



Strategic Plan Supplement
2024-2034

Introduction

The Adair County Emergency Communications Center (Center), as it exists today, was established in 2000 as a joint effort between the City of Kirksville, Adair County, Truman State University, Adair County Ambulance District, and the Adair County fire departments. This agreement consolidated multiple separate dispatching functions into a single unified 911 Public Safety Answering Point and expanded enhanced 911 services to all of Adair County.

This agreement identified the City of Kirksville as the operational and fiscal agent for the newly formed Kirksville/Adair County E911 Joint Services Board, capitalizing on the existing 911 equipment and infrastructure that had been operational within the City of Kirksville since 1973.

The Center was funded through a combination of user contributions from partner agencies and a fee for landline phone services in the county. As the number of cellular phones rose and the number of landlines declined, funding dropped significantly, causing an increase in the financial burden on partner agencies and a rise in call volume from the proliferation of cellular phones. This funding constraint limited technology improvement and equipment replacement in the Center. In 2019, legislative changes at the state level allowed for local implementation of cellular-based fees. Local voters approved a \$1.00 per month fee on any device enabled to call 911, creating an additional revenue stream to reduce the burden on partner agencies and support capital improvements. Significant grant funding in 2022 provided for the replacement of two major 911 systems, and the addition of a third dispatch position, positioning the Center as fully Next Generation 911 compliant. This transition will be completed in the 4th quarter of 2023. An additional grant initiative in 2023-2024 is expected to bring Adair County online with the regional Emergency Services Network, giving the community the most advanced 911 systems currently available, and positioning Adair County to provide contracted dispatching services to other counties in the region.

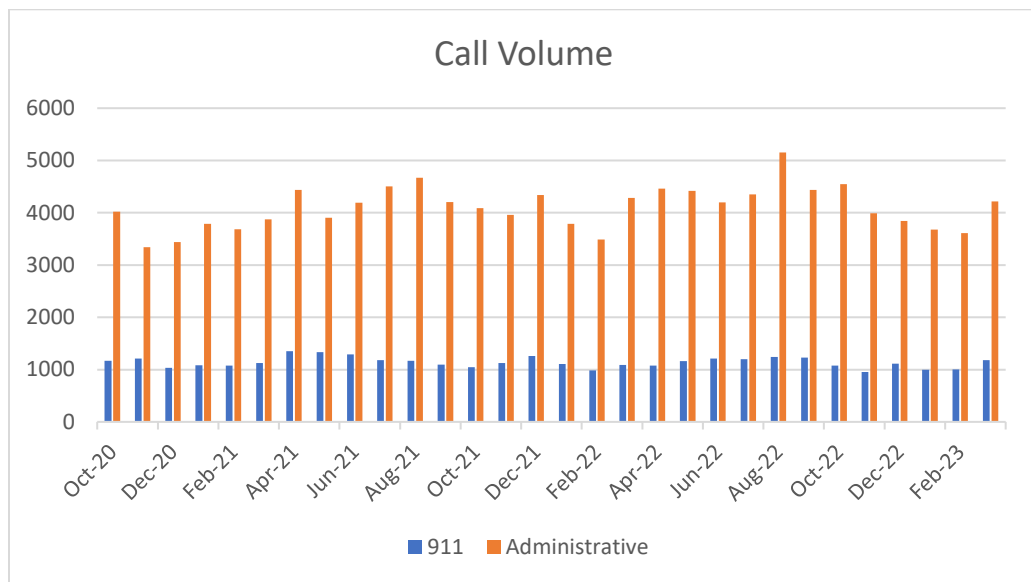
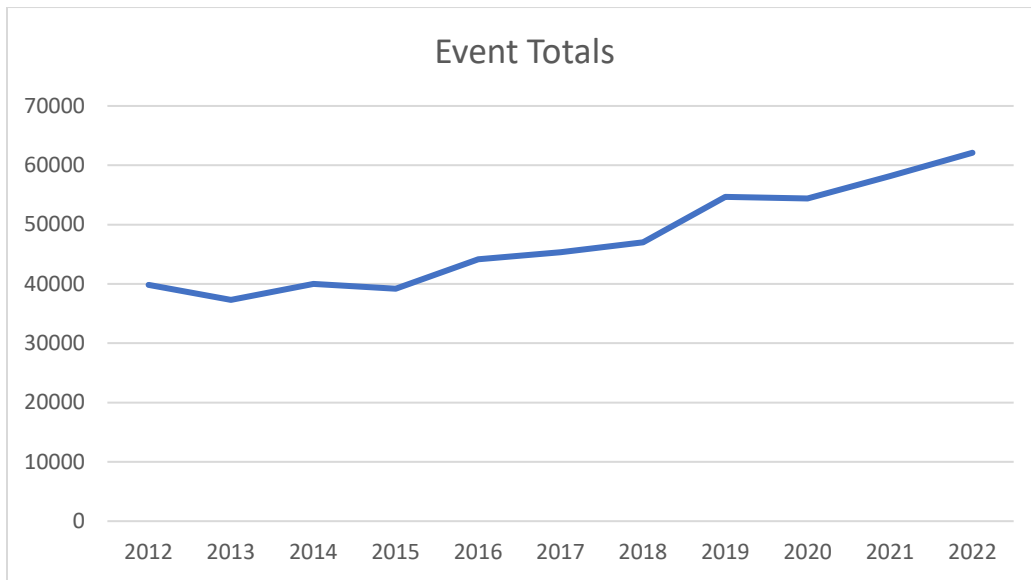
Services provided include:

- 911 call answering
- Administrative/non-emergency call answering, including customer agency after-hours call rollover
- Radio dispatching functions for the City of Kirksville Police and Fire Departments, Adair County Sheriff's Office, Adair County Ambulance District, Truman State University Police, and Adair County Fire Department.
- Customer agency staffing callback for emergencies
- Significant MULES work including license checks for patrol officers, warrant, sex offender, and user maintenance as well as criminal history checks
- Storm siren activation and other mass notification functions

- Master Street Address Guide maintenance
- Rural home addressing

In conjunction with the passage of the Wireless Device Fee in 2019, the E911 Joint Services Board developed a Strategic Plan for the Board, evaluating operations and setting goals in the following domains: Operational Design, Personnel, Facilities, Governance, Technology, Capital Equipment, and Financial. This document serves as a supplement to that Strategic Plan, providing additional detail and timelines, and intended to guide current and future dispatch center leadership to achieve the goals of the Joint Services Board.

Current Environment



Call Volume

The two major measures of 911 Center workload include customer agency events and phone call volume. Phone call volume has remained relatively consistent over the last decade, with the Center handling approximately 13,000 911 calls and 50,000 administrative or non-emergency phone calls annually.

While these phone call numbers have shown limited growth, customer agency event numbers have risen by 50% in the last decade, to over 60,000 events in 2022. These event numbers correspond to a significant increase in radio traffic and data entry work for Dispatchers.

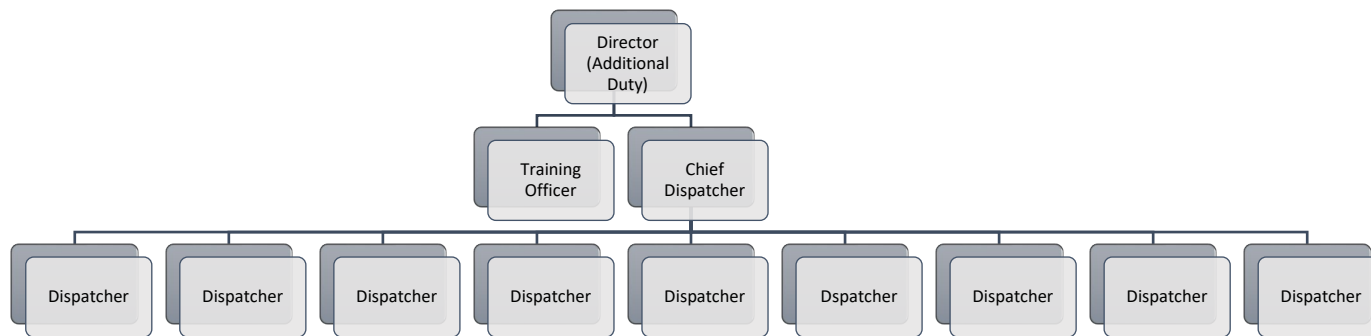
Operating the 911 system also includes significant systems maintenance work including Master Street Address Guide maintenance, CAD database maintenance, MULES and CAD user validation, and significant MULES administrative management and regulation compliance tracking.

Staffing

The current authorized strength is 10 full-time dispatchers, one Chief Dispatcher, and one Training Officer. The Fire Chief serves as 911 Director as an additional duty. The 911 Center is staffed with two dispatchers 24/7. This staffing is equal to, or falls below staffing of other regional 911 Centers, most of which handle significantly fewer calls. With significant turnover and staffing shortages, the Chief Dispatcher and Training Officer are forced to cover dispatching shifts, significantly limiting their effectiveness with additional duties including system database maintenance, quality assurance/quality improvement, and training.

While turnover and recruiting challenges are not unique to Adair County, and a problem seen nationwide, it has significantly impacted Dispatcher wellness and morale. Pre-employment testing was implemented in 2022 to better screen applicants, and significant time and effort have been invested to develop and refine a consistent introductory training and onboarding process.

Current Organizational Structure. Chief Dispatcher and Training Officer fill any long-term vacancies.



Facilities

The 911 center operates in space in the basement of Kirksville City Hall. The current space accommodates two dispatch consoles, with no additional room for expansion. With only two positions, training of new personnel is difficult, limiting operational capacity while new dispatchers are introduced to the job. The proximity of the two positions creates significant communication challenges due to background noise and radio interference in the Center. 911 system “back room” equipment is also located in the basement, collocated with all other City phone/computer infrastructure. Access to maintenance is difficult.

The grant-funded equipment replacement in 2023 will coincide with a modest remodel of a space adjacent to the existing Center, and provide for an additional dispatch position and a better working environment for Center personnel. This additional position will also allow for improved training, with a fully equipped position for trainees to utilize while being monitored by the Training Officer or Field Training Officer, without decreasing the capacity of the Center.

Equipment

The 2022-2023 grant (installation in progress at the time of this plan) will bring the Center fully into Next-Generation 911 compliance with local equipment. The grant replaces obsolete phone and radio systems, bringing significant improvements in call delivery, handling, and radio communications, as well as consolidating phone, radio console, and radio infrastructure maintenance to a single vendor to streamline troubleshooting and maintenance. The remaining systems meet Next Generation requirements, and have been included in a capital improvement plan for life cycle replacement.

Goals

Goal 1 – Increase retention, improve recruiting, and ensure quality employee career development.

- Provide improved training through updated facilities and procedures
- Ensure competitive compensation
- Decrease introductory training time and job difficulty by maximizing use of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system features
- Evaluate incorporation of 911 job training as part of the developing Public Safety Training Center under development with the Police and Fire Departments

Goal 2 – Capitalize on the momentum from the 2022/2023 grant funding and maintain a state-of-the-art 911 Center and infrastructure.

- Fully implement equipment received in the 2022 grant
- Capitalize on the expanded Center
- Utilize the 2021 Capital Replacement Plan to keep dispatch systems current
- Seek opportunities to consolidate systems under fewer vendors
- Evaluate alternative mapping/GIS maintenance options

Goal 3 – Pursue consolidation/contracting opportunities to increase funding and staffing

- Apply for grant funding in 2023 to join the Missouri Region B ESINET to streamline regionalization efforts
- Stabilize staffing
- Ensure introductory and recurrent training meets State and National standards

Goal 4 – Maximize the quality of dispatch services

- Fully implement a Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement program for all call types
- Maximize the use of improved data reporting features of new dispatch systems to guide training and decision-making
- Maximize the use of dispatch automation/assist features in all dispatch systems

Future Vision

Call Volume

We expect call volume to continue to grow, albeit at a slower pace, as the demographics of our community change. Expansion of services and agency-initiated events by customer agencies continue to increase the Center's workload, even in the absence of significant increases in emergency and administrative calls to the Center.

Staffing

Staffing remains the biggest challenge to the Center. It is a chronic issue in 911 Centers state and nationwide, and is expected to be the biggest driver in consolidation in the region. Small centers are struggling to remain staffed in the current job market, and have limited reserve capacity to absorb losses without causing hardship to remaining personnel.

Historic staffing levels provided limited capacity to manage short- or long-term personnel losses. Any vacancy created over time, and long-term vacancies quickly lead to burnout and loss of administrative effectiveness as Center leadership shifts to operational shift coverage instead of system maintenance, training, and personnel management. An additional full-time position was authorized for 2023 that will assist with managing those vacancies, however, the center has been unable to recruit personnel for two vacant

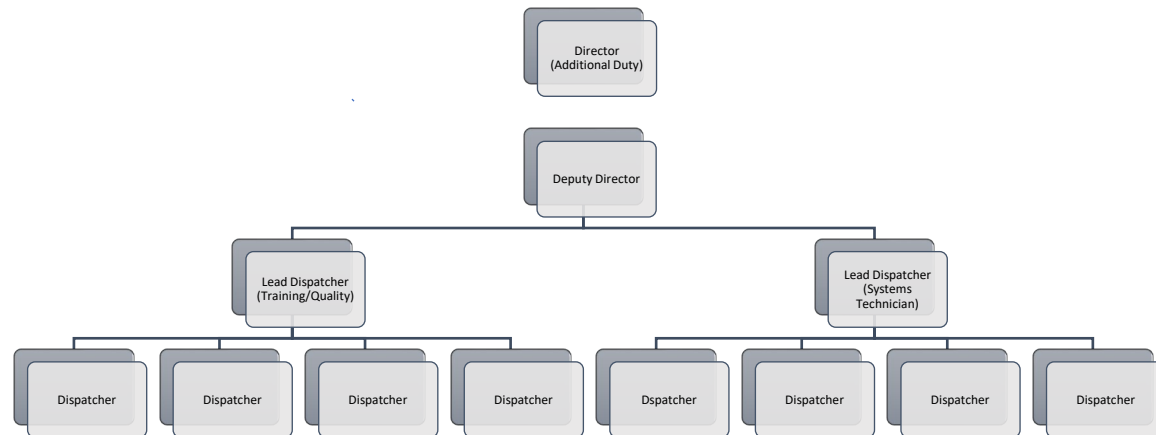
positions to date in 2023.

Center *authorized* daily staffing levels are frequently inadequate during the hours of 1200-0000 daily, and cause delays or inconsistencies in emergency dispatching. Any significant increase in call volume, consolidation, or contracted dispatching services will require additional operational staffing.

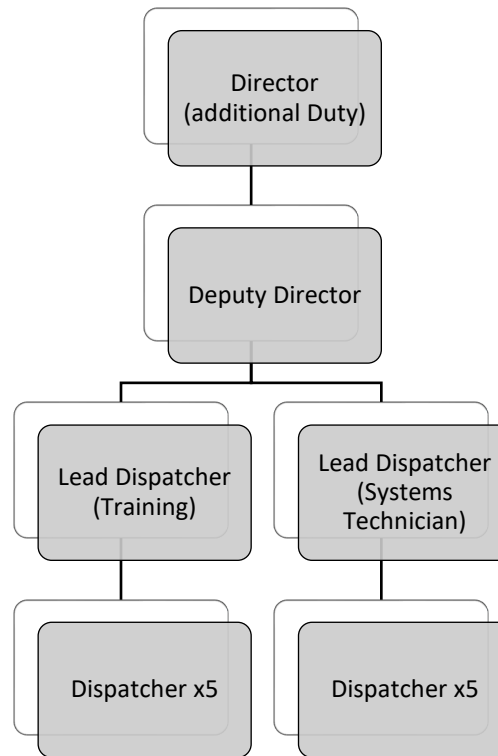
The Center has suffered from a lack of time and expertise to perform database maintenance on critical dispatch systems, making the job of 911 dispatching even more difficult. Once operational staffing is stabilized, the focus must shift to the future and evaluate the proper management structure to best support the 911 function.

Statutory changes in 2023 classify 911 Dispatchers as first responders and provide additional benefits including a lowering of the retirement age, access to public safety death benefits, and access to a critical illness funding pool for traumatic post-traumatic stress disorder. Evaluation of these options for improved Dispatcher morale, recruitment, and retention is advised.

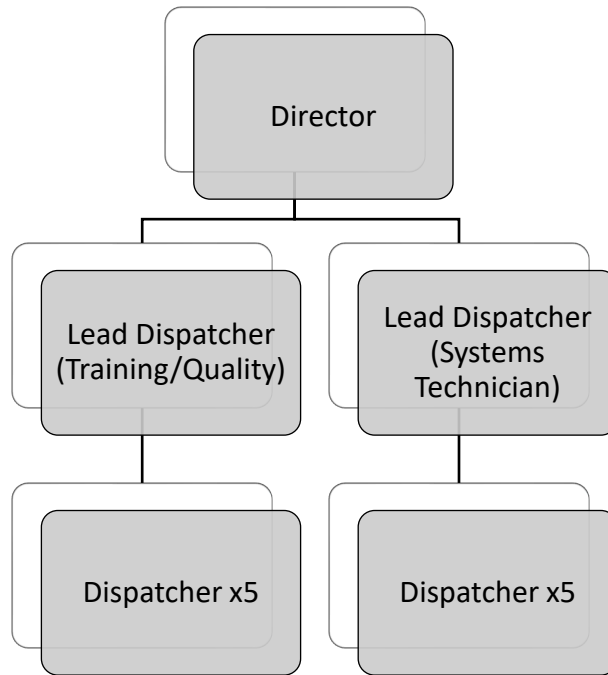
Proposed 2024. No additional positions, just some reclassifications. This would fully capitalize on the additional dispatcher added this year, assuming we can get all the positions filled. The Deputy Director and Lead Dispatchers provide backfill for PTO vacancies, but otherwise, work staggered schedules to provide additional coverage during typical higher volume times, and serve as shift supervisors. It has become clear that additional time needs to be spent on database integrity, updates, and maintenance. With MSAG, mapping, CAD, etc., they all require significant administrative time for them to operate at their fullest potential, and to date, they have not operated anywhere close to their potential.



Proposed 2025. This adds two additional dispatchers, allowing three personnel 16+ hours a day. Our current call volume warrants additional daily staffing during typical busy days/times, and adding these two additional would allow us to provide contracted dispatching services to adjoining counties. System replacements and expansion in 2023, combined with ESINET completion in 2024-2025 will allow this, provided we have the personnel. This staffing model could accommodate one to two Schuylar County-sized operations in addition to our own.



Proposed 2028. This assumes the planned departure of the current (additional duty) Director. Deputy Director is replaced with a full director, but this person would still need to be “Dispatch Qualified”. No additional staffing changes would be necessary. Aligning Emergency Management with Dispatch is a viable and common option as well, provided the right candidate can be found.



Facilities

The 2023 renovation/expansion will accommodate short-term/midterm needs well, provided no other opportunities for growth present themselves.

Serious consideration needs to be given to preparing purpose-built space for dispatch in conjunction with expansion/additions to other City buildings, i.e. relocate inside the new/old parts of City Hall if an addition is completed; relocate to a vacated PD building; relocate to Armory, etc. Adequate space for 4-5 consoles provides the facilities necessary for any foreseeable local growth and any likely expansion/contracting possibilities.

Equipment

Once systems are replaced in 2023, the next priority must be to join an ESINET. This makes all the Next-Generation 911 features function without any third-party services. This **WILL** be funded with grant funding if we choose to apply; it is a high priority for the Missouri 911 Service Board. This is captured in the Capital Plan for 2024 as “offsite backup”. Joining an ESINET provides for improved call routing, and call transferring, and allows for centers to back each other up without investing in lots of additional hardware. This also opens the door to providing dispatching services to adjoining counties.

Additional equipment needs are minimal. As technology changes, expect a lifespan of 10 years for major dispatch systems, but it *should* be longer with the next-generation architecture.

Conclusion

911 services are a critical, yet unsung emergency function with no viable operational backup. Significant effort has been expended over the last 5 years to update the Center and its equipment to current standards and lay the work groundwork for the next decade. It is critical that the focus shift to organizational structure and staffing to ensure the Center remains resilient and viable in the near to midterm.