

Questions from March 10, 2020 State of 911 Webinar

Question 1: If a number of States take steps toward PST recognition as public safety personnel, will this statistical data influence the OMB process?

Keith Flewelling Asked during the webinar.

Answer: This depends. OMB will collect data pertinent to its classification principles, and if state legislation informs that data, it will absolutely be influential. For instance, OMB has argued that dispatching lacks the “direct physical contact” found in most Protective Services occupations; if state legislation addressing audible PTSD speaks to how deeply connected a dispatcher is to an ongoing crime, that could help support reclassification. OMB also noted in its analysis that the most commonly-reported injuries on the PSAP floor are overexertion, repetitive motion, and slip-and-fall injuries. This is partially because many states’ OSHA laws don’t address the chronic psychological injuries that come from call taking and dispatching. Changing state laws to allow chronic PTSD in workers’ compensation filings will help take away that argument against reclassification.

Question 2: At what level of change, if any, would we be allowed to move from a 40 hour/week schedule to a 14 day or 28 day schedule similar to our Police officers?

[Susan Perney]

Answer: I think this really depends on a lot of local factors. The change in classification could for some open up utilizing schedules similar to other first responders but again that is just if your HR uses the reclassification in that way.

DH: Agree with Kate here. In some cases, the transition will be very straightforward: dispatchers classified as first responders will automatically be eligible for an alteration of their shift and overtime schedules. In other cases, shifts/overtime are not tied to classification as public safety, but are rather tied directly to the name of your profession, not its classification. Whether these shift schedules are beneficial to 9-1-1 is an entirely different discussion.

Question 3: What are reasons a state or locality would not want reclassification of dispatchers? The reasons that have been given.

[Christine Fraizer]

Answer: It’s *possible* that we’ll see opposition to reclassification. Some of the reasons it is feared reclassification will be opposed is it changes pay, shift or workmen’s compensation requirements; but we’ve been tracking this closely and have seen no evidence of this.

Question 4: How can you change the job description to more fully differentiate from dispatchers that take calls and then dispatch? Seems like until you do that BLS will continue to refuse to re-classify.

[Robert Cobb]

Answer: The challenge is that in some places call takers and dispatchers are separate where as in others the same person does both. The goal of the reclassification is to move out of the clerical category and into the protected class/first responder category. This would not necessarily require they separate but more to differentiate from the dispatchers that truly are clerical.

DH: We feel that we can achieve reclassification without having to differentiate call takers and dispatchers, especially given the general granularity (or lack thereof) in the SOCS. SOC Coding Guideline #2 states that, “[w]hen workers in a single job could be coded in more than one occupation, they should be coded in the occupation that requires the highest level of skill”; given this guideline, we feel that keeping the greater profession of telecommunicator/dispatcher together is the best course of action.

Question 5: Are indigenous First Nation police departments surveyed for the reclassification process? For Navajo Nation we have 68 public safety telecommunicator operators serving in AZ, NM and UT.

[Leonard Redhorse III]

Answer: I do not know if they were. I think it would be great to make sure that your information is part of the next revision.

DH: Agree with Kate above. BLS has not given us insight into all of their surveying methods or data collected.

Question 6: What is the data points that GE will receive?

[Adam Jones]

Answer: Speakers are unclear what is being asked.

Question 7: Michael- Can you elaborate on the 911 Director's Academy?

Monte McClain Asked during the webinar.

Answer: We're aiming for a 3-day course that may have some pre-requisite online training. Broadly, the topics will cover an introduction to the Georgia Emergency Communications Authority, leadership, PSAP technology, agency management, physical facility management, personnel management, finance/budgeting, industry standards/certifications. Topics that were identified in an occupational analysis workshop that didn't make it into the Academy will be used to develop continuing education and conference sessions.