The goal of this training program is to educate dispatchers on the opportunities and challenges presented during a career in public safety dispatching. Whether you are new to the job or a veteran of a dispatch center, this training will offer suggestions and tools to help reduce stress and create an environment that will encourage a full and rewarding dispatch career.

This facilitation guide is intended to assist in the delivery of the video material in an interactive and thought-provoking manner. It provides suggestions to help facilitate most sections of the video; however, it is not a comprehensive guide for every aspect of the video. The videos do not necessarily depict a correct or incorrect way to handle a situation. The goal is for the students to engage in discussion of the topic and how it relates to them and to their agency. The guide may be used by facilitators of all experience levels to help the students get the most out of the material.

This guide contains the following sections: 1) Video Viewing Options and Features, 2) a Brief Overview of the Scenarios with key learning points, 3) an Expanded Content Guide, and 4) a Student Study Guide Answer Key.

The Video Viewing Options and Features section describes how the video is formatted and organized for use by facilitators or individual trainees.

The Brief Overview of the Scenarios describes each scenario and lists the key learning points for each section. It can assist a facilitator in quickly getting up to speed with the material.

The Expanded Content Guide is designed for use in a traditional training session where more time is available to explore the subject in depth. The expanded guide contains the same information as the brief scenario overview, plus provides suggested questions to facilitate most sections of the video, sample learning activities for small groups, and additional learning points that are often found in the interview comments.

A Student Study Guide Answer Key, which is a completed version of the Student Study Guide, is included at the end of this document. To receive credit, individual students review their completed Student Study Guide with the designated training manager or supervisor.

The facilitator should view and become familiar with all the material and key learning points in this course before use with students. This video is intended as a guide for discussion. Scenarios do not necessarily depict correct responses, and may not include a response at all. The goal is to create a venue for discussion and student interaction. The conclusion of the discussion should focus on the law and your specific agency policies.

This video is designed to give the facilitator different viewing options. The video may be watched in its entirety in a single session or broken up into shorter segments. Each video segment is approximately 15 minutes long, making it ideal for facilitation in a briefing or roll call setting.
Video Viewing Options and Features

The video will open with two different viewing options: **Facilitated Group Course** or **Informational/Individual Viewing**.

**Facilitated Group Course**
The Facilitated Group Course option should be selected when the video is being used in a classroom or briefing setting and an instructor or supervisor is present to facilitate the course. The material may be delivered in a single session or broken up over several days, such as delivery during briefing settings. The material is divided into tabbed sections that the facilitator may play in whatever order they feel best meets the training need. Once the material has been covered in its entirety, the supervisor or training manager (as designated by the department) may submit a completed training roster via EDI to POST for CPT credit for trainees who have completed the training.

**Informational/Individual Viewing**
The Informational/Individual Viewing option should be selected when a dispatcher is viewing the video alone or without an instructor or supervisor present to facilitate the delivery of the material. This option should not be used in a group training session. This option is intended for dispatchers who work in a remote location or for a smaller agency that cannot readily access group training, or for a dispatcher who is simply interested in viewing the video for informational purposes. The viewer will be guided through the video without facilitator interaction.

At the discretion of the department designated training manager or supervisor, individual viewers may receive training credit for viewing this video. To receive credit, individual students must be provided with the student study guide that is attached as a PDF file on the DVD-ROM disc. The student watches the video and completes the study guide as they follow along. They then submit their completed study guide to the designated training manager or supervisor, who discusses the video and the student’s responses with them. Once the training manager or supervisor is satisfied that the student has demonstrated an understanding of the concepts of the video, the supervisor or training manager may submit a completed training roster via EDI to POST for CPT credit. A completed version of the student study guide (Student Study Guide Answer Key) is included at the end of this document.

**Navigating the Video**
On-screen tabs appear across the bottom of each section of the video and allow the facilitator to select in what order the students will view the information. If in doubt about which tab to select, the information will flow logically if the tabs are selected in order from left to right. Once a facilitator is familiar with the content, they may find it more comfortable to deliver the material in an order of their own choosing.

**Scenario Tabs**
Scenario tabs appear at the start of each section and indicate a video scenario that is used for that section.

**Task Tabs**
Task tabs appear after scenarios or discussion tabs and are simply on-screen questions or statements available to use for group discussion.

**Discussion Tabs**
Discussion tabs appear after each scenario. They show a sample facilitation of the scenario in a briefing setting. They are optional. If the facilitator feels comfortable delivering the key learning points of the material, they may do so on their own. If they are not comfortable with the learning points or their own facilitation skills, they may either view the sample facilitation in advance to help become familiar with the material, or show the sample facilitation to the class to help spur further discussion.

**Interview Tabs**
Interview tabs appear after task questions. These are interviews with the Subject Matter Experts who provide additional discussion on the material. This commentary contains more information than what is delivered in the scenarios.

**Menu Tab**
Selecting the menu tab at the bottom right of the screen will take the viewer from the specific section they are in and return them to the main menu of the video where all sections are listed.
Brief Overview of the Scenarios

Scenario 1
Uncontrollable Factors

This segment depicts a communications center where three on-duty dispatchers are discussing the challenges involved with having to be at work for the holidays. Their discussion focuses on the challenges and drawbacks to being at work while family members are enjoying the holiday at home. The discussion also highlights some ideas on how to overcome the challenges of having to be at work during holiday events and why it is important to understand those parts of the job over which you have no control.

Key learning points:

• While a career in dispatching will offer satisfaction and fulfillment, it may also come with a high price to pay with stress, decreased morale, and personal sacrifices
• Some factors that cause stress and lower morale within a dispatch center and over which dispatchers have no control:
  o Shift work
  o Working holidays
  o Dealing with difficult people
  o Limited variety of duties/assignments
  o Mandatory overtime
  o Not knowing the outcome of calls for service
  o Always dealing with people in crisis
  o Workload
• Dispatchers often suffer physiological responses to the stresses of a communications center
  o Adrenaline rush
  o Increased heart rate
  o Increased blood pressure
  o Shaky voice
  o Shaky hands
• There are ideas and tools dispatchers can implement and/or understand in order to help reduce some of this stress
  o Interpersonal relationship skills
  o Recognition of stress and the physiological response
  o Adjustments in home life
• Supervisors have a responsibility with regard to uncontrollable factors within a communications center
  o Interpersonal skills in acknowledging uncontrollable factors
  o An understanding of what can and cannot be “fixed”
  o Recognizing and approaching employees exhibiting signs of stress and/or lowered morale
  o Remember, everyone handles stress differently
• Lack of professional advancement (in some agencies)
• Dispatchers do not have control over the actions of the victim nor suspect on the telephone
Scenario 2
Controllable Factors

This segment depicts a dispatcher arriving for her work shift and, while walking toward the communications center, she seems disheveled and is complaining to a co-worker about the last week and how today will probably be the same “mess.” While on duty at the console, the dispatcher makes comments to a caller that may be inappropriate. The dispatcher is then seen working a critical incident in a manner that left much room for improvement.

Key learning points:

- Emotional reactions to stressors can most often be controlled: this is emotional intelligence.
- Work pace can most often be controlled
  - Everyone has limits to what they can handle at a given moment
  - When possible, deal with one emergency at a time
- Awareness of personal habits (your body) and their effect on stress in the workplace
  - Getting sufficient rest
  - Nutrition plays an important role in stress reduction
  - Hydration is equally important
  - The chair and console ergonomics are critical to relieving stress and preventing repetitive strain
  - Your body language sends a message to your peers, to you, and may also influence the way you talk to callers
- Your internal communication enhances your ability to control your work environment
  - Make sure your self speak is positive
  - Avoid negative thoughts relating to what you could have done differently during critical incidents
    - “If I had not dispatched that officer, he would not have been killed”
    - “What could I have said differently to that caller to have kept them safe?”
  - Avoid replaying the incident in your head after you’ve left work (the tape keeps playing)
  - Avoid thoughts that everyone else seems to be able to handle the stress, it must “just be me”

Scenario 3
Communication

In this scenario, a conversation between two dispatchers takes place where one has some difficulties at home with an aging parent who may have some challenging medical issues. The other dispatcher encourages the dispatcher with the aging parent to approach the communications supervisor to let her know of the situation. After some initial hesitation, the dispatcher contacts the communications supervisor via email. The scenario closes with a discussion between the communications supervisor and the dispatcher regarding options and assistance that might be available.

Key learning points:

- Communicate clearly
  - Dispatchers must be encouraged to know when to ask for help and then to actually ask
  - It is especially important to ask for help when you are falling behind
  - It is important to know when and how to say “no” to additional duties or workload
  - Suggest debriefings of critical incidents if none have been planned or offered
  - Communicate your needs, both personally and professionally
    - Know when to ask for down time both at work and at home
    - Defuse situations
    - Recognize that personal issues can impact your stress levels and productivity at work
- Identify positive support systems at work and maintain a healthy dialogue with those support systems
- Know when you need to seek help from health care providers and then follow through by making contact with them
- Be prepared by knowing what resources and options are available for you
- Surround yourself with positive people
- Present yourself professionally
  - With peers
  - With supervisors
  - With officers and other stakeholders of your dispatch center
  - Most importantly, with citizens who are calling for assistance
- Adaptive distancing: don’t allow yourself to become emotionally invested in a negative environment
• Practice “letting it go”
  o Time management in your personal life
  o Time management in your professional life
  o Avoid drama and gossip
  o Seek closure of critical incidents; i.e., did the caller survive, is the officer okay?

**Scenario 4**

**Taking Care of Our Own**

This segment depicts a conversation in a break room between two dispatchers. The senior dispatcher comments that the other dispatcher did a good job handling a critical incident. This dispatcher replies that she is not sure she can continue with this job as the stress is getting to her. The conversation continues with advice from the senior dispatcher regarding steps the younger dispatcher can take to reduce the stress and maintain a healthy and prolonged career.

**Key learning points:**

• Dispatchers should expect and embrace changes
  o Practice good habits to ensure positive outcomes
  o Practice good lifestyle choices to reduce stress
    • Stay hydrated - water intake
    • Diet - healthy choices
    • Exercise - consistently and appropriately
    • Rest - to include breaks and downtime
• Give yourself permission to care for yourself and recognize that taking care of yourself is essential
• Journaling can be a very positive step in taking care of yourself
• Be prepared for and have a process for dealing with the aftermath of difficult calls-for-service
• Identify and seek out positive support systems
• Ask to attend debriefings of critical incidents (when appropriate)
• Self-reflection: what type of person were you when you first got the job? And now?
• Mindfulness
  o Observe those around you
  o Just because their actions and responses are different does not mean theirs (or yours) are wrong
  o Learn from others
• Honor the profession
• If it were your family member calling in, whom would you want handling that call?
• Check in on fellow dispatchers
  o After a challenging call for service
  o When you recognize a problem or issue
  o Don’t avoid them
  o Don’t simply dismiss their perceived problems
• Consider deflection or defense mechanisms
  o Strongly avoid the “what if?” or “if only” self-talk
    • “If only I hadn’t dispatched that officer to the call”
    • “What if I had asked that question a different way or not asked it at all?”
  o Change clothing once you arrive home. The clothes absorbed the stress of the difficult and challenging calls
  o Avoid “filling in the blanks” of missing parts of the story: the blood at the scene, the final outcome, etc
  o Consider seeking professional assistance
• Set boundaries to reduce stress
• There will be intense emotions
  o Develop strategies to manage these emotions
  o Consider seeking help to manage the emotions
  o Develop strategies for decompressing in order to avoid burnout
• Self-reflection about the job: it may not be for you
• Remember that you are part of a team; others can help
• You don’t always have control over your stressors, but you can improve your control over your reactions
• If we can treat our coworkers disrespectfully, it becomes easy to treat the callers disrespectfully
Scenario 5
Management and Supervision

This segment begins with two communications center supervisors discussing a new policy. Next, we see one of these supervisors walking through the communications center, approaching a group of several dispatchers who are heard to be vocalizing their disdain for this new policy. The supervisor discusses the policy with the dispatchers and provides some additional clarification and solicits ideas from the group on ways to more effectively implement the new policy.

Key learning points:

- From a supervisor’s perspective, recognize the symptoms of stress in dispatchers
- Dispatchers have difficulty asking for help
  - Dispatchers do not want to risk looking like they are insubordinate
  - Fear of turning down a task is perceived as a sign of weakness
  - Risk of not having another opportunity to take on more tasks
  - Fear of not getting promoted
- Do not perpetuate bad habits
- Encourage and sometimes require life balance issues (i.e. mandatory breaks)
- Try to identify behavioral changes and intervene before they become issues
- Model what you expect: good behavior
  - Emulate, follow, enforce agency mission and values
  - As a supervisor, don’t see just what you want to see, look deeper
  - Empowering and providing options
  - Praise in public, counsel in private
  - Look for opportunities to offer compliments
  - Clear communication, top to bottom, bottom to top
- Recognize the potential impact you have on your dispatchers
- Take corrective action when you see the need
- Encourage professional development beyond CPT for self and staff
  - Schedule sit-alongs and ride-alongs for staff
  - Schedule a sit-along exchange with neighboring dispatch centers to improve working relationships
  - Attend professional integrated training
  - Provide timely, fair and accurate employee appraisals
  - Learn how to give and implement evaluations and pre-evaluation worksheets
- Incorporate outside skills into the work environment
- Share information you receive, keep your people informed
Expanded Content Guide

Scenario 1
Uncontrollable Factors

This segment depicts a communications center where three on-duty dispatchers are discussing the challenges involved with having to be at work for the holidays. Their discussion focuses on the challenges and drawbacks to being at work while family members are enjoying the holiday at home. The discussion also highlights some ideas on how to overcome the challenges of having to be at work during holiday events and why it is important to understand those parts of the job over which you have no control.

Key learning points:

• While a career in dispatching will offer satisfaction and fulfillment, it may also come with a high price to pay with stress, decreased morale and personal sacrifices
• Some factors that cause stress and lower morale within a dispatch center and over which dispatchers have no control:
  o Shift work
  o Working holidays
  o Dealing with difficult people
  o Limited variety of duties/assignments
  o Mandatory overtime
  o Not knowing the outcome of calls for service
  o Always dealing with people in crisis
  o Workload
• Dispatchers often suffer physiological responses to the stresses of a communications center
  o Adrenaline rush
  o Increased heart rate
  o Increased blood pressure
  o Shaky voice
  o Shaky hands
• There are ideas and tools dispatchers can implement and/or understand in order to help reduce some of this stress
  o Interpersonal relationship skills
  o Recognition of stress and the physiological response
  o Adjustments in home life
• Supervisors have a responsibility with regard to uncontrollable factors within a communications center
  o Interpersonal skills in acknowledging uncontrollable factors
  o An understanding of what can and cannot be “fixed”
  o Recognizing and approaching employees exhibiting signs of stress and/or lowered morale
  o Remember, everyone handles stress differently
• Lack of professional advancement (in some agencies)
• Dispatchers do not have control over the actions of the victim nor suspect on the telephone

Suggested facilitation questions and common responses:

What are some of the uncontrollable factors within our communications center that may cause morale problems or stress for our employees?

• Shift work
• Working holidays
• Dealing with difficult people
• Limited variety of duties/assignments
• Mandatory overtime
• Not knowing the outcome of calls for service
• Always dealing with people in crisis
• Workload
• There are many others that can be mentioned
What are some physiological responses that take place as a result of the stresses within a communications center?

- Adrenaline rush
- Increased heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- Shaky voice
- Shaky hands

**Scenario 2**

**Controllable Factors**

This segment depicts a dispatcher arriving for her work shift and, while walking toward the communications center, she seems disheveled and is complaining to a co-worker about the last week and how today will probably be the same “mess.” While on duty at the console, the dispatcher makes comments to a caller that may be inappropriate. The dispatcher is then seen working a critical incident in a manner that left much room for improvement.

Key learning points:

- Emotional reactions to stressors can most often be controlled: this is emotional intelligence.
- Work pace can most often be controlled
  - Everyone has limits to what they can handle at a given moment
  - When possible deal with one emergency at a time
- Awareness of personal habits (your body) and their effect on stress in the workplace
  - Getting sufficient rest
  - Nutrition plays an important role in stress reduction
  - Hydration is equally important
  - The chair and console ergonomics are critical to relieving stress and preventing repetitive strain
  - Your body language sends a message to your peers, to you, and may even influence the way you talk to callers
- Your internal communication enhances your ability to control your work environment
  - Make sure your self-speak is positive
  - Avoid negative thoughts relating to what you could have done differently during critical incidents
    - “If I had not dispatched that officer, he would not have been killed”
    - “What could I have said differently to that caller to have kept them safe?”
  - Avoid replaying the incident in your head after you’ve left work (the tape keeps playing)
  - Avoid thoughts that everyone else seems to be able to handle the stress, it must “just be me”

Additional learning points:

- Intellectually prepare for the shift
  - Know your department’s policies and procedures
  - Know what resources are available for assistance and/or know where to find what resources are available
  - Practice hypothetical scenarios – “what if?”
  - Maintain your continuing professional training to current requirements
  - Be familiar with current industry updates and best practices

Suggested facilitation questions and common responses:

What are some ways we can maintain a positive attitude through the use of self-reflection or internal communication?

- Make sure your self-speak is positive
- Avoid negative thoughts relating to what you could have done differently during critical incidents
  - “If I had not dispatched that officer, he would not have been killed”
  - “What could I have said differently to that caller to have kept them safe?”

Dispatch centers may sometimes become extremely busy with multiple calls and many police events going on at a given time. What are some things dispatchers can do to avoid being caught up in the stressors of a busy communications center?

- Remember that everyone has limits to what they are physically capable of doing.
- You cannot answer more than one phone at a time
- You should only deal with one emergency at a time
List some personal habits or personal choices that may affect how our bodies deal with stress.

- Ensure that we get enough sleep
- What we eat, our nutrition, plays an important role in stress reduction
- We should ensure adequate water intake to stay hydrated
- Communications centers should have chairs and consoles that allow proper ergonomic adjustments for individual dispatchers

**Scenario 3
Communication**

In this scenario, a conversation between two dispatchers takes place where one has some difficulties at home with an aging parent who may have some challenging medical issues. The other dispatcher encourages the dispatcher with the aging parent to approach the communications supervisor to let her know of the situation. After some initial hesitation, the dispatcher contacts the communications supervisor via email. The scenario closes with a discussion between the communications supervisor and the dispatcher regarding options and assistance that might be available.

Key learning points:

- Communicate clearly
  - Dispatchers must be encouraged to know when to ask for help and then to actually ask
  - It is especially important to ask for help when you are falling behind
  - It is important to know when and how to say “no” to additional duties or workload
  - Suggest debriefings of critical incidents if none have been planned or offered
  - Communicate your needs, both personally and professionally
    - Know when to ask for down time both at work and at home
    - Defuse situations
    - Recognize that personal issues can impact your stress levels and productivity at work
- Identify positive support systems at work and maintain a healthy dialogue with those support systems
- Know when you need to seek help from health care providers and then follow through by making contact with them
- Be prepared by knowing what resources and options are available for you
- Surround yourself with positive people
- Present yourself professionally
  - With peers
  - With supervisors
  - With officers and other stakeholders of your dispatch center
  - Most importantly, with citizens who are calling for assistance
- Adaptive distancing: don’t allow yourself to become emotionally invested in a negative environment
- Practice “letting it go”
  - Time management in your personal life
  - Time management in your professional life
  - Avoid drama and gossip
  - Seek closure of critical incidents; i.e., did the caller survive, is the officer okay?

Suggested facilitation questions and common responses:

What are some of the ways dispatchers can practice positive communications?

- Dispatchers must be encouraged to know when to ask for help and then to actually ask
- It is especially important to ask for help when you are falling behind
- It is important to know when and how to say “no”
- Suggest debriefings of critical incidents if none have been planned nor offered
- Communicate your needs, both personally and professionally
  - Know when to ask for downtime both at work and at home
  - Defuse situations
What are some ways dispatchers can practice, or emphasize, “letting it go?”

• Time management in your personal life
• Time management in your professional life
• Avoid drama and gossip
• Seek closure of critical incidents; i.e., did the caller survive, is the officer okay?

Suggested learning activity:

Divide the class into small groups of three to six per group. The following scenarios may be used for three groups and can be slightly altered and then assigned to larger classes with additional groups. Ask one group to come up with a comprehensive list of those resources and options that are available within your agency’s area that may be helpful in reducing stress and/or improving communication within the workplace. Another group can be assigned to create a list of ways that dispatchers can better learn to “let it go” in the aftermath of a critical incident. Assign another group the task of defining “clear communication” in the dispatch center, to include a list of methods for implementing clear communication within your communications center.

Scenario 4
Taking Care of Our Own

This segment depicts a conversation in a break room between two dispatchers. The senior dispatcher comments that the other dispatcher did a good job handling a critical incident. This dispatcher replies that she is not sure she can continue with this job as the stress is getting to her. The conversation continues with advice from the senior dispatcher regarding steps the younger dispatcher may take in order to reduce the stress and maintain a healthy and prolonged career.

Key learning points:

• Dispatchers should expect and embrace changes
  o Practice good habits to ensure positive outcomes
  o Practice good lifestyle choices to reduce stress
    ▪ Stay hydrated - water intake
    ▪ Diet - healthy choices
    ▪ Exercise - consistently and appropriately
    ▪ Rest - to include breaks and downtime
• Give yourself permission to care for yourself and recognize that taking care of yourself is essential
• Journaling can be a very positive step in taking care of yourself
• Be prepared for and have a process for dealing with the aftermath of difficult calls-for-service
• Identify and seek out positive support systems
• Ask to attend debriefings of critical incidents (when appropriate)
• Self-reflection: what type of person were you when you first got the job? And now?
• Mindfulness
  o Observe those around you
  o Just because their actions and responses are different does not mean theirs (or yours) are wrong
  o Learn from others
• Honor the profession
• If it were your family member calling in, whom would you want handling that call?
• Check in on fellow dispatchers
  o After a challenging call for service
  o When you recognize a problem or issue
  o Don’t avoid them
  o Don’t simply dismiss their perceived problems
• Consider deflection or defense mechanisms
  o Strongly avoid the “what if?” or “if only” self-talk
    ▪ “If only I hadn’t dispatched that officer to the call”
    ▪ “What if I had asked that question a different way or not asked it at all?”
  o Change clothing once you arrive home. The clothes absorbed the stress of the difficult and challenging calls
  o Avoid “filling in the blanks” of missing parts of the story: the blood at the scene, the final outcome, etc
  o Consider seeking professional assistance
• Set boundaries to reduce stress
• There will be intense emotions
  o Develop strategies to manage these emotions
  o Consider seeking help to manage the emotions
  o Develop strategies for decompressing in order to avoid burnout
• Self-reflection about the job: it may not be for you
• Remember that you are part of a team; others can help
• You don’t always have control over your stressors, but you can improve your control over your reactions
• If we can treat our coworkers disrespectfully, it becomes easy to treat the callers disrespectfully

Additional learning points:
• Make sure you know what options and resources are available to you (check with your agency supervisors to see what is available in your department):
  o Talk to your personal support system
  o Talk to your peers - peer support program
  o Chaplaincy program
  o Your supervisor
  o EAP (Employee Assistance Program) - know what your agency has or ask your supervisor (EAP is confidential)
  o APCO (Association of Public Communications Officers) – professional resource
  o NENA (National Emergency Number Association)
  o NAED (National Academy of Emergency Dispatch)
  o 911 Wellness Foundation
  o 911 Lifeline
  o First Responders Support System
  o Critical Incident Stress Management Team
  o California Peer Support Association
  o Your department psychologist, or outside psychologist who understands the agency stress
  o Professional help through your health care provider
• There can be four steps to healing and resolving stress
  o Acknowledge
    • Your stress is natural
    • You’re a normal person having a normal reaction
  o Express
    • Triage the stress
    • What’s hitting you the hardest right now?
    • Identify and prioritize
  o Act
    • What do you need right now?
    • A good meal?
    • Rest?
  o Celebrate
    • Once we have dealt with the stress
    • Can go back to celebrating the good things in your life

Suggested facilitation questions and common responses:

What are some of the things dispatchers in your communications center can work harder at in order to reduce long-term stress associated with this career?
• Practice good habits to ensure positive outcomes
• Practice good lifestyle choices to reduce stress
• Give yourself permission to care for yourself and recognize that taking care of yourself is essential
• Journaling can be a very positive step in taking care of yourself
• Be prepared for-- and have a process for-- dealing with the aftermath of difficult calls for service
• Seek out and identify positive support systems
• Mindfulness
• Set boundaries to reduce stress
• Consider seeking professional assistance
Provide the names and descriptions of some of the options and resources that are available for our dispatchers.

- A personal support system
- Peer-to-peer support program
- Chaplaincy program
- Supervisors
- EAP (Employee Assistance Program)
- APCO (Association of Public Communications Officers) – professional resource
- NENA (National Emergency Number Association)
- NAED (National Academy of Emergency Dispatch)
- 911 Wellness Foundation
- 911 Lifeline
- First Responders Support System
- Critical Incident Stress Management Team
- California Peer Support Association
- Department psychologist
- Health care provider

On a peer-to-peer level, should we as dispatchers check in on our fellow dispatchers? Please elaborate on your answer as to why or why not.

- After a challenging call for service, for reassurance and empathy
- When you recognize a problem or issue
- Don’t avoid them
- Don’t simply dismiss their perceived problems

Scenario 5
Management and Supervision

This segment begins with two communications center supervisors discussing a new policy. Next, we see one of these supervisors walking through the communications center, approaching a group of several dispatchers who are heard to be vocalizing their disdain for this new policy. The supervisor discusses the policy with the dispatchers and provides some additional clarification and solicits ideas from the group on ways to more effectively implement the new policy.

Key learning points:

- From a supervisor’s perspective, recognize the symptoms of stress in dispatchers
- Dispatchers often have difficulty asking for help
  - Dispatchers do not want to risk looking like they are insubordinate
  - Fear of turning down a task is perceived as a sign of weakness
  - Risks of not having another opportunity to take on more tasks
  - Fear of not getting promoted
- Do not perpetuate bad habits
- Encourage and sometimes require life balance issues (i.e. mandatory breaks)
- Try to identify behavioral changes and intervene before they become issues
- Model what you expect: good behavior
  - Emulate, follow, enforce agency mission and values
  - As a supervisor, don't see just what you want to see, look deeper
  - Empowering and providing options
  - Praise in public, counsel in private
  - Look for opportunities to offer compliments
  - Clear communication, top to bottom, bottom to top
- Recognize the potential impact you have on your dispatchers
- Take corrective action when you see the need
Dispatchers: Career Resiliency

- Encourage professional development beyond CPT for self and staff
  - Schedule sit-alongs and ride-alongs for staff
  - Schedule a sit-along exchange with neighboring dispatch centers to improve working relationships
  - Attend professional integrated training
  - Provide timely, fair and accurate employee appraisals
  - Learn how to give and implement evaluations and pre-evaluation worksheets
- Incorporate outside skills into the work environment
- Share information you receive, keep your people informed

Additional learning points:
- Encouraging the support of partnering agencies
- Be prepared by knowing what options/resources you have available for your dispatchers
- Be invested, be involved
- Try to create opportunities for interaction with other agency personnel; i.e., cookouts, parties, fundraisers, etc.
- Part of a supervisor’s responsibility is to understand new policy and be able to articulate the need or importance for it, even when not in full agreement of the policy
- Line dispatchers (and in fact, supervisors) may not always know the reasons or need behind policy, but once enacted, they must endorse it to their subordinates
- Supervisors should encourage their subordinates to bring problems and issues to the attention of the supervisor and then be prepared to, at a minimum, have a dialogue about the issue or problem

Suggested facilitation questions and common responses:

**How can dispatch supervisors encourage professional development within their dispatch cadre?**
- Schedule sit-alongs and ride-alongs for staff
- Schedule a sit-along exchange with neighboring dispatch centers to improve working relationships
- Attend professional integrated training
- Provide timely, fair and accurate evaluations
- Learn how to give and implement fair and accurate evaluations and pre-evaluation worksheets

**Why are dispatchers often reluctant to ask for help and/or decline added duties?**
- Dispatchers do not want to risk looking like they are insubordinate
- Fear of turning down a task as a sign of weakness
- Risks of not having another opportunity to take on more tasks
- Fear of not getting promoted

**What are some effective examples of supervisors modeling good behaviors?**
- Emulate, follow, enforce agency mission and values
- As a supervisor, don't see just what you want to see, look deeper
- Empowering and providing options
- Praise in public, counsel in private
- Look for opportunities to offer compliments
- Clear communication, top to bottom, bottom to top

Suggested learning activity:

Divide the room into small groups of three to six. The following scenarios can be used for up to three groups and can be slightly altered for different outcomes and then assigned to classes with more than three groups. After viewing the scenario, ask one group to list examples of positive modeling behaviors exhibited by the supervisors in the scenario. After viewing the scenario, ask another group to list those actions by the supervisor that could have been improved. After viewing the scenario, have one group list examples in the scenario of stress or frustration exhibited by line level dispatchers.
Conclusion

This facilitation guide provides information needed to assist the instructor in delivering an interactive and goal-oriented training session. After completing this course, students should have general background insight and ideas for improving the career longevity within California’s dispatch centers. Students should be better able to recognize challenges within communications centers and be more confident in transforming those challenges into opportunities for growth.
Student Study Guide – Answer Key

A blank copy of the Student Study Guide is attached as a separate document for individual viewers wishing to work with the agency designated trainer or supervisor for POST CPT credit. This is not a formal testing tool. Although sample answers are listed below, there are sometimes additional correct answers with which a student may respond. Those answers should be evaluated by the trainer. The following answers match the video content and are listed for general guidance.

“Self-speak,” the comments dispatchers make to themselves, is of little importance to how dispatchers view the world and how they project themselves to others around them.

Answer: **False**

There are many uncontrollable factors that are “just part of the job and can’t be changed” for dispatchers. These include all of the following, EXCEPT: **B**

A. Overtime
B. **Diet and exercise**
C. Limited breaks
D. Working holidays
E. Shift work

Most new hires in a communications center are fully aware and prepared for shift work, including having to work holidays, and do so willingly and without complaint.

Answer: **False**

Stress is almost entirely (approximately 80%) a result of the individual’s perception and only minimally (approximately 20%) the outer event.

Answer: **True**

While there are some uncontrollable factors in a communications center, all of the following ARE factors over which we have control, EXCEPT: **D**

A. Your attitude
B. Food and drink options
C. How you answer the phone
D. **Your shift assignment**
Should dispatchers accept any responsibility for their own satisfaction with the job or is employee morale and happiness solely the responsibility of the communications center management?  

A. Responsibility of the management  
B. **Dispatchers should accept some responsibility**  

What are some examples of techniques dispatchers can employ during stressful incidents that can help to alleviate some of the stress?  

A. Feel your feet on the floor  
B. Wiggle your fingers and toes to get blood flowing  
C. Be aware of your body, who you are  
D. **All of the above**  
E. A and C only  
F. B and C only  

When supervisors take the time to talk to their team members one-on-one on a regular basis, it can be effective for all of the following reasons, EXCEPT:  

A. It increases the supervisor’s awareness of potential problems  
B. **It encourages employees to report other employee misconduct in a more informal way** (If used in this manner it would DISCOURAGE employees to talk to the supervisor)  
C. Reduces the stress for when a supervisor needs to talk to an employee regarding a possible incident  
D. It helps to keep the employee on track professionally  
E. The employees get the sense that the supervisor cares about them personally and professionally  

In most communications centers, dispatchers often receive praise from both their supervisors and citizens. As such, most dispatchers are comfortable being praised and receive it comfortably.  

Answer: **False** (Most say they don’t want praise because they don’t know how to accept it and don’t want to show that as a weakness and/or they feel they are just doing their job)  

In the scenario where the dispatcher was caring for an elderly family member who had some potential dementia challenges, in what way did the supervisor intervene?  

A. The supervisor noticed the dispatcher’s work quality had diminished and, after discussion with another supervisor, decided to step in.  
B. The supervisor was contacted by another employee who urged the supervisor to step in  
C. **The dispatcher with the aging parent sent an email to the supervisor notifying her of the situation**  
D. During a meeting for an annual appraisal, the supervisor asked how the dispatcher’s family was doing.
Dispatchers take calls asking for help on a 24/7 basis. It is easy, then, for dispatchers themselves to recognize when they need help and to ask for that help.

Answer: False (They pride themselves on invulnerability and rarely ask for help)

In the scenario where the senior dispatcher is coaching the more junior dispatcher regarding the stress of handling a carjacking incident, what suggestions did the senior dispatcher give for ways of “fixing me?”

E. All of the above except C
F. All of the above except A and C

When dispatchers seek professional help for critical incidents and/or stress, which of the following most accurately describes how this is viewed by other dispatchers?

A. Normal routine
B. Somewhat out of the ordinary
C. Very brave and very out of the ordinary
D. What should become the new paradigm for all dispatchers
E. B and D
F. C and D

In the four-step process for dealing with and resolving stress (acknowledge, express, act, and celebrate) which of the following most accurately describes the “acknowledge” stage of this process?

A. “Your stress is natural. You’re a normal person having a normal reaction.”
B. “That was a stressful call for service. Do you feel stress now as a result?”
C. “After handling a stressful call for service, you must notify your supervisor of the incident.”
D. As simple as turning to a co-worker and saying, “Wow, that call really stressed me out.”

Because dispatchers get their information verbally through their auditory senses, what happens with the visual picture?

A. Dispatchers generally stare at their computer console and get no other visual picture
B. Dispatchers are generally not concerned with the “picture” of what’s happening and pay no attention to this
C. Dispatchers will fill the picture in within their minds and it will always be the “worst case scenario”
D. Dispatchers try to fill the picture in for closure and will picture the scene as “fixed”