

**Developing a Legislative
Strategy for Reclassification
December 2021**

Acknowledgments

The Public Safety Telecommunicator Reclassification Toolkit was compiled through the efforts of numerous 911 professionals with a deep commitment to the individuals that are the first, first responders in any emergency. The goal of this toolkit is to provide public safety answering point (PSAP)/emergency communications center (ECC) leaders and decision-makers with a framework to help ensure job descriptions, training programs, operational documents, and legislative efforts and/or legislation adequately reflect the evolving expectations of the public safety telecommunicator. This document, entitled “Guidelines for Developing a Legislative Strategy for Reclassification,” provides steps that ECCs can take to prepare a legislative strategy at state and local levels to advance reclassification efforts.

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HISTORY

Federal Classification

The United States (U.S.) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), under the Department of Labor, is responsible for the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) of workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, and disseminating data.

“Occupations are classified based on work performed and, in some cases, on the skills, education and/or training needed to perform the work.” [Classification Principles and Coding Guidelines, 2018 SOC (bls.gov)]

The Decisions to Not Reclassify

BLS ultimately was unable to reclassify because of the lack of objective, measurable data; thus, the 911 telecommunicator position remains classified under the Office and Administrative Support Occupation. The decision not to reclassify PSTs from the Office and Administrative Support Occupation to Protective Services was a blow to the industry and a campaign to increase the visibility of PSTs and their roles and responsibilities was undertaken.

Moving Forward

It is in the best interest of the 911 community to assemble objective data and information that can be used for the reclassification of the PST by updating job descriptions, training programs, and written directives to accurately depict job duties and responsibilities, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the modern PST.

For more information on the Toolkit visit www.911.gov

1 Call to Action

It is vital that when a person dials 911, they receive a consistent level of 911 service—no matter where they live or travel in the U.S. Consequently, there should be agreed-upon common elements that ensure the person who answers a 911 call has met baseline core competencies, and that the public will receive a standard level of expertise and professionalism when communicating with a public safety answering point (PSAP), an emergency communications center (ECC), or other emergency services providers¹. This is increasingly the case, as states and localities increase the educational and training requirements for call taking and dispatch. However, the evolution of the modern public safety telecommunicator (PST) often goes unrecognized in government, as policy and policymakers’ understanding of 911 lags years behind the current state of the 911 industry.

A toolkit has been developed to help ECCs take the necessary actions to support the change in job classification of public safety PSTs from clerical to **protective services**. The toolkit is comprised of four parts:



Throughout this document, we refer to 911 professionals as PSTs, however, different parts of the country use a variety of job titles.

The case for change begins at the ECC and includes updating job descriptions, developing a training program, and addressing

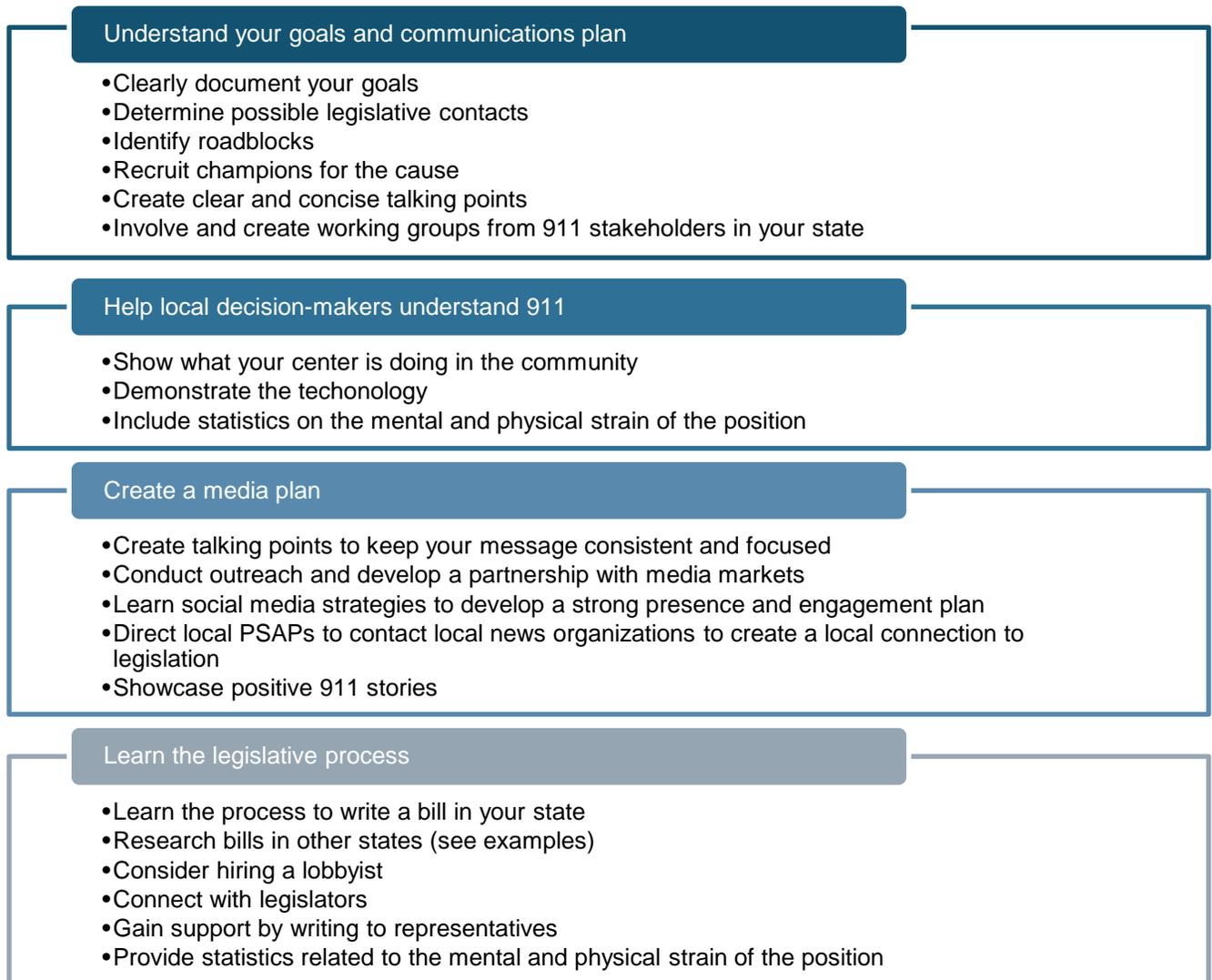
¹ Throughout the remainder of this document, ECC is intended to be synonymous with PSAP.

technology and tool needs for PSTs. To support the change in job classification, ECCs are encouraged to read and act upon all four parts of the toolkit as desired.

This document, *Guidelines for Developing a Legislative Strategy for Reclassification*, is Part Four of the four-part toolkit, and it addresses the steps every ECC can take to prepare for legislative reclassification efforts, working with policy makers at all levels of government.

This document is a call to action to make legislative changes in your state to reclassify telecommunicators to first responders.

This toolkit is a guide to help you showcase your center, develop a media plan, and support learning the legislative process. The graphic below is an outline of Section 3 of this document, How to Effect Change. Further details are provided in this Section.



2 Background

Each year hundreds of millions of calls are made to 911. The estimated 98,300² dedicated men and women who answer those calls are facing a time of great change as their careers, roles, and responsibilities move from a legacy environment to a Next Generation 911 (NG911) environment. They walk alongside citizens during the worst trauma of their lives. Their roles in providing care include such tasks as:

- Helping to calm a terrified teenager hiding in a closet during a home invasion, while simultaneously providing information about the incident to first responders while they rush to the scene
- Directing a frightened caller on how to safely escape a burning building or take protective actions if they are trapped
- Providing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) instructions to a panicked parent holding a lifeless child
- Hearing gunshots and discerning, screams, physical and emotional violence while working to calm the caller
- Processing their own acute and accrued trauma in the midst of a fast-paced, unpredictable, and often overstretched work environment

These dedicated professionals are trained to stay on the line during emergent situations, following complicated operational protocols and delivering time-sensitive, mission-critical dispatch communications; all while providing a sense of calm during what is often the worst moments of a caller's life. However, even with the expectations and stressful demands of the position, they currently fall into a clerical/administrative job category for classification and reporting purposes.

At the federal level, the United States (U.S.) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is responsible for the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) of workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, and disseminating data.³ The classifications are reviewed every ten years, and in 2018, the efforts of 911 professionals to make the case for reclassification failed due to a lack of objective, measurable data required to support reclassification of the PST profession within the BLS SOC database. This document, as part four of the toolkit, is offered to help guide ECCs in efforts to change state and local policy to reclassify PSTs as first responders; therefore, supporting the reclassification effort nationwide.

2.1 The Future

Much progress has been made nationwide to reclassify PSTs as first responders (protective services) at the state and local levels. According to the National Emergency Number Association's (NENA) Telecommunicator Reclassification Map webpage, several states and localities have passed bills that reclassify PSTs as first responders or make them eligible for workers' compensation for post-traumatic

² Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers. Occupational Outlook Handbook. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/office-and-administrative-support/police-fire-and-ambulance-dispatchers.htm#tab-1>. Last accessed 01/09/2020.

³ Standard Occupational Classification. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/soc/>. Last accessed 01/09/2020.

stress disorder (PTSD).⁴ As states and localities continue to reclassify PSTs as first responders, this can strengthen the case for reclassification at the federal level.

2.2 Why Reclassification?

Nationwide, countless ECCs are significantly challenged to recruit and retain skilled and career-minded Emergency Communications Officers or PSTs. This is, in part, the result of being an undervalued, undertrained, and under-compensated discipline, and is likely affected by with a grossly inaccurate job classification. Reclassification goals vary state by state, but there are many reasons why being reclassified as first responders is important for 911 professionals. Respect and recognition for this extremely challenging and vital job are lacking across the country. The title of first responder has been earned and has long been deserved. Additional factors that may be positively impacted with reclassification such as hiring and retention in the field, wages and benefits that are commensurate with protective services work, mental health resources, and a strengthening of training standards.

States and localities need a strategy to be successful in their reclassification efforts. It is important to develop a plan and understand the combination of facts and education needed to build the case at the state and/or local level. States and localities need to understand their state's intricacies and how long the reclassification process may take. As of the date of this publication, eight states have enacted first responder classification for PSTs, and six states have adopted legislation enabling telecommunicators to receive retirement benefits and/or workers' compensation benefits (e.g., for PTSD). The following map and table display reclassification efforts as of November 2021.

⁴ [Telecommunicator Reclassification Map - National Emergency Number Association \(nena.org\)](https://www.nena.org/telecommunicator-reclassification-map)

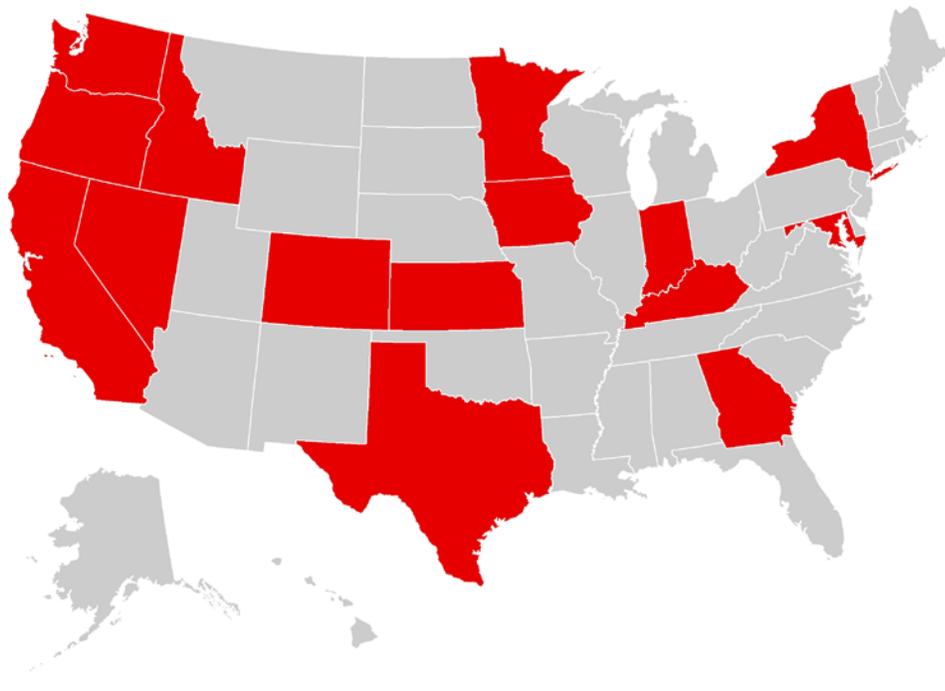


Figure 1: Telecommunicator Reclassification Map

Table 1: Reclassification Status

State	First Responders	Eligible for Workers' Compensation
California	AB 1945	
Colorado	Localities can adopt first responder resolution	SB20-026
Georgia	HR 885	
Idaho		I.C. 72-451
Indiana	HB 1198	
Iowa	SF 2373	
Kansas	SB 40	

State	First Responders	Eligible for Workers' Compensation
Maryland	SB 0284 (partial) ⁵	
Minnesota		MN Stat §176.011
Nevada		AB492
New York	SB S7121	
Oregon		SB 507
Texas	HB 1090	
Washington		HB 2758
West Virginia ⁶		

The success of these states toward PST reclassification is significant—and can inspire other states and localities to join efforts for reclassification. This document identifies successful steps that states and localities have taken toward reclassification; and provides tools and techniques to assist those undertaking legislative efforts to classify PSTs as first responders.

3 How to Affect Change

Some key tactics have been successful across the country in the quest to reclassify PSTs to first responders. While every state is different, you will need an organized approach to be successful in your reclassification efforts. While organization and planning are crucial, there is no need to “reinvent the wheel.” Utilizing a strategy that has been successful for other states and modifying (or customizing) it to fit your situation is a great beginning.

Policy changes require not just stories and narrative, but facts and data as well. Stories are memorable; facts are actionable.

Both stories and facts are essential for a successful campaign. Your plan should include real-life experiences but should not rely solely on opinions or emotional pleas. Objective data and information are also necessary to form a solid basis for reclassification. The process may be long and having a road map to follow will help keep your effort on track for the long haul. The steps below will help you compile and

⁵ Maryland allows PSTs to qualify for special tax credits that are also available to other first responders.
⁶ Marion County, West Virginia, recognized its PSTs as first responders in 2019.

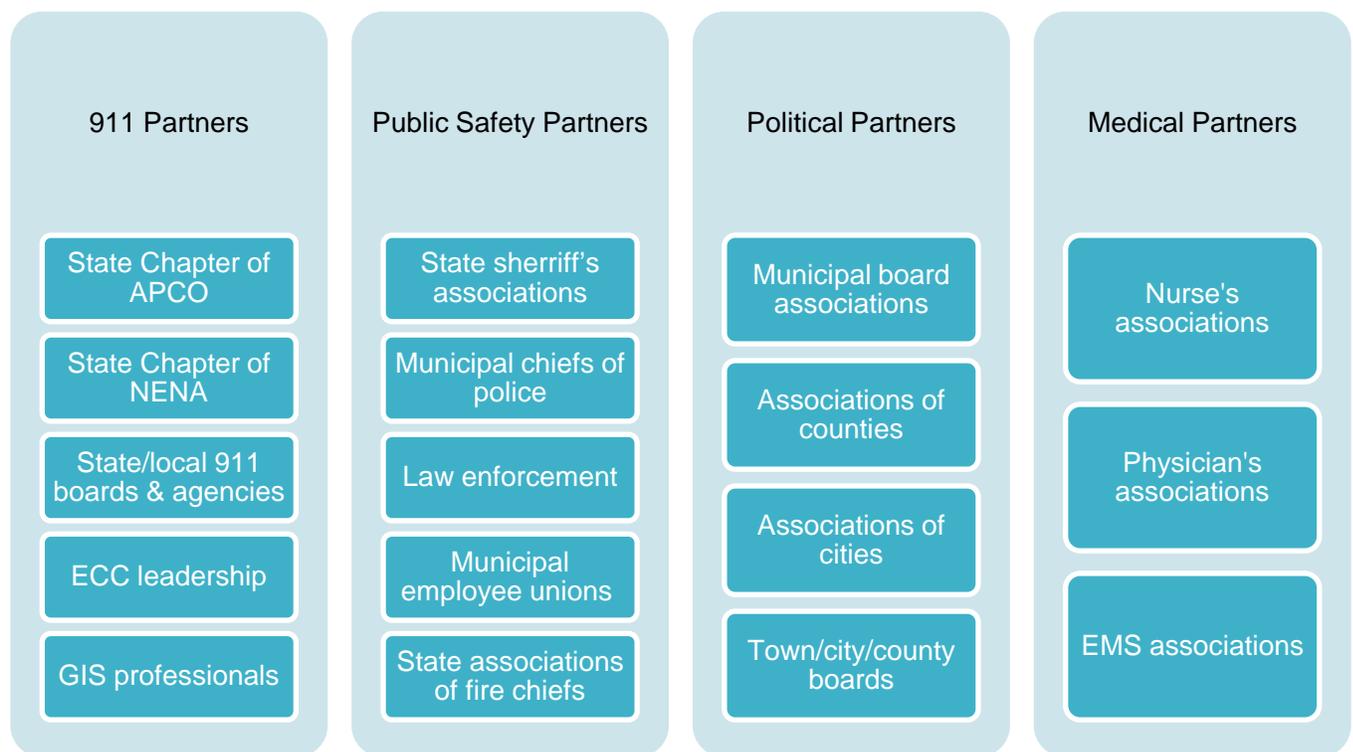
compose your plan and can be a guide as you research and prepare the necessary information to move forward with your reclassification efforts.

3.1 Understand Your Goals and Communications Plan

3.1.1 Clearly Document Your Goals and Connect with Stakeholders

Creating a plan is an important step in organizing a reclassification effort within your state or locality. Create buy-in by establishing a working group of 911 stakeholders in your state from the onset. Reach out to people who are passionate and informed about 911 and solicit their involvement in this initiative. It is incredibly important to involve stakeholders early in the process so they feel invested in the project and to help you spread the word and gain support from their networks as well. When brainstorming possible stakeholders, think big and think broad, be creative and inclusive. Think about building the largest collation possible. It's good to start with public safety partners but also reach out to all classes of professionals whose jobs are improved by the 911 system, such as criminal justice partners and medical partners (such as nurse's and physician's associations).

The list below is a starting point for compiling potential stakeholders, but there may be many more depending on your state:



Creating an appropriate stakeholder group is an important step in identifying the goals of a reclassification effort and gaining champions of the cause. However, engaging stakeholders can seem intimidating at

times if a prior relationship does not exist. Now is the time to reach out and build these relationships. Below are some tools to help find and engage stakeholders.

- Larger associations have policy committees that deal with public safety issues. Research this in your state and locality. This information may be listed on the website, or there may be a phone number to call for information. The website may also contain a list of board members and the issues on which they focus.
- Start locally. Local/County leaders may have a deeper network from which they can garner further support for reclassification. Reach out to a personal contact to help you bridge the gap to further associations.
- Identify if you or someone associated with this effort has a contact that has been through a similar process.
- Work your connections;
 - Start with who you know and learn from them; this can build momentum for your cause.
 - Gather the names and contacts of these individuals who work with the identified stakeholder associations and reach out.
 - Invite them to a call that educates them and gets them involved in the goals and plans on how to move forward.
 - Plan several of these meetings throughout the process to keep stakeholders updated, involved, and invested.
- Send monthly update emails/communications.
- If there are objections, try to learn why they exist and address them early. Individuals/organizations initially perceived as “nay-sayers” can be helpful in identifying obstacles and challenges, so strategies can be developed to overcome them.
- Run this campaign loud and proud. Know that the process is not easy, but it is possible.

When gathering stakeholders, think big and broad. Be creative and inclusive. Build the largest coalition you can to help in this process. These people are already professionally invested in 911 and may have additional contacts within the state, including the legislature. Creating a working group is an important step as these people, individually or as a group, will act and do the “heavy lifting” down the road. Take extra time to consider, select, and approach the right individuals for this group. Tasks that the working group might be asked to accomplish, which require varying skillsets, are as follows:

- Assisting with creating the communications plan
- Creating and carrying out a media/public relations (PR) plan
- Writing legislation
- Communicating with legislators and/or lobbyists
- Conducting community outreach

An effective plan begins with goals. The goals for reclassification should be understood by all stakeholders and documented. You need to understand and make clear what is being sought before you make the ask. Reclassification goals will be different in each state. Some goals may include the following:

- Recognition and respect for the profession
- Hiring best practices
- Training standards (i.e., creating a standard or strengthening one)
- PTSD legislation
- Wages and benefits commensurate with protective service work
- First responder benefits such as disaster benefits, pensions, mental health resources
- Increased autonomy of shift structures (optimal shift structures can be different depending on size/location).
- Availability of federal and local grants for first responders.

These are just examples; your goals will be unique to your state and legislative climate.

3.1.2 Determine Possible Legislative Contacts

Along with clearly defined goals, you will need to determine the most appropriate person or group of people to communicate with and present your legislative ask for reclassification. Determine if you have any legislative contacts with a connection to 911 or a local 911 champion. Are there any legislative contacts on your local or state 911 board? Are there groups in your state that work specifically with legislation? Research is important to determine if there are individuals within your group that have a good relationship with local legislators or decision-makers or their staff. These people can provide valuable feedback on the reclassification legislation if they are willing to read your draft. They can also provide useful information about current policy priorities, and developing strategies that are inclusive of broader circumstances that could influence action on the part of policy makers.

- Identify who/what agency oversees 911 in your locality/state (this is often a board or committee)
- Determine if there are legislative contacts on your board or if anyone on the board has legislative connections
- Ask legislative committee groups if they are willing to advocate for 911 related issues

Once you have identified legislative contacts and legislators, be sure to reach out a number of ways. Phone calls, writing letters and connecting via email can all lead to success. You may not hear back immediately. Contacting local legislators or their staff via email once a month is a way to keep them interested, engaged, informed and supportive of the cause.

3.1.3 Identify Roadblocks

It is important to identify known roadblocks during the early stages of planning. Are there groups that might not support the reclassification effort? If so, part of your plan should include outreach strategies to educate those groups and strengthen relationships with them.

- Be prepared for questions and have data and facts available to share.
- Be aware of what you are asking for (money, title) and understand possible implications for other agencies in your state.

- Be inclusive of associations that might present issues and create a mitigation plan to educate and work collaboratively.

There may be situations where you face opposition that cannot be mitigated despite your best efforts, and you may have to push your legislation without total support. The following table contains mitigation strategies that may assist in your efforts:

Mitigation Strategies	
Do your research	Understand the implications of the goals you have in mind for reclassification (e.g., how it would affect the retirement fund, is there a cost to taxpayers, etc.). Include possible mechanisms to address these implications as part of your strategy. It's more productive to suggest a solution than simply identify a challenge.
Prepare data and facts	Do your homework to disarm what arguments may come up and work to understand the ramifications so you can accurately respond to questions and concerns.
Educate your champions	Help others understand to help strengthen your argument and inspire support for the cause.
Seek compromise	Develop an approach to reach consensus between parties who may have differing viewpoints or opinions.
Have patience	Legislative efforts can take a long time, and if you are not successful in the first attempt, do not give up.
Stay positive	Put your message out there and know you are not alone in the effort.

3.1.4 Create Clear and Concise Talking Points

Your reclassification plan should include clear and concise talking points tailored for an audience that is not familiar with the responsibilities of a PST. These talking points should be created early and distributed often. It is important to involve as many people as possible with consistent messaging. Your talking points should consist of three to five reasons why reclassification legislation is important. Illustrate how this would impact a PST and how not being a first responder impacts your ECC and the people who work there. Remember, keep it short and sweet. It's important to avoid overwhelming your audience, especially in your initial conversations, so your initial talking points should only include what your audience needs to know. Talking point samples can be found in Appendix A, Sample Talking Points for the Legislature.

3.2 Help Local Decision-makers Understand 911

Your campaign's success will likely depend upon local decision-makers (such as a town manager or county executive) understanding the responsibilities of a PST and why a first responder designation is appropriate and imperative. Decision-makers need to understand the facts and statistics behind the ask as well as the mental and physical strain of the position.

Help local decision-makers understand why a first responder designation is needed by educating them on the functions a PST performs. Invite them to your centers, if possible, to immerse them in the environment. This may involve referring to your updated job descriptions to highlight the most important. (Reference part one of this four-part toolkit to learn more about creating updated job descriptions.) Additionally, part three of this toolkit highlights the different technologies that are used in ECCs daily; this also may be useful as you create talking points. Getting state stakeholders onboard mitigates torpedoes to the legislative effort later. Engage public safety groups that represent chiefs of police and rank-and-file police, firefighters and their chiefs, sheriffs, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, prosecutors/district attorneys, and others. Remember that if you don't involve—or at least invite—these groups early, they may raise objections that they were excluded later in the process. Understand how these associations view reclassification in your state and educate them early in the process.

You may wish to consider these items for your talking points:

- Programs your 911 center offers the community
 - 911 education
 - Special needs awareness programs
 - Seniors/elderly programs
 - Mass notification
- Technology
 - NG911
 - Mapping
 - Emergency dispatch protocols for medical, fire, and law enforcement
 - Computer-aided dispatch (CAD)
- Mental and physical strain of the position
 - PTSD and suicide statistics
 - What your 911 center offers to support your PSTs

Educating elected officials is different from lobbying. You may be concerned about what you can and cannot say to an elected official, but educating an elected official is no different from providing instruction on 911 in a casual conversation.

Compile and save all of your documentation to create a packet that can be used to send out to people for educational purposes. This packet can be used for decision-makers but will also be useful for all

stakeholders and champions of the cause. This documentation can also be used to educate employees in your center, especially new hires and recruits. A sample legislative informational guide is provided in Appendix B, Sample Legislative “Leave Behind” Document.

3.3 Create a Media Plan

Creating a media plan will require clear and concise talking points, which will differ from the talking points you use for legislators and decision-makers. These points must be consistent, focused, and targeted to the public-at-large rather than lawmakers.

An initial step in creating a media plan should be meeting with directors and PSTs to gain input and buy-in on the media strategy and talking points. Buy-in will assure a united front and a clear message as communications begin to occur. This meeting should be led by an individual or group that has a strong understanding of public safety needs at the state or local level (e.g., a state subcommittee, a local NENA/APCO⁷ chapter, etc.).

Before outreach begins, the media strategy should be understood and adopted by as many ECCs as possible to have the biggest impact on the community.

Social media can be a powerful tool to reach several audiences through the reclassification process. If your center does not have a social media strategy, this is a good opportunity to start one with clear goals of educating decision-makers, the media, and the public. Creating social media team within your center or reclassification task force can help with the creativity, consistency, and effectiveness of your message. Also, consider having the state NENA and APCO chapters lead the charge by posting positive and impactful content on social media that ECCs can share. This helps create a consistent message and is convenient for ECCs that do not have availability or the staff to manage media. Asking PSTs to share their support for the measure on their social media will further the reach of the message and help them feel invested in the effort. Examples of social media posts can be found in Appendix C, Examples of Social Media Messaging.

While social media seems to be the easiest and most direct form of communication, it is important to reach out to large and small media markets in your area. Compile a media list that includes television, print, online, and radio stations. Often media contacts will have covered 911 previously and may be willing to assist with your campaign. Get involved with local news outlets early in the process and commit them to partner with the story. Assign ECC directors and leaders to contact local print sources such as newspapers. This will help create a local connection for garnering support for new legislation. An example press release for seeking PST reclassification can be found in Appendix D, Sample Press Release for Seeking Emergency Responder Designation.

An important aspect of media and public outreach is clear directives on the type of information to share during your campaign. To grab attention and educate the public, showcase the positive impact that ECCs

⁷ Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International

have in the community. Display your current projects, put 911 front and center, and create relevance. Share positive stories on social media, organize a press release, or reach out to your media contacts; do not wait for National Telecommunicator Week. Examples could include life-saving events such as childbirth assisted by a PST or new technology, training efforts, or community service activities. Reach out to community members to see if they would be willing to share saves and showcase them in your media campaign.

3.4 Learn the Legislative Process

Learning about your state's legislative process is critical to updating, changing, or writing new legislation. Every state/locality has a unique legislative process. Understanding this process and learning how to write a bill will save you time and effort by following the process correctly. Research associations in your state that draft legislation and that might be able to educate you and/or connect you with the appropriate persons.

Research existing law in your state/locality. Additionally, research current bills that involve the term “first responder” to see if 911 is included and how that may impact your center. In some states, the terms emergency/first responder can be interchangeable. It is important to understand what currently exists in law and be proactive in understanding what role 911 would play if reclassified. You may be able to utilize existing bills that include the term first responder to help craft your verbiage. Use consistent language with other 911-related bills in your state to ensure consistency among bills that already exist.

Research other professional associations and their work. Remember, you're not the first interest group to try to affect legislation! Numerous resources exist for better understanding the legislative process in your state; many of them may have been created by other interest groups. Find other associations in your state — even those outside public safety—that have experience in the legislative process. These associations include those representing teachers, pharmacists, electricians, or other working professions. They may have already created advocacy guidance for their members (or “grassroots”) or even be willing to help you learn the ropes.

Search out clerks of the legislature and other “in-house” resources. Many states have a clerk of the legislature who can be an incredible resource to help you understand the legislative process in your state. Reach out to your state office as this position may be called something different in each state. This office can offer educational sessions upon request. State legislative bodies may also have *legislative counsel*, a nonpartisan or semi-partisan position who offers guidance to legislators and stakeholders on the legal implications and procedural requirements of proposed policy changes.

Take cues from reclassification efforts and bills in other states. Research bills in other states, even if they haven't been passed (remember, *good bills fail all the time*). While your language will not precisely reflect another state's bill, you may be able to utilize some language. Often you will not need to begin from scratch when you have strong examples of successful language as a starting point or the ability to amend current legislation. Examples of bills from states that have successfully reclassified PSTs can be found in Appendix E, Finding a Lobbyist and Sample Request for Proposal.

Consider a lobbyist. State and/or regional groups should consider hiring a lobbyist. A lobbyist is a professional who advocates for a particular side of an issue to influence political decisions. They are professional government relations experts. Lobbyists are often hired to assist in proposing new legislation or amending existing legislation. Lobbyists often have connections to decision-makers and understand the legislative process in a respective state. States or regions can leverage lobbyists' existing relationships and can help build relationships where there are none. Lobbyists often have valuable experience that they can lend to your reclassification advocacy. Finding the right lobbyist requires time and research, and even once you settle on one, they may not always be the right fit. Be diligent in your search and relationship with your lobbyist to ensure you are getting what you need. Frequently asked questions regarding lobbyists and a sample RFP for hiring a lobbyist can be found in Appendix E, Finding a Lobbyist and Sample Request for Proposal.

Activate your grassroots. A letter-writing campaign to your state/local representatives is an important aspect of pursuing legislative change. Encourage the 911 professionals in your state to support the effort by writing to their representatives. Do this as early in the process as possible—often as soon as your core policy and strategy working group has settled on talking points. Use the talking points created for reclassification and share them with the 911 community. This presents a united front and provides for further legislative education on reclassification and its importance. Include facts and figures about the job, the job description, and personal stories in the writing campaign. Information on writing to a legislator can be found in Appendix F, Writing to a Legislator, Sample Letter. Additionally, a sample resolution for state chapters to approve and send to members of their state legislative delegations is provided in Appendix G, Sample Resolution for NENA State Chapters

4 Next Steps

Pursuing legislative change is an arduous process: it takes time, patience, hard work, and perseverance. There are often roadblocks, changes in direction, and sometimes starting anew. This document exists to help minimize the pain and point you in the right direction with confidence. Perhaps your state or locality does not know where to begin or has hit a stumbling block. Creating a plan, involving stakeholders, creating buy-in, and following the appropriate legislative steps in your state can position your state or locality for success.

Use this document as a roadmap in your planning and strategy. With your updated job descriptions, training, and standard operating procedures (SOPs), as detailed in other parts of this toolkit, you can blend your success stories and market your ECC to the public and lawmakers.

The more prepared and organized your state is in the process, the more you will elevate your state's ability to succeed—moving through the process with confidence and resiliency.

Appendix A – Sample Talking Points for the Legislature

The legislature needs to understand the function of PSTs in ECCs today. They will need an overview that includes everything from technology, to scheduling, to overtime. You will need to help them understand the huge technology changes that are coming with NG911 and how that further changes the job of a PST. You will need to paint the picture of how benefits differ for PSTs as compared to those classified as first responders.

When educating the legislature, it is important to illustrate how reclassification can create standards and better training, which leads to a better quality of service to the public, to their constituents. Below are some sample talking points to explain to the legislature why reclassification is important.

Talking Points – Why Reclassify?

Reclassification does not guarantee better pay, better benefits, more staff, or better training. But it does pave the way for PSTs to be recognized and accepted into the same field of work as first responders.

1. Recruitment and Retention
 - a. Today, PST jobs are not packaged as a long-term career path, rather a job or stepping stone to a “career” with a traditional first responder agency. Becoming classified for the work PSTs truly do can be a more accurate representation of what an applicant is deciding to apply for.
 - b. Giving an ECC the ability to create minimum requirements to become a PST when there are no official hiring minimums or standardization through the state.
 - i. Experience in different areas
 - ii. Age limitations
 - iii. Convictions vs. no convictions
 - iv. Creating moral and ethical behavior standards within EOCs
 - v. Minimum requirements could enhance community trust
2. A Foot in the Door in the Capital
 - a. A better ability to advocate for technology needs and funding needs as first responders. Being reclassified could help PSTs secure more than is possible as administrative workers statewide.
 - i. Future increases to 911 rates
 - ii. Future development of workmen’s comp benefits for PTSD and other mental illness for first responders in your state
 - iii. Addressing deficiencies in retirement plans
3. Next Pandemic?
 - a. During COVID, many PSTs across the country struggled. At first, many were denied priority testing because we didn’t have “contact with the public.”
 - b. PSTs did not know if ECC’s were included in economic relief initiatives that essential personnel were eligible for.

- c. Vaccinations. Not all PSTs around the country were eligible for priority vaccinations.
 - d. No emergency communicator should have uncertainty or be in limbo during a national or statewide crisis.
4. Professionalizing the Profession.
- a. Future quality of service standardization. ECCs may have a training level that the adjacent county does not.
 - i. Training standards
 - ii. Training certification at start of employment
 - iii. Training standardization creates community trust. Even if a standard already exists, it allows agencies to state that they are a first responder agency with required training standards that exceed the minimum allowable.
 - b. Changes internal practices
 - c. Culture shifts
 - i. PSTs are no longer “just dispatchers.” PSTs have a meaningful place in the first responder process.
5. At some point, this could impact our ability to pay our staff more.
6. Mental Health
- a. A 2019 study hosted by Fairfax County Police showed that 14.5% of Public Safety Communications personnel who had responded to their survey had had suicidal thoughts within the last year. By comparison, the rate of suicidal thoughts in the United States is only 3%. Suicidal thoughts are often linked to other problems such as depression. COVID-19 has only increased the level of stress 911 professionals face. A NENA survey showed that 40% of 911 professionals felt more stressed due to the pandemic than before.⁸
 - b. “Recent studies of 9-1-1 profession related stress and mental health impacts show that 9-1-1 industry professionals are exposed to various levels of trauma and work-related stress. One study even showed that 17%-24% of telecommunicators in the United States exhibited symptoms of probable Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and 23.9% exhibited symptoms of probable major depression.”⁹

⁸ 2019 Virginia Public Safety Mental Health Pilot Survey. <http://fcop5000.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-Fairfax-County-Police-Pilot-Survey-Summary.pdf>

⁹ Excerpt from *NENA Peer Support Team Development, Implementation, and Oversight* NENA-INF-044.1-2021, April 21, 2021. Study reference: Lilly Michelle M. and Christy E. Allen. 2015. “Psychological Inflexibility and Psychopathology in 9-1-1 Telecommunicators.” *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. 28(3):262-266. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1002/jts.22004>

Appendix B – Sample Legislative “Leave Behind” Document

*****911 Logo Here*****

Who We Are:

- Explain who you are as a 911 organization
- How do you serve the community?
 - Example: “The association serves its members and the greater public safety community as the only professional organization solely focused on 911 policy, technology, operations, and education issues.”
- How do you promote the implementation and awareness of 911?
- What is the mission of your agency?

911 FACTS

911 Emergency Communications provided in the State of **STATE:**

- How many PSAPs?
- How many backup PSAPs
- Population served

Explain how funding works in your state/jurisdiction:

The funding sources for 911 service include:

- Surcharges
- Wireline services fees
- Wireless service fees
- Prepaid emergency service fees
- Any other type of applicable fee that feeds 911

The Future of 911:

- Nationally, Next Generation 911 (NG911) is recognized by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Commerce (DOC), and the National 911 Program Office (jointly administered by the USDOT [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA] and National Telecommunications and Information Administration [NTIA])
- Reclassification goals
- Technology and customer service are needed to provide assistance to citizens from Any Device, Any Time, & Anywhere

Legislative Policy Priorities **(insert year):**

- Priority One
 - Details

- Priority Two
 - Details
- Priority Three
 - Details
- Priority Four
 - Details

To learn more about 911 emergency communications:

- Visit (your organization's website)
- www.nena.org
- Schedule a tour of a 911 center in your district
- Reach out to 911 professionals in your district

Organization 911 leaders in your district are here to help! To find out more about 911 or to schedule a member visit to a local 911 center contact:

Name: _____

911 Entity: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Appendix C – Examples of Social Media Messaging

Information sharing with the public can be a huge asset during a reclassification effort. One method of public information sharing that has seen great success for states and localities is the use of social media. Building a social media campaign takes commitment and consistency. If your state or localities does not yet have a social media presence, now is the right time to start one. If one is already established, utilize what exists to share information and build followers. The more people you can engage and reach from your platform, the better. Social media can bring a significant increase in attention.

There are many examples of 911 centers and state 911 programs across the country that run successful social media accounts. You can usually find them by searching hashtags related to 911 or reclassification. Helpful and well-presented posts can lead to more engagement. Examples of social media posts related to the reclassification effort can be found on [911.gov](https://www.911.gov) in the Documents and Tools section.

Appendix D – Sample Press Release for Seeking Emergency Responder Designation

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Logo here

State Chapters of APCO and NENA

Address 1

Address 2

RELEASE DATE:

Month Day, Year

State 911 Professionals Seek Emergency Responder Designation

Protecting the Dedicated Voices on the Other End of Your Emergency

Location, Date — No one anticipates a situation that requires a 911 call. Though, over **XXXX** Public Safety Telecommunicators in the state of **State** choose a career as the crucial first point of contact in life-or-death situations. In a fleeting instant, their actions can determine the outcome of someone's worst day.

The **State** Chapters of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) are currently working together to introduce legislation seeking **State** public safety telecommunicators to be recognized as first responders.

Currently, on the federal level, telecommunicators are defined as clerical workers. On the state level, no statute in **[name of state]** currently defines telecommunicators in any capacity, and existing definitions of Emergency or First Responder do not include them. We would like **[name of State]** to join the other states who have made that designation.

During the early stages of COVID-19, this became a frustration point within the 911 community. There was much confusion on the state level as to whether telecommunicators were essential or vital when it came to vaccines, the Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act or the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Local jurisdictions were left to decide on their own, and dozens of different interpretations and perspectives added to the confusion and uncertainty. Several centers were hit hard by the pandemic, forcing them to come up with alternative methods to process emergency calls amid critical staffing shortages.

Public safety telecommunicators are highly trained individuals and routinely communicate with citizens who are in great distress, fear or injured. They can coach callers through a mental health crisis, how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or deliver a baby, collect information to provide situational awareness for responders and negotiate in hostile situations. They perform critical life-saving duties in the field as incident tactical dispatchers (INTD) for the special weapons and tactics unit (SWAT) and fire, communications units leaders and technicians (COML and COMT), and the telecommunicator emergency response taskforce (TERT) assistance to public safety answering points (PSAPs) in disasters.

This designation will give telecommunicators the recognition they deserve for the job they do as the first, first responder. There is no pay or benefit impact, as that is a local decision, and there are no training or certification requirements in the legislation, although that discussion could come later. The same could be said for including telecommunicators in the movement to declare post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a worker's compensation injury in [name of State].

Legislation has been presented to the Office of the XXXX by Senator XXXX. The members of the [name of State] APCO and NENA committee are hopeful that a bill can move forward in this legislative session with the support of the public, as well as you as first responders and elected officials. Once a bill is crafted, the bill number will be provided so you can lend your support.

By designating public safety telecommunicators as first responders, [name of State] would be sending a powerful message nationwide that it supports our 911 professionals by recognizing the life-saving work that each of them performs every day.

###

Appendix E – Finding a Lobbyist and Sample Request for Proposal

Where do we start when considering a lobbyist?

- Each state/locality is different regarding laws and funds to secure lobbyists. You need to research your jurisdiction's website for rules on lobbying and lobbyists.
- Understand what your organization/group wants or needs from local (municipal/county), state or federal lobbyists.
- Know that whom you hire works for you, they need your views and interests, they should stay in constant communication.
- Remember that lobbyists open doors to legislators and their staff. However, you are the subject matter expert.
- Creating a new law is difficult and can be expensive. Amending an existing law is a little easier but can still be tough. A lobbyist helps to navigate this process.

What are some considerations when hiring a lobbyist?

Find out if the potential lobbyist, group or organization belongs to a trade association that already conducts government relations/lobby activities at the local, state, or federal level. Many times, mistakes are made when a group hires a lobbyist and expects them to “fix” things on their own. Most lobbyists will engage the client and request direction and understanding of the issues, and over time the lobbyist will have a better understanding of the client's concerns. In order to ensure this, the client must give and demand attention to their issue/concern from the lobbyist. Do not hire a lobbyist and assume they are working in a vacuum to get the work done. Require a steady flow of information to and from the lobbyist. Also, it is recommended to give the lobbyist has one point of contact.

Can you hire lobbyists for certain legislative sessions?

Yes, but this could increase costs to the organization. Additionally, many of the relationships and/or access to elected officials and their staff occurs in the interim. Typically, a “session-only” lobbyist monitors the legislative activity and does not engage in any “fixes” until a problem arises for the client, typically in a filed bill or amendment.

Are lobbyists tied to only promoting the agenda you are asking them to promote, or do they have the freedom to negotiate things with other legislators/or lobbyists without your approval?

Lobbyists typically promote the client agenda only. Again, communication to and from the lobbyist is essential.

Sample Request for Proposal for a Lobbying Firm

(Insert Agency or Group Name) is seeking proposals from professional firms with public policy expertise, particularly 911 emergency telecommunications policy, to conduct a review of policy issues impacting emergency telecommunications interests in the State of (Insert State Name) and to provide monitoring on an ongoing basis. Also, as needed, advocate on key issues as identified by the policy review and our client interests.

Background

Provide information about your agency, what you do, what your goals are and the outcome of these goals. Example: (Insert name) represents, (Insert Agency or Group Name) operating emergency telecommunications technology services and infrastructure in (Insert State Name) of who are seeking to create and protect the citizens they serve by proactively understanding, monitoring, and taking appropriate actions on policy matters pertaining to telecommunications and public safety to meet fiduciary, technology infrastructure, and public safety goals.

Scope of Work

1. Provide specific information with regard to the form of service that can be expected (i.e., drafting legislation, creating/managing coalition, arranging meetings/calls with policy makers and/or their staff, monitoring ongoing actions). Scope and assess telecommunications and technology policy issues regulated or influenced by the (Insert State Name) Government relative to emergency telecommunication public safety providers and opportunities to mitigate risk, including the below components:
 - a. Identify state-level emergency telecommunications and advocacy organizations in (Name State Here) and identify the key public policy issues of concern to each organization.
 - b. Utilizing the below issues considering (1) threats and opportunities to the industry, (2) ability to influence, and (3) current state-of-play.
 - i. Emergency Telecommunications Funding
 - ii. Emergency Telecommunications Practices & Management
 - iii. Emerging Telecommunications Technology
 - iv. Emergency Telecommunications Market and U.S. Mandates
 - c. Potential Near-Term Actions by the (Insert State Here) Legislature and Executive Branch
 - d. Assessment should exclude policy issues impacting emergency telecommunications and focus on issues affecting public safety.
2. Ongoing monitoring and policy support on identified issues, and as needed, direct lobbying and advocacy. Issue monitoring should include any resources needed to properly brand (Insert Agency or Group Name) short of any direct lobbying and advocacy.

Work Product

Statewide assessment of emergency telecommunications policy issues (Item 1 from Scope of Work) completed by (Insert Date), unless otherwise agreed.

1. Ongoing monitoring and policy support are commencing on **(Insert Date)** or at the beginning of the legislative session.
2. Monthly updates are delivered by the **(Insert Date Here)** of each month of the legislative session.
3. Post-session summary and assessment delivered within 30 days of adjournment.
4. Bi-monthly updates after session adjournment.

Budget

(Insert Agency or Group Name) strongly prefers a monthly retainer format for this work. Proposals should include the anticipated budget that identifies individuals involved in developing the state assessment and conducting the monitoring and policy support, any data acquisition costs, and any anticipated travel or miscellaneous costs.

Proposal Deadline

Proposals should be submitted to the email address below by **(Insert Time and Date)**

Email Address

Appendix F – Writing to a Legislator, Sample Letter

Sample Reclassification Letter:

[Your Letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable [Representative]
State General Assembly (or other, if applicable)
[Representative's Address]

Dear Representative [Representative's Last Name],

I write today to ask that you support [name of legislator] by cosponsoring/supporting the 911 [name of bill (bill number)]. This bill would reclassify public safety telecommunicators (911 call takers and dispatchers) as “Protective Service Occupations” instead of their current classification, “Office and Administrative Support Occupations.”¹⁰

[Optional: Your story here. Things to touch on:

(1) Your public safety answering point's (PSAP's) connection to the district, e.g., “[My PSAP] serves x, which covers over xxx residents and visitors,”

(2) A brief overview of your PSAP, e.g., “[My PSAP] employs x dispatchers.”

(3) the nature of the work your telecommunicators and dispatchers perform, e.g., “Telecommunicators here use emergency medical dispatch to help 911 callers administer Epinephrine ...” any data points or anecdotes to highlight the unique and challenging nature of the work]

The 911 telecommunicators and dispatchers in our community are critically important public safety personnel. On any given day, they may provide emergency medical instruction, deal with suicidal persons, analyze background noises and a caller's voice to assess a situation, or coordinate the dispatch and safe arrival of police, fire, and emergency medical service (EMS) personnel.

[State how you relate to the district, e.g., “As director of a PSAP that serves your district,” or “As a resident of your district”]. I'm writing to request your support of the [name of legislation]. It has broad support throughout the 911 community, including the endorsement of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA): The 9-1-1 Association. Put simply, the [name of legislation] is good governance and much-deserved recognition for the estimated 100,000 public safety telecommunicators in our country.

The bill's sponsors—and the 911 community—would gladly welcome any support of the House and Senate bills. For more information, please contact [appropriate contact names and emails].

¹⁰ Public Safety Telecommunicators (also referred to as Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers) are Occupation 43-5031, currently classified under Major Occupation Category 43-0000, “Office and Administrative Support Occupations.” “Protective Service Occupations” is Major Occupation Category 33-0000. U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, 2018 STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM, https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#.

Please let us know if we may ever be of assistance to you in the future.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Role]

[Your Organization]

[Your Address]

Appendix G – Sample Resolution for NENA State Chapters

SAMPLE RESOLUTION FOR NENA STATE CHAPTERS TO APPROVE AND SEND TO MEMBERS OF THEIR STATE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATIONS

The following is draft language for a resolution that NENA encourages its chapter leaders to consider, refine as you wish, officially approve, put on your letterhead, and send to the members of your state’s legislative delegation.

RESOLUTION: CALLING UPON MEMBERS OF THE {name of state legislative body} TO SUPPORT THE [name of legislation]

The following resolution was approved by the Board of Directors of [NAME OF YOUR NENA CHAPTER] on [DATE]:

Whereas the state government’s [name of state system for classifying occupations] sorts workers into occupational categories, according to the nature of the work performed and, in some cases, on the skills, education, or training needed to perform the work; and

Whereas America’s 911 telecommunicators are currently incorrectly categorized in the [name of state system for classifying occupations] as an “Office and Administrative Support Occupation,” a category which includes secretaries, office clerks, and taxicab dispatchers; and

Whereas, classifying 911 telecommunicators as an “Office and Administrative Support Occupation” fails to recognize their central role in public safety and homeland security, their specialized training and skills, and their uniquely stressful work environment; and

Whereas, classifying public safety telecommunicators as “Protective Service Occupations” – alongside police, firefighters, security guards, lifeguards, and others whose job it is to protect our communities – would better reflect the work they perform and align the SOC with related classification systems;

Now, therefore, this board resolves to call upon all members of the [state name] Legislature to reclassify public safety telecommunicators as a “Protective Service Occupation”; and we also call upon our state Senators to support companion legislation; and

Therefore, members of [NAME OF YOUR NENA CHAPTER] will continue to advocate for an accurate statistical classification for 911 professionals to support critical research into the nature and impacts of 911 jobs, which differ substantially from those encountered by non-public-safety “Office and Administrative Support Occupations.”

Signed,

[Names and Titles of Signatories]