

911 Emergency Communications

Recommendation #1: Develop an uninterrupted, 24/7 mobile mental health response system that can be dispatched by 911.

Implementation Date: In Progress

Implementation Details:

- 8/29/2022 Update
 - COMCARE has been able to fill all full-time positions dedicated to mobile crisis response, which includes three clinicians and two integrated care specialists. This should help improve mobile crisis response in Sedgwick County.
 - Present staffing and workforce deficiency are barriers to implementing enhanced ICT capacity. System partners may recommend alternative models to fulfill the 24/7 response capability. The 2023 Recommended Budget contains a Mental Health Contingency Reserve of \$1,000,000 for mental health initiatives. Should the environment become more conducive to enhancements, contingency could be available to address recommendations from COMCARE and Emergency Communications staff.
 - In preparation for 988 implementation, COMCARE created five Integrated Care Specialist positions, whose focus will be on answering calls from the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Additionally, one full-time Mobile Crisis Clinician position was created, which will provide an opportunity for mobile response when appropriate. COMCARE will continue to work on enhancing our technology to aid in call distribution and data collection, which will support us in providing the highest quality of care possible.
988 went live on July 16, 2022, allowing increased 24/7 access to mental health intervention for those impacted by a mental health or substance use disorder crisis. Legislation was signed, providing funding to build the infrastructure necessary to manage 988 demands. Sedgwick County COMCARE will be awarded \$1,080,000 in state funding during the current budget cycle. This funding will support the current 988 positions and any additional program components that are needed to widen access to crisis intervention services.
- 12/2/2022 Update
 - The City of Wichita has dedicated funding for mental health staff to support mental health-related calls for service. There will be 4 mobile response teams comprised of a clinician and an integrated care specialist who will be available to accompany WPD on calls or to respond on their own to 911 calls that do not warrant a law enforcement response. We hope to have 24/7 coverage

with these 4 teams. The goal is to get the right response to persons who access 911 be it a co-responder response or just the mobile response team. We know that not every call to 911 requires a law enforcement response and we hope that by partnering we are able to help those in a mental health crisis or assist someone calling about someone in need of a mental health intervention. Our ultimate goal is to identify what social supports or mental health care is needed to resolve the crisis.

- 4/20/2023 Update
 - The city and county legal departments are collaborating on a memorandum of understanding (MOU).
 - The Kansas Legislature allocated additional 988 funding which will be used by Sedgwick County COMCARE to expand mobile response capacity through added staffing and fleet.
- 4/26/2023 Update
 - The City of Wichita sent a proposed MOU document to the County Counselor regarding the COMCARE embedded Mental Health workers with WPD. COMCARE and County Counselor are presently reviewing the MOU content.
- 6/20/2023 Update
 - The City of Wichita City Council approved the agreement with COMCARE on Tuesday, 6/6/23. Subsequently, the Sedgwick County Board of County Commissioners approved the agreement on Wednesday, 6/7/23. The next step is to post the job positions and recruit behavioral health professionals.
- 10/5/2023 Update
 - Regarding the agreement between WPD and COMCARE for mobile response, implementation is in full swing. ICT1 is expanding with four additional teams, ICT2, ICT3, ICT4 and ICT5. Each team will consist of one case manager and one therapist. All teams will work out of the Central Bureau office. All case managers have been hired and are in training. Two offers have been made to therapists. Interviews will continue until all positions are filled.

Recommendation #2: Embed qualified mental health providers within the 911 system.

Implementation Date: Implemented 10/2/23

Implementation Details:

- 8/29/2022 Update
 - Present staffing and workforce deficiency are barriers to implementing enhanced mobile response team and ICT capacity. The 2023 Recommended Budget contains a Mental Health Contingency Reserve of \$1,000,000 for mental health initiatives. Should the environment become more conducive to enhancements, contingency could be available to address recommendation from COMCARE and Emergency Communications staff.

- 10/11/2022 Update
 - Emergency Communications (911) is collaborating with COMCARE to develop a pilot for an embedded mental health specialist dispatch that will be live Q4 of 2022. This is made possible through the utilization and reallocation of existing staff at COMCARE.
- 11/30/2022 Update
 - COMCARE and Emergency Communications have partnered to start a pilot program for an embedded mental health worker in dispatch which will be staffed by the end of January 2023, if not sooner. Policies and procedures have been established, a job description created, and the hiring process has begun. Once a qualified candidate is selected, they will be trained, along with Emergency Communications staff and the pilot will be live. Staff from both agencies will be collecting data throughout the pilot so that they may demonstrate the effectiveness of the program for future growth.
- 4/20/2023 Update
 - COMCARE received funding from KDADS in order to increase capacity to manage 988 calls, which includes enhancing partnerships with Emergency Communications in order to connect persons in mental health-related distress with a mental health professional when appropriate. COMCARE hired one full-time Integrated Care Specialist who will be co-located at the 911 call center on Monday-Thursday during the second shift. This person started Jan. 30 and has been completing COMCARE required training and onboarding for the last several months. Additionally, he has had several shadowing opportunities, which includes observing calls in the 911 call-center and going on WPD ride-alongs. The plan is to have the Integrated Care Specialist transition to a workspace at the Emergency Communications building; however, this has been delayed due to construction and CAD upgrades in the Emergency Communications Building. The team is in process of developing a plan so COMCARE staff can access CAD while using COMCARE technology, train on CAD, and then receive calls transferred from 911 while working from a remote location.
- 10/19/2023 Update
 - On October 2nd, 2023, the Integrated Care Specialist (ICS) program went live at 9-1-1, embedding a qualified mental health worker in dispatch to respond to calls of mental health crisis that do not necessitate a law enforcement response. There is one ICS staff member in dispatch now, working Sunday through Thursday, 2:30pm to 10:30pm, and a second ICS staff member currently in training with an expected operational date of December 4th. The second ICS team member will be operational Monday-Friday, 12pm to 8pm. In addition to responding to mental health crisis, the ICS is able to join 9-1-1 calls in progress, providing de-escalation to callers prior to officer arrival with the goal of creating a less volatile situation for the safety of all

parties involved. Since the go-live on October 2nd, the ICS team member has been able to participate in or respond in lieu of law enforcement to 25 calls for assistance (as of 10/19).

Recommendation #3: Add an additional position, "Continuing Education Coordinator," to the 911 budget to enrich continuing education and training for 911 employees to better screen callers, develop tools to evaluate mental health needs and then transfer to COMCARE or another agency as appropriate.

Implementation Date: Not Implemented

Implementation Details:

- 8/29/2022 Update
 - A new Full Time Employee position is not being added to the 2023 budget, or the 911 staffing table at this time due to staffing and workforce deficiencies, however, at the recommendation of the Director, when staffing is adequately improved, this position may be created within the Department's current allocation and addressed in a future budget.

Recommendation #4: By December 2022, establish a community advisory board that is reflective of the diverse communities 911 services.

Implementation Date: In Progress

Implementation Details:

- 8/29/2022 Update
 - By December 2022 Emergency Communications will establish draft bylaws for a Community Advisory Board and a protocol for establishing board members. Because Commissioners will be appointing board members, the Director will wait until January of 2023 to solicit board appointments from seated Commissioners. The CAB will meet quarterly and membership will be established in time for the inaugural meeting in Q1 of 2023.
- 4/20/2023 Update
 - The Community Advisory Board is still a work in process. Initial draft of by-laws have been reviewed and approved by the County Counselor's Office. Work on representative selection and implementation is delayed by operational priorities (CAD implementation and staff relocation to accommodate call center demolition and remodel) and by administrative revisions of the County's board appointments policy. The advisory board will still be advanced for implementation in calendar year 2023.
- 10/19/2023 Update

- Efforts to initiate a Community Advisory Board for Emergency Communications were delayed during 2023, due to both logistical considerations and operational focus. Those efforts are underway again, with the hope to have guidelines established by the end of 2023 for a 2024 start date.

Recommendation #5: Address the high turnover rates at 911 by continuing to improve pay; improve diversity in recruitment and hiring for 911 staff; and add benefits that focus on the wellness of 911 personnel.

Implementation Date: Implemented 10/19/2023

Implementation Details:

- 8/29/2022 Update
 - Compensation for 911 staff is under review by Human Resources and County Management. A general pay adjustment and funding to support the proposed plan are included in the 2023 Recommended Budget. Specific details of 911 compensation is anticipated before final Budget adoption on August 24.
- 12/2/2022 Update
 - The County Commission approved a pay plan to enhance compensation for 911 personnel on Nov. 16, 2022.
- 10/19/2023 Update
 - Emergency Communications continues to have the support of County Commissioners and County Management to improve pay and working conditions at Emergency Communications, aiding in the recruitment and retention efforts. In 2023, Emergency Communications underwent a renovation of the communications center from April through August, providing for expanded work space and updated equipment. As of November 5th, the pay for Emergency Service Call Takers starts at \$19.14, which is a 32% increase from what the starting pay was in 2019. Emergency Communications is slated to end October staffed at 91%, a staffing percentage that hasn't been seen since May of 2020, with an average turnover ratio of 4% per month. Efforts to increase diversity amongst staff also continues. Currently 16% of staff are identified as Black or African American and 13% of staff are identified as Latino or Hispanic. There are 8 staff members that are certified bilingual for Spanish translation. Recruitment efforts will continue to focus broadly on diversity, with emphasis on recruiting in the Asian community.

