndtsa.national911@dot.gov)

Dr. Michelle Lilly: [Michelle@lilly-consulting.com](mailto:Michelle@lilly-consulting.com)

**What about resources for those who no longer serve in the 911 role? Because of PTSD, depression, and anxiety, I left the 911 center two years ago after working there for 12 years and although I'm actively working with a therapist, I have a hard time remembering to use those tools provided (my therapist is great but does not have first responder experience).**

For more information on dealing with duty related trauma the VA has great resources and information. [PTSD.va.gov](http://PTSD.va.gov)

**Has any research been collected on other non-sworn professionals within public safety agencies as an additional comparison. Research generally seems to compare to first responders /public, but perhaps organizational culture - i.e., sworn vs civilian conflicts - contributes to the stress as well which could be reflected in measuring similar things in professional staff members in general.**

One would have to look at the individual studies to understand if 911 was separated out from sworn vs career fire vs telecommunicator.

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**The following answers are provided by:**

- Marty Bennett, Director Cook County 911
- Megan Kinsella, Director of Operations Cook County 911, K9 Joey's handler

- Ray Lee, Vice President at FGM Architects
- Raegan Porter, Vice President at FGM Architects

**Do you do any cross training (or reinforcement training), Professional witness training?**

**Are your remote monitoring devices integrated?**

No, we do not provide any cross training/professional witness training.

Yes, our remote monitoring devices are integrated.

**Are these call totals per month?**

Yearly

**Do you use any mentoring programs?:**

Yes- informal assigned when trainees are shadowing and released

**Do you or have you tried puppy raising?**

No

**With Joey how do you cover all shifts. Alpha and bravo**

We have 3 shifts with rotating days off. He is here for 2 of 3 of the shifts Monday – Friday. He stays late sometimes to visit with the midnight shift.

**Besides your local organizations, are your therapy dogs accredited by a national program or organization?**

The Brevard County Sheriffs Office Paws and Stripes program which is recognized by the AKC as therapy dog organization.

**Other than the shelter trained dog, where would an agency be able to acquire a trained therapy dog?**

We acquire the dogs from shelters and train and certify them through AKC recognized therapy dog organizations. There are some departments that have purchased “trained dogs” but I am not familiar with the sellers that provide the dogs

**Please, what is the name of the rocking chair furniture, great size and sleek design!**

[www.frankcooney.com](http://www.frankcooney.com) is the vendor we worked with out of Elk Grove Village Illinois

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