



Police Department

INFORMATION CALENDAR
November 3, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Jennifer Louis, Interim Chief of Police

Subject: Audit Recommendation Status – 911 Dispatchers: Understaffing Leads to Excessive Overtime and Low Morale

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The City Auditor's report included 14 recommendations. As of this report, 11 recommendations have been implemented, 1 was dropped (in consultation with the Auditors Office) and 2 are partly implemented. Please see attachment for further details regarding individual recommendations.

BACKGROUND

On April 25, 2019, the City Auditor's Office issued its audit, *911 Dispatchers: Understaffing Leads to Excessive Overtime and Low Morale*¹. This audit report included 14 recommendations. The purpose of this report is to update City Council on the Berkeley Police Department's (BPD) progress on implementing the City Auditor's recommendations. This is the 2nd status update report to City Council with the next update planned for May 2023.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There are no identifiable environmental effects, climate impacts, or sustainability opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Associated costs will depend on the outcome of the recommendations. That work is in progress and nearly completed.

CONTACT PERSON

Captain Kevin Schofield, 510-981-5815.

¹ City Auditor's Office Dispatcher Audit (04/25/19) <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/Dispatch-%20Workload-Fiscal-%20Year-2018.pdf>

Audit Title: 911 Dispatchers: Understaffing Leads to Excessive Overtime and Low Morale				
Finding	Recommendation	Lead Department	Expected or Actual Implementation Date	Status of Audit Recommendations, Corrective Action Plan, and Progress Summary
It is taking longer to answer 911 calls and there are not enough call takers.	1.1 Conduct an annual staffing analysis of required minimum staffing levels and budgeted dispatchers to ensure budget staffing requests and scheduling efforts meet demand and limit the use of overtime where possible (see also Finding 2). Use the staffing analysis to communicate to Council and the public during the annual appropriations process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service level demands • The full-burdened cost of budgeting for additional staff • Whether there is sufficient funding available to budget for the additional staff or a shortfall (quantified in dollars) • Additional staffing requests, if needed 	Police	5/10/2022	<u>Status: Implemented</u> Current employees continue to be staffed during days and times that mirror call volume reports (ECats). Data on service level demands continues to be reviewed monthly. Current budget does not support additional staff, however analysis of overtime expenditures was conducted as part of Call Taker recommendation. This revealed that additional positions could be funding via overtime savings.
It is taking longer to answer 911 calls and there are not enough call takers.	1.2 Use the staffing analysis performed in response to recommendation 1.1, to determine future resource needs of the Communications Center, including staffing, equipment, and physical space. Take into account planned changes to services and factors that may influence call volume.	Police	Ongoing	<u>Status: Partly Implemented</u> A part of Measure FF passed in 2021 provided additional funding to improve Berkeley's 9-1-1 dispatch system and implement an accredited priority dispatching and emergency medical dispatching program. The Fire Department contracted with Federal Engineering to conduct an analysis of the staffing, infrastructure, and technology needs of the Communications Center to implement these programs. Analysis work began in February 2022. The consultant's report is pending.

<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	<p>2.1</p>	<p>Open all dispatcher positions to continuous recruitment.</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>6/29/2022</p>	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u> In June of 2022 Human Resources changed the Public Safety Dispatcher I position to open and continuous hiring.</p>
<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	<p>2.2</p>	<p>Work with Communications Center staff to create a specific recruitment plan for dispatcher positions including recruitment events and marketing material. Use recruitment best practices to reach potential applicants and increase the number of applicants.</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>5/10/2022</p>	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u> Recruitment and Retention Team continues to actively recruit and implement new strategies for reaching a diverse and broad group of Communications Center applicants. Communications Center personnel have been included in recruitment materials, interview processes, applicant “sit alongs”, and applicant outreach. On September 24, 2019 BPD launched a recruitment-specific website, www.joinberkeleypd.com, and accompanying social media accounts all specifically designed for BPD by an experienced marketing firm. This included recruitment videos, language, and images specifically targeting potential Communications Center applicants.</p> <p>BPD implemented a program (“Text bpdjobs to (510) 399-1814) that leads applicants through immediate response text conversations where recruiters can gather information on applicants quickly and efficiently, and applicants can be provided testing and job information.</p> <p>Another new strategy implemented during the most recent recruitment period included advertising on a worldwide employment related search engine (indeed.com). One of the Supervising Public Safety Dispatchers personally contacted the more than 600 applicants once the application period was open to inform them of such and to provide them with POST test preparation materials and other test information. She also coordinated sit-alongs with those interested in doing so.</p>

<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	<p>2.3</p>	<p>Identify and implement feasible option to improve turnaround time on background checks for dispatcher positions. This can include outsourcing background investigations or working with Human Resources to ensure that the Department is able to complete all background investigations in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>5/10/2022</p>	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u></p> <p>Two independent background investigation firms are working with BPD to complete backgrounds. Turn-around times have met promised delivery dates, with most being completed within a month. This has relieved pressure on internal background investigators and significantly shortened the time from application period to job offer. Data is being collected and reviewed regularly regarding turn-around times. This current pace will allow BPD to remain swift and competitive while hiring quality applicants and also ensure that we can hold multiple recruitment periods in a single year.</p>
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<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	2.4	<p>Design a way to retain staff that are unable to pass the Police Desk training, for example, keep staff as PSD I and have them work as a call taker or create a new job classification for a call taking position.</p>	Police	5/10/2022	<p><u>Status: Dropped</u></p> <p>Call Taker proposal written and subsequently approved by the Chief. Initial meeting held with affected bargaining unit and Human Resources. Union voiced concerns about separating job duties within the Communications Center and the Call Taker position being misused. Next steps include Human Resources reviewing job classification and conducting comp survey, followed by BPD and HR meeting again with the union. Union is considering submitting counter proposal to Call Taker position, to possibly rewrite trainees. It became clear that the majority of those failing the training program were failing due to inability to pass call taking, and that the call taking training was often extending over six months. The most recent trainee who failed due to inability to pass Police Desk who would have been qualified to work in the Call Taker position was in 2011.</p> <p>A determination was made to focus on improving the training program for Call Taker training (and overall training program) to increase the success rate for trainees moving from PSD I to PSD II. This would also alleviate the Union's stated concerns. Additionally, BPD will conduct a review of both the training program as well as the feasibility/benefit of moving forward with a Call Taker position at the next Audit Status Update.</p>
<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	2.5	<p>Evaluate the results from dispatcher recruitment routinely (e.g., annually or at the end of a recruitment cycle) to determine areas for improvement. Update recruitment plans.</p>	Police	5/10/2022	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u></p> <p>Personnel and Training, working in conjunction with the Communications Center, now tracks applicant progress through the recruitment, testing, hiring and training process. Data collected includes information regarding where the applicant/employee was "lost" and what steps are in place or required to allow the applicant (or future applicants) to successfully move forward in the process. Data is reviewed at each stage, and at the end of each cycle will be assessed for effectiveness.</p>

<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	<p>2.6</p>	<p>Implement an automated scheduling software that has built-in decision-making capabilities to automatically fill shifts based on specified qualifications and staff availability.</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p><u>Status: Partly Implemented</u> Care Systems Inc. was selected and approved by City Council on May 24, 2022 for an electronic scheduling solution. Contract completion is pending. The system integrates scheduling and overtime management.</p>
<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	<p>2.7</p>	<p>Decrease the concentration of overtime among dispatchers.</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>7/1/2022</p>	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u> Since the last update we have successfully promoted 3 Public Safety Dispatcher II employees. Currently there are 2 Public Safety Dispatcher I employees in training. In April 2021 we implemented the use of Google Sheets (Drive) where all shifts and overtime are readily viewable and signup is done online. Minimum mandatory overtime hours are set for each Dispatcher per week for equity. Voluntary overtime signup is completed in stages in order to distribute overtime equitably between all Dispatchers. Trainees who have passed Call Taking, Fire Desk, or Records desk are able to assist and work overtime on select desks as needed. On May 25, 2022 City Council approved the hiring of Care Systems Inc. for an electronic staffing solution for the police department. The system integrates scheduling and provides timely and accurate information on overtime usage and an approval process. Recruitment and hiring for Public Safety Dispatchers (PSD) is now open and continuous. Overtime expenditure for the Communications Center from fiscal year 2019 through 2021 trended downward.</p>

<p>The Communications Center relies on significant overtime leading to inadequate training and an unhealthy work environment.</p>	<p>2.8</p>	<p>Develop and implement a Communications Center training plan to ensure compliance with POST training requirements. Evaluate training processes and update training plans routinely.</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>5/10/2022</p>	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u> Communications Center leadership, in partnership with Personnel and Training, now monitor training hour progress annually (tied to PARs) and quarterly with a goal of training hours being completed throughout the training cycle. At the third quarter of year one of the two year cycle, Communications Center personnel have surpassed training hours that were accomplished near the end of the last two year cycle. Plan implemented to approve a minimum of two Communications Center personnel to training each month, and complete at least two hours of online training as well. In an effort to also improve morale and overall health, focus has been placed completing training hours in classes that provide employee wellness and development.</p>
<p>Working conditions adversely affect dispatcher morale.</p>	<p>3.1</p>	<p>Create a comprehensive stress management program specifically for the Communications Center that includes the following: - Stress management training for all staff, 8 hours minimum during career - Access to on-site educational resources to help with stress and related risks, e.g., directory of local therapists specializing in treatment of stress and traumatic stress disorders and City programs that provide information on how and where to access help - Procedures assuring participation of staff in critical incidence stress management activities (e.g., debriefing sessions when involved in traumatic call events) - A Peer Support Program - Comprehensive, ongoing training on structured call-taking processes</p>	<p>Police</p>	<p>5/10/2022</p>	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u> Multiple courses and online learning materials related to Communications Center/dispatcher stress management have been identified. Communications Center personnel have begun attending this course (goal set of at least two Communications Center personnel attending a class per month) and the department will continue to provide these training opportunities. BPD as a whole continues to aggressively work on improving the overall wellness and improving stress management skills of personnel. All employees have access to a meditation app to support stress reduction, and have access to a fully-equipped gym in the building.</p>

Working conditions adversely affect dispatcher morale.	3.2	Develop and implement plans to address workplace cleanliness and equipment and furniture maintenance and replacement.	Police	5/10/2022	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u></p> <p>BPD has implemented a quarterly deep-cleaning schedule. After reviewing the current Hepa filters, it was determined that purchasing new individual filters for each console was not financially prudent, as we have already identified that the existing console must be replaced within the next year. BPD purchased and will install two wall mounted Hepa filters that can work in conjunction with existing (or replacement systems) and are relocatable once a new location /expansion is decided. Additionally, the carpet was replaced in the last 8 years with a low pile, sound reduction carpet that consisted of individual squares so that dirty/stained or otherwise worn areas or squares could be switched out. Replacement timeline for that product is being monitored. Further, the individual console chairs are regularly replaced and over the last several years we have worked with the COB Occupational Health and Safety Specialist to purchase chairs to conform to the specific ergonomic needs of individual dispatchers.</p>
Working conditions adversely affect dispatcher morale.	3.3	Conduct regular supervisor level meetings to share information about operations and staffing. Use these meetings to improve understanding of the supervisor role, identify problems, discuss changes that may affect operations, and establish communications plans for distributing information to all staff.	Police	5/10/2022	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u></p> <p>The Communications Manager and supervisor group now conduct formal weekly supervisor level meetings as well as informal group discussions regarding operational needs, project updates and current issues that need addressing. Information from these meetings is shared out to the entire Communications Center via email from the manager or Lieutenant.</p>
Working conditions adversely affect dispatcher morale.	3.4	Routinely have Police and Fire staff meet with all Center Supervisors to solicit feedback on Center operations and to address any issues. Use these meetings to improve understanding of the dispatcher role and current policies of public safety, identify problems that should be evaluated for further discussion, and discuss known and expected changes that may affect the Communications Center.	Police	5/10/2022	<p><u>Status: Implemented</u></p> <p>BFD attends the formal weekly meeting once a month, or more frequently as needed. BFD and BPD leadership conducted a topic specific meeting to discuss potential physical expansion needs, Emergency Medical Dispatching and the opening of the Communications Center Manager position due to retirement.</p>