



*Sedgwick County...
working for you*

Emergency Communications

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Elora Forshee, Director

Sedgwick County Emergency Communications (911) and COMCARE

Mental Health

1. Develop an uninterrupted, 24/7 **mobile mental health response system** that can be dispatched by 911 through a combination of the following –

- 1 a. Increasing funding for COMCARE mobile response team to increase availability.

8/29/2022 COMCARE has been able to fill all full-time positions dedicated to mobile crisis response, which includes 3 clinicians and 2 integrated care specialists. This should help improve mobile crisis response in Sedgwick County.

- 1.b. Increasing funding for ICT One, so they can be available 24/7.

8/29/2022 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.

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.

- 1.c. Developing and implementing a new crisis response model that focuses on having a mental health and medical responder available for crisis calls, with a process in place to engage with law enforcement as appropriate for each call.

8/29/2022 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.

2. Embed **qualified mental health providers** within the 911 system.

- Austin, TX, model
- Colorado model

8/29/2022 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.

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.

Training

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.

8/29/2022: 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.

Community Involvement / Inclusion

4. By December 2022, establish a **community advisory board** that is reflective of the diverse communities 911 services. This advisory board should create plans for transparency and acknowledgement of board members conflict of interest.

8/29/2022: 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.

Workforce / Wellness

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.

8/29/2022: 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.

UPDATE: The County Commission approved a pay plan to enhance compensation for 911 personnel on November 16, 2022.