

Washington State Public Safety Telecommunicator Certification Program Handbook

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1 INTRODUCTION

In 2022 the Legislature unanimously approved Substitute Senate Bill 5555, creating Chapter 38.60 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) to address Public Safety Telecommunicators. In this process, the Legislature acknowledged that a primary responsibility of government is to ensure public safety, and that nearly every emergency response begins with a request for assistance made through 911. These requests, along with subsequent emergency response communications, are managed by public safety telecommunicator professionals.

These first responders are essential workers who play a critical role in triaging requests for emergency responses and providing lifesaving instructions and guidance to those who call 911. Their work ensures that the appropriate response—whether law enforcement, behavioral health, fire, or emergency medical services—is deployed based on the situation. Public safety telecommunicators also dispatch, track, process, and transmit information from the public, continually communicating with responders and adding an additional layer of safety.¹

The Legislature took special note of the significant contributions made by public safety telecommunicators, recognizing that their tasks are arduous and that their working conditions may be contributing to the high - and often critical - turnover among professionals who receive and process emergency requests from the public and provide emergency communications with other public safety responders.

At the time of passage, public safety telecommunicators were the only public safety professionals not required to be certified and lacked standardized initial training requirements to perform their critical public safety function. As a result, the Legislature declared that:

- a) Public safety telecommunicators must have a formal system of training, and certification and recertification standards, to ensure a standardized response is given when the public seeks assistance during an emergency and that standardized communications are in place to support public safety responders within Washington State.
- b) The quality of emergency response in most cases begins with the competence of public safety telecommunicators.

To ensure the availability and quality of trained public safety telecommunicators, the Legislature recognized the need to adopt and implement standardized training programs, along with certification and recertification requirements.

With this legislation the State PST Certification Board was established. The Certification Board is charged with overseeing the implementation and enforcement of the standards set forth in Chapter 38.60 RCW. Its primary responsibilities include developing and maintaining the certification and recertification requirements for public safety telecommunicators, ensuring that these professionals meet the rigorous standards necessary to perform their critical duties effectively.

The Board is composed of a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from public safety agencies, emergency response organizations, and industry experts. Together, they work to

¹ RCW 38.60.010

create and uphold a uniform system of training and certification that enhances the quality and consistency of emergency response across the state.

The State PST Certification Board is committed to supporting public safety telecommunicators by providing them with the resources, training, and standards needed to excel in their roles. This handbook is a key resource for understanding the certification process, the expectations for PSTs, and the guidelines for maintaining certification throughout their careers.

1.1 PST Certification

Washington State PST certification is designed to enhance the professionalism of our 911 telecommunicators and ensure consistency with industry training standards. No individual may independently take 911 calls or dispatch 911 incidents at an agency within Washington State without being certified as a PST.

Given that 911 centers across the state vary in discipline, tasks and assignments, agencies have three options to certify their PSTs.

1.1.1 Call Taking Certification

PSTs serving as a 911 call taker have the primary responsibility of receiving, processing and transmitting 911 emergency and non-emergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services by telephone, radio, or other communication devices.

An agency may certify their PSTs in call taking only, allowing them to handle 911 calls independently. Later, the certification can be expanded to include dispatching once the relevant training is completed and the PST is ready to work independently as a dispatcher.

1.1.2 Dispatching Certification

PSTs serving as emergency dispatchers have the primary responsibility of processing, transmitting, or dispatching 911 emergency and non-emergency incidents for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and other public safety entities using telephone, radio, or other communication devices.

An agency may certify their PSTs in dispatching only, allowing them to dispatch incidents independently. Later, the certification can be expanded to include call taking once the relevant training is completed and the PST is ready to work independently as a call taker.

1.1.3 Dual Certification

PSTs serving as a 911 call taker and an emergency dispatcher have the primary responsibility of receiving, processing, transmitting, or dispatching 911 emergency and non-emergency calls and incidents for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and other public safety entities using telephone, radio or other communication devices.

An agency may certify their PSTS in call taking and dispatching, allowing them to handle 911 calls and dispatch incidents independently.

1.1.4 Legacy Certification

All PSTs who are independently serving in a call taking or dispatching capacity at a primary or secondary PSAP will automatically receive legacy certification at the time certification becomes effective. The legacy certification is valid for two (2) years, after which the PST must renew it every three (3) years to maintain their status.

1.1.5 Initial Certification

Initial certification applies to all PSTs who are in training at the time certification becomes effective or who are hired after the effective date. This certification process includes an assessment of knowledge, verified through testing, and an evaluation of understanding, determined by the employing agency's attestation of outcomes.

1.1.6 Recertification

PSTs are required to maintain certification through ongoing continuing education and professional development. Details regarding the recertification process will follow in subsequent sections, outlining the requirements and procedures for maintaining PST certification.

1.1.7 Certification & Recertification Updates

To ensure all members of the 911 community are informed of any changes to certification requirements or significant updates to application processes, the following communication methods will be utilized:

- Official email notifications: all changes will be communicated via official email to certified personnel, agency leadership, state-approved training program contacts. Emails will include a detailed explanation of the change, its impact, and the effective date.
- Website updates: changes will be posted on the certification board's official webpage under the Certification Updates section. This will include any related documents or resources necessary to comply with the new requirements.
- Newsletters: a summary of changes will be featured in the PST certification newsletter, which is distributed to all certified personnel.
- External methods: Posts will be submitted for inclusion in any other state 911 related newsletters or websites.

A minimum of 90 days' notice will be provided before any new requirement takes effect. If immediate changes are required due to legal or regulatory mandates, the 911 community will be notified as soon as possible.

All personnel are responsible for staying informed by reviewing these communication channels regularly and ensuring compliance with any updated requirements.

1.2 How to use this document

This handbook is intended for use by 911 call taking or dispatching agencies, community college or local high school curriculum committees or other potential 911 training providers.

The handbook may be used to:

- Assist an agency having jurisdiction (AHJ) to establish an in-house training program that meets certification and recertification requirements.
- Assist an AHJ to assess their in-house training program to ensure it meets certification and recertification requirements.
- Support other 911 training delivery providers, such as community colleges, high schools, private, public, or non-profit organizations, in developing training programs that meet the requirements for PST certification or recertification.
- Guide AHJs through the certification and recertification process.

1.2.1 Certification Training Syllabus

The training syllabus, approved by the Certification Board, identifies the recognized and accepted minimum required topics, organized by categories, used to train and certify PSTs in Washington State. The syllabus also provides a framework for agencies to plan PST continuing education and professional development, and to track training credits toward PST recertification.

1.2.2 Certification Requirements

Chapter 2 Certification Requirements describes the necessary knowledge and outcomes required to achieve certification. The chapter is organized into categories, detailing the specific areas of expertise PSTs must master.

1.2.3 Outcomes and Knowledge Requirement

When applying for initial PST certification, agencies must ensure the PST has completed the required training. Knowledge may be demonstrated through written or oral tests, while outcomes may be demonstrated through on-the-job training (OJT) by completing the required tasks during simulated or live calls.

Knowledge can be obtained by attending and passing a state-approved training program or verified by passing an approved challenge test. Outcomes must be demonstrated using the equipment, policies and procedures of the agency having jurisdiction (AHJ.)

1.2.4 State Approved Training Programs & Fast Track

Further details on state-approved training programs, including the fast-track option in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1, for certain accredited or certified programs, will be provided in the relevant section of this handbook.

2 CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Certification requirements are approved by the Certification Board in accordance with RCW 38.60.030. The following requirements correspond to the Training Categories and Training Topics found in Appendix B.

Each topic includes a section on outcomes and knowledge. Outcomes refer to specific activities the PST must demonstrate during simulated or live calls to meet the minimum training requirements. The knowledge section describes fundamental understanding the PST must have to meet the minimum training requirements.

2.1 Equipment and Technology

Relates to the importance of technology in the PST's role. PSTs must understand how to use, interpret, and analyze information obtained from equipment.

2.1.1 Equipment

Outcomes

- Use equipment and technologies to meet operational needs in both regular and failure conditions.
- Operate TTY, Video Relay Services, and Text to 911 system according to local, state, and federal regulations and laws following the AHJ's policies.
- Troubleshoot common technical issues.

Knowledge

- Describe how to use the equipment and technologies in use by the AHJ.
- Understanding of local, state, and federal regulations and laws related to providing services to people with disabilities, which include but are not limited to:
 - ADA Amendments Act of 2008
 - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II
 - Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 404

2.1.2 Location Services

Outcomes

- Use available information to identify and verify the location of the calling device.
- Interpret ANI/ALI, class of service, or their i3 equivalent, data accurately.

Knowledge

- Familiar with ANI/ALI system and its limitations.
- Describe the impact of incorrect location data on emergency response.

2.1.3 Security

Outcomes

- Identify and report suspicious emails.

- Update and keep secure user passwords, passcodes and other security devices according to AHJ policy.

Knowledge

- Understanding of security vulnerabilities and agency specific policies.
- Understanding of the PST's role in security, and how to defend, respond and make notifications regarding attempted or in-progress attacks.

2.2 Procedures and Techniques for Call Receiving

This section focuses on the critical skills and techniques that PSTs need to effectively manage incoming emergency and non-emergency calls.

2.2.1 Accurate & Precise Location Identification

Outcomes

- Use available information to adequately identify and verify the location of the calling device.
- Explain and demonstrate the use of location assisting technologies, such as ANI/ALI, Wireless services, etc. to determine locations of emergency service calls.
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of agency jurisdictions and Washington State geography, including compass direction and commonly referenced cities, towns, landmarks, and surrounding states.
- Demonstrate problem-solving interviewing techniques to determine the location of emergency calls.
- Articulate the many different types of locations utilized to locate 911 calls and incidents, and the importance of determining the exact location of an event.

2.2.2 Incident Categorization & Prioritization

Outcomes

- Identify incoming information which is urgent versus routine.
- Process requests for service according to AHJ.
- Alter the priority of an incident involving safety concerns.

Knowledge

- Define the common incident types utilized to manage 911 calls.
- Identify safety concerns for citizens and responders which may raise or lower the priority of an incident.

2.2.3 Minimum Information to Process a Call

Outcomes

- Interview callers according to the agency's policy to obtain the necessary information for response.
- Gather appropriate information based on the incident type selected.
- Ask secondary questions to obtain information.

Knowledge

- Explain the importance of quickly obtaining initial screening information to create an incident.
- Describe the minimum information needed for an incident.
- List the elements that determine the severity of an incident.

2.2.4 Reporting Party Interview Techniques

Outcomes

- Ask appropriate, necessary and clarifying questions.
- Provide clear instructions while maintaining a calm and empathetic demeanor.
- Effectively communicate with callers in a positive, professional manner, maintaining self-control in difficult situations and with challenging callers.
- Direct callers to gain needed information.
- Use appropriate demeanor and active listening skills.
- Use language services when necessary.

Knowledge

- Explain the difference between interviewing callers for routine calls versus priority or safety concern calls.
- Identify types of challenging callers and effective methods of communication with them.
- Explain the importance of the call receiver's demeanor and active listening to effectively communicate with a caller.
- Explain the difference between content and context as it relates to active listening.
- List the three elements of persistent repetition.
- Define customer service as it relates to the AHJ and the industry.

2.2.5 Call Transfer

Outcomes

- Identify and refer or transfer calls according to the AHJ's policy.
- Use appropriate technologies for transferring calls (conference call, external transfers, TTY transfers, text-to-911 transfers, etc.)

Knowledge

- Understand when a caller needs to be transferred to a different agency or resource.
- Articulate proper use of the NENA Enhanced PSAP Registry and Census (EPRC) tool.
- Describe resources available through outside agencies or contact points (211, 988, 311, Mental Health professionals, Animal Control, etc.)
- Describe how to properly transfer a call or incident to another agency or resource using the appropriate technology and hand off.

2.2.6 Caller and Scene Safety

Outcomes

- Consistently obtain information related to the caller, responder and scene safety.
- Evaluate severity of hazards that may impact the caller, responder and scene safety.

Knowledge

- Describe the importance of caller, responder and scene safety.
- Identify factors that create potential caller, responder and scene safety hazards.

2.2.7 Documentation

Outcomes

- Write clear, concise, accurate and objective narratives.
- Document updated information in incidents and notify the dispatcher in a timely manner.
- Follow the AHJ's protocols for documenting caller, responder and scene safety information.
- Follow the AHJ's protocols for documenting confidential, CJIS or medical related information.
- Use AHJ's approved acronyms and abbreviations.

Knowledge

- Describe how physical and vehicle descriptors and other incident related information are documented according to the AHJ's policy.
- Describe the type of information that is considered confidential.
- Explain the difference between subjective and objective narratives.
- Describe pertinent information to include in the incident.
- Describe the impact of documentation errors on incident responses, investigations and court proceedings.

2.2.8 Special Situations

Special Situations refer to atypical, complex, or high-risk incidents requiring PSTs to use specialized knowledge, skills, and protocols. This section refers to those incident types that don't have their own topical area within this syllabus.

Outcomes

- Use AHJ's protocols and procedures to respond to special situations and high risk/low frequency events.
- Adheres to the AHJ's policy regarding recontacting a caller when there is evidence or suspicion of an emergency.
- Recognize and react to incongruent caller behaviors.

Knowledge

- List and describe situations in their jurisdiction that are considered high risk.
- Describe the AHJ's procedures and protocols and local, state and federal regulations and laws related to providing services to people experiencing special situations such as:
 - Domestic violence

- End of life
- Atypical behaviors
- High risk events
- Understand the significance and liability associated with high-risk events.

2.2.9 Behavioral Health and Crisis Events

Related to the knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively respond to and support individuals experiencing crisis and crisis events, including those involving mental illness and behavior health while promoting safety, dignity, and respect for all involved.

Outcomes

- Adapt the questioning technique to the stage of crisis indicated by the caller.
- Use de-escalation strategies to assist callers in crisis.
- Document and relay commonly encountered mental illness or behavioral health indicators.
- Use suicide risk assessment when indicated.
- Provide appropriate assistance and support, while coordinating with emergency responders and mental health professionals.

Knowledge:

- Describe the stages of crisis, including escalation patterns.
- Identify the key components of a mental health crisis situation.
- Identify common symptoms, behaviors, or indicators of common mental health disorders, especially those that may pose a threat to the public, the individual or public safety responders.

2.2.10 Washington State Alerts

Outcomes

- Recognize the proper alerts available within Washington state and when to initiate, activate, modify and cancel each alert.
- Accurately and efficiently interview callers reporting missing persons while recognizing the urgency of each individual call at the time received.
- Use an initial call intake guide to determine necessary information needed regarding missing person incidents.

Knowledge

- Recite the different types of missing person alerts and their criteria for entry.
- Describe the necessary intake information needed for different types of missing person alert, to include missing children versus adults.
- Describe the Washington State Alerts handled by 911 communications centers or law enforcement agencies (Amber Alert, Silver Alert, Blue Alert, Missing Indigenous Persons Alerts.)

2.3 Procedures and Techniques for Dispatching

This section covers the critical skills required for gathering and disseminating information, maintaining clear communication, and ensuring responder safety. This section is crucial in preparing PSTs to manage the flow of information efficiently and ensure that the right resources are dispatched to incidents in a timely manner.

2.3.1 Minimum Information to Dispatch an Incident

Outcomes

- Dispatch an incident when the minimum information needed is available.
- Accurately prioritize the dispatch of incidents based on the severity of the situation and available information.
- Dispatch an incident by interpreting AHJ in situations that aren't specifically covered when necessary.

Knowledge

- List the minimum information needed to dispatch an incident.
- Explain the difference between an emergency incident versus a non-emergency incident.
- Explain the difference between an in-progress incident versus a report incident.
- Outline AHJ policy on holding incidents.

2.3.2 Radio Speech & Etiquette

Outcomes

- Maintain speech that is clear and easily understood, with appropriate tone, pitch, modulations, and speed, avoiding slang and ensuring professionalism.
- Use plain speech for interoperability, providing standardized information consistently with minimal need for clarification.
- Ensure radio transmissions are not clipped or faded, maintaining clear communication, and effectively managing transmissions when multiple requests are made simultaneously.
- Accurately interprets and relays necessary response information, paraphrasing complex text without altering the meaning, and grouping information in sets for clarity.
- Verify and confirm unclear radio transmissions with responders to ensure accurate information is communicated.

Knowledge

- Understand AHJ policy on radio communication.
- Explain the FCC rules that govern Public Safety radio transmissions.
- Articulate what the term "brevity" means in the context of a radio transmission.
- Understand how to properly manage poorly received or inaudible radio transmissions.

2.3.3 Phonetic Alphabet

Outcomes

- Information is provided to responders using the standard law enforcement or international military phonetic alphabet.
- Interpret and utilize a phonetic alphabet as it is provided by responders to confirm or verify unclear information.

Knowledge

- Demonstrates recall of the law enforcement or international military phonetic alphabet.
- Describe the purpose and importance of using the phonetic alphabet to avoid miscommunication using common scenarios.

2.3.4 Dispatch Updates

Outcomes

- Ensure that timely and accurate updates are provided to field responders regarding the status of an ongoing incident.
- Track and communicate any changes in the situation that may affect the response, such as additional hazards or updated location information.
- Ensure that all additional relevant parties are informed of critical developments in a timely manner.

Knowledge

- Explain the importance of providing continuous updates to field responders to ensure their safety and the effectiveness of the response.
- Identify the types of information that require immediate communication to field responders.
- Explain how to prioritize and relay updates based on the urgency and impact on the incident.

2.3.5 Unit Tracking

Outcomes

- Maintain an accurate account of responder locations.
- Monitor and document responder activities.
- Maintain the status of responders according to AHJ.
- Uses situational awareness and available tools to accurately identify the unit identification.

Knowledge

- Describe the tools and technologies used for unit tracking.
- Demonstrates an understanding of responder location, without relying on electronic tracking tools.
- Describe the importance of maintaining proper responder location at all times, to include the use of electronic tracking technologies (AVL, push to talk, etc.) when relevant or needed.
- Explain the procedures for logging unit activity, status changes, and other relevant updates.

- Explain the significance of accurate record-keeping for effective incident management and emergent situations.

2.3.6 Field Responder Safety Considerations

Outcomes

- Relay scene safety information to responders and surrounding agencies according to AHJ.
- Review field responder safety databases and respond according to AHJ.
- Restrict radio traffic during high priority events include dispatching potentially unsafe, hazardous, or dangerous incidents, according to AHJ and procedure.

Knowledge

- Identify key factors that impact responder safety.
- Identify situations in which high priority radio codes should be used.
- Identify incidents that require additional support or backup for responders.
- Explain when a communication frequency should be restricted for priority use.
- Describe situations or scenarios that may require immediate attention for field responder safety.
- Explain the correct procedure for initiating an emergency broadcast.

2.4 Policies and Procedures

2.4.1 PST Certification Overview

Certification is critical in ensuring the PSTs maintain a high standard of professionalism and competence in their roles. Understanding the certification process and its significance helps PSTs stay current with industry standards and enhances their ability to effectively manage emergency communications.

Outcomes

- Complete and track the required training for certification.
- Complete and track the annual 24 hours required for recertification.

Knowledge

- List the requirements for recertification.
- Understand the importance of certification in maintaining high standards of professionalism and competence in public safety communications.

2.4.2 Professionalism, Respect & Civility

Consistent with federal and state laws and AHJ, PSTs are expected to exhibit professionalism, respect and civility in all interactions, whether with colleagues, responders, or the public.

Outcomes

- Exhibit professionalism, respect, and civility in all interactions with colleagues, responders, and the public.

- Demonstrate the ability to handle conflicts or difficult situations with poise and maintain a positive work environment.
- Foster a culture of respect and inclusion within the workplace, setting an example for others to follow.
- Respond to uncivil behavior according to AHJ.

Knowledge

- Understand the principles of professionalism, including integrity, accountability, and ethical behavior.
- Recognize the importance of treating others with respect and the impact of civility on team dynamics and public interactions.
- Describe uncivil behavior.
- Explain strategies for promoting a respectful and inclusive workplace culture.

2.4.3 Continuity of Operations Plans

A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is essential for ensuring that PSAPs can maintain or rapidly resume critical functions during emergencies. Effective COOP implementation by the PST ensures services remain operational, safeguarding public safety and maintaining response capabilities under adverse conditions.

Outcomes

- Evacuate the PSAP in an orderly and efficient manner and relocate to designated backup center.
- Maintain continuous communication and coordination with field responders and other public safety agencies prior, during and after relocation.
- Determine appropriate backup system for failure conditions.
- Utilize backup systems to ensure uninterrupted service.
- Implement contingency plans when a primary system (CAD, radio or phone) fails.

Knowledge

- Understand key components of a COOP, including risk assessment, critical function prioritization, and recovery strategies.
- Describe the backup systems available for CAD, radio or phone operations, including how to switch over to these systems.
- Describe the limitations and capabilities of the backup systems and options to mitigate any identified gaps in services.
- Describe the differences between partial and complete system failures and when to switch to the backup.
- Understand what to do when there are critical systems failures.

2.4.4 Agency and Personal Liability in Public Safety

Covers the legal concepts of liability, negligence, and the doctrine of public duty, providing PSTs with the knowledge needed to perform their roles while minimizing the risk of legal consequences.

Outcomes

- Follow agency protocols and procedures to minimize personal and agency liability in the performance of PST duties.
- Apply the principles of public duty doctrine and understand its relevance to PST operations.

Knowledge

- Describe the four elements of negligence (duty, breach, causation, and damages), with examples specific to emergency communications, and understand the different levels of negligence.
- Describe the public duty doctrine and vicarious liability.
- Identify and explain the elements to create a special relationship.
- Outline prevention techniques to utilize for minimizing civil liability.

2.4.5 Public Records Act & Confidentiality

In Washington State, nearly all records generated by public agencies, including 911 centers, are subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56). This includes communications such as 911 calls, radio transmissions, and entries into the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs) must exercise caution not only in their official communications but also in their personal interactions, including social media activity and discussions with friends or family. Sharing information about incidents, even in casual conversation or online posts, can lead to breaches of confidentiality and may result in disciplinary action or legal consequences. PSTs must understand the boundaries of their roles and the importance of maintaining confidentiality in all aspects of their life.

Outcomes

- Practice discretion and caution when entering information into the CAD system or during radio and phone communications.
- Maintain a high standard of accuracy and objectivity in all records and communications.
- Apply AHJ's protocols for managing and documenting confidential information.
- Maintain the security and confidentiality of records by not discussing the details of incidents or protected information on social media platforms, personal devices, or with individuals not authorized to receive such information.
- Follow the Public Records Act related to all forms of communication which would be subject to public disclosure.
- Follow AHJ policy related to records retention.

Knowledge

- Describe potential consequences of unprofessional conduct or inaccurate records being disclosed under the PRA.
- Describe potential penalties for non-compliance with agency adopted standards (e.g., CJIS, PRA, HIPAA.)
- Describe the risks and consequences of sharing confidential information outside of official channels.
- Understand the AHJ's policies on social media usage and the potential impact on both personal and professional standing.

2.5 Health and Wellness

To equip Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs) with the skills and knowledge needed to manage stress, build resilience, and prevent compassion fatigue, ensuring their long-term well-being and effectiveness on the job.

2.5.1 Stress Management and Resiliency

Outcomes

- Demonstrate effective stress management techniques to prevent burnout and maintain physical, emotional, and psychological well-being.
- Exhibit resilience in the face of continuous exposure to stressful and crisis situations, using appropriate coping strategies.
- Recognize the signs of compassion fatigue and take proactive steps to mitigate its effects, including seeking help when needed.
- Use available resources to mitigate the impacts of traumatic events causing critical stress and enhance resiliency.
- Recognize the early symptoms of critical stress in self and others.

Knowledge

- Understand the various stressors inherent in the PST role and how to manage them through self-care practices.
- Identify the key traits and problem-solving skills necessary for resilience in high-stress environments.
- Differentiate between critical incident stress, stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue, and understand strategies to address each.
- Compare and contrast debriefings, defusing sessions, and grief sessions.
- Explain the core components of critical incident stress management.
- Describe educational materials and training available for pre-crisis preparation.

2.5.2 PST Support Programs

Outcomes

- Explain the use and purpose of available employee assistance and support programs.
- Seek assistance from available employee assistance and support programs for short-term and long-term care when necessary.
- Recognize when a colleague may benefit from a program and use an appropriate approach to offer support and assistance.

Knowledge

- Describe different internal and external employee assistance and support programs.
- Compare and contrast the benefits of short-term and long-term care resources.

3 PST CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The PST certification process is established for Washington State Public Safety Telecommunicators (PST's). The goal is to ensure PSTs complete all training requirements and demonstrate the necessary skills and knowledge to handle 911 emergency and non-emergency calls in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws following the agency having jurisdiction's policies and procedures.

3.1 Training Requirements and Documentation

PST certification is offered in three categories: call taker, dispatcher or both.

3.2 Eligibility Requirements

- Affiliated with a Washington State PSAP or enrolled in an approved secondary or higher education program.
- Completed a Washington State approved Call Taking or Dispatching Telecommunicator Training Program as applicable.
- Must pass the applicable state approved examination.
- Agency attests the PST certification candidate is ready to work independently and perform the work necessary for the position in which they are requesting certification.

3.3 Application Process

- The agency must complete and submit the application and any required fee in accordance with the form instructions.

3.4 Individual PST Responsibility

PSTs are required to follow all rules and regulations established by the Certification Board and any local, state, and federal statutes established for Washington State PST Certification. The PST must complete a state approved training program which encompasses all applicable training requirements established in the PST Certification Handbook. The PST must pass a state approved examination covering curriculum established in the Training Syllabus and provide supporting documentation of completed training upon request. The PST will follow all eligibility requirements and demonstrate professional conduct throughout the PST's 911 career to maintain certification.

- Initial certification expires every three (3) years after issuance.
- For PSTs qualifying for legacy certification, their initial certificate expires two (2) years after issuance and then every three (3) years thereafter.

3.5 Agency Responsibility

Agencies are responsible for ensuring the PST certification candidate has met all applicable training requirements set forth by the Washington State PST Certification Handbook. It is recommended that agencies include a background verification check and physical, mental, and emotional fitness checks before submitting the candidate for certification.

The agency must submit PST certification candidates before allowing them to work unattended and within 18 months of hire. An agency may request a 6-month extension from the Certification Board for PSTs as noted in section 3.7 Appeals and Extension Process. Agencies must:

- Submit an attestation form, with each PST name, to the Certification Board for initial certification within 18-months of the PST's hire date.
- Provide requested supporting documentation demonstrating proof all PST Certification Training requirements were met, including proof of a successful examination score.
- Maintain all records of ongoing and continuing education supporting the PST eligibility for certification.
- Monitor each PST to ensure fitness for duty, including consistent professional conduct.
- Notify the Board of any changes in a PST's employment status, including termination or transfer to another role.
- Provide essential new, refresher, and ongoing continuing education opportunities to PST staff, ensuring they maintain and learn any new necessary skills and knowledge to handle emergency situations effectively.

3.6 Certification Approval Process

Once the application is received:

- SECO will review the application for completeness and provide a list of recommended PSTs for certification to the Board.
- The Board reviews the PST certification application, and all materials submitted, along with the examination results, for approval.
- Upon approval, the Board issues the PST certificate and assigns the renewal date.
- If the certification request is denied, the Board notifies the agency of the decision, how to remedy the application and how to appeal the decision.
- Certification applications will usually be reviewed and approved or denied within 30 days of receipt of a complete application. If the application cannot be reviewed within 30 days, the agency will be notified.

3.7 Appeals and Extension Process

3.7.1 Application Extension Requests

If an agency requests an extension for certification approval beyond the 18-month hiring window, it must send a formal request for the extension directly to the Certification Board by submitting a written request to SECO at least 30 days before the 18-month deadline. The request must detail the reason for the extension. The Board will review the request and communicate its decision directly to the agency.

Examples of valid reasons for extensions include medical or other state or federal guaranteed leave, unforeseen circumstances, other significant events.

3.7.2 Certification Denial Appeals

Agencies can appeal a denied certification directly to the Certification Board by submitting a written appeal to SECO within 30 days of receipt of the denial. The appeal must include why the agency disagrees with the denial and the facts upon which it has based their argument. The Board will review the appeal within 30 days of receipt and notify the agency of its final decision. If the denial is upheld the agency must re-apply for certification.

4 PST RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

The PST recertification process supports Washington State Public Safety Telecommunicators (PST's) in maintaining their qualifications to work in public safety answering points (PSAPs). The goal is to ensure PSTs retain and acquire new essential skills and knowledge to handle 911 emergency and non-emergency calls effectively and complete all required continuing education for recertification.

4.1 Recertification Timeline

Recertification is completed in calendar blocks twice a year in April and October. PSTs certified between October 1 and March 31 will be given an expiration date of April 1 of the applicable year. PSTs certified between April 1 and September 30 will be given an expiration date of October 1 of the applicable year.

- Initial certification expires every three (3) years after issuance.
- Legacy certification expires two (2) years after issuance and then every three (3) years thereafter.

4.1.1 Leaving and Returning to Service

Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs) whose certification expires following separation from their agency and are rehired within six months of the expiration date will be granted a six (6) month grace period from the most recent date of hire. During this period, the employing agency is responsible to ensure that the returning PST completes the necessary recertification training. The agency must attest that the PST is fully prepared to work independently and complete an expired recertification request form.

PSTs whose certification has been expired for more than six months must submit a new application for certification.

Certification remains valid if a telecommunicator leaves PST service and returns to PST service while the certification is still active.

4.2 Recertification Training and Documentation

4.2.1 Agency Responsibility

The agency is responsible for providing essential continuing education, including new, refresher, and ongoing training, to ensure PST staff maintain and develop the skills and knowledge needed to handle emergency situations effectively. The agency must ensure that PSTs meet the recertification requirements outlined in this handbook. Continuing education can be obtained through various approved platforms, including agency-developed training, independent training providers, industry associations, or courses provided by SECO and other recognized organizations.

The agency is responsible for covering all costs associated with the required continuing education and for maintaining records of all training in accordance with retention rules. Additionally, the agency must submit documentation of completed continuing education for each PST to SECO to verify qualifications for recertification. Additional supporting documentation may be required.

4.2.2 Individual PST Responsibility

PST's are required to complete a minimum of 24 hours of annual continuing education, covering key areas such as call handling, dispatching, crisis communication, technology use, legal updates, procedural changes, and other approved mandatory topics. Before the expiration of their initial or legacy certification, PSTs must complete and document the required training and notify the agency to ensure accurate training records. A test is not required for recertification if it is completed on or before the expiration of the certification.

4.3 Recertification Requirements

4.3.1 Flexible Training Topics

Continuing education requirements are designed to be flexible, allowing agencies to select topics that align with their specific operational or PST needs. The categories provide a broad framework from which agencies can choose relevant training topics. Agencies have the discretion to tailor training to their unique needs while ensuring that all PSTs meet the annual minimum 24- hour requirement. No pre-approval for training is required, but SECO may determine at the time of recertification application that certain training does not qualify if the relevance of the training cannot be demonstrated. Dis-approved training may impact PST certification.

4.3.2 Mandatory Training and Legal Compliance

Agencies must include any legally mandated training within their continuing education programs. Additionally, if the Certification Board introduces new requirements or modifies existing certification standards, these changes must be incorporated into the agency's ongoing training to ensure PSTs remain compliant with all current regulations and certification criteria.

4.3.3 Continuing Education Categories

4.3.3.1 Technology and Equipment Proficiency

Objective: Ensure PSTs remain proficient in using the latest technology and equipment.

Topics could include but are not limited to: Training on updates and enhancements to technologies and systems employed by the state or AHJ and cybersecurity awareness.

4.3.3.2 Legal and Compliance Updates

Objective: Keep PSTs informed of changes in laws, regulations, and standards.

Topics could include but are not limited to: Updates on federal, state, and local laws (e.g., ADA, Public Records Act), compliance training for handling sensitive information (e.g., CJIS, HIPAA), ethical practices and liability considerations.

4.3.3.3 Call and Incident Handling

Objective: Enhance PSTs' ability to manage calls effectively.

Topics could include but are not limited to: Advanced techniques in complex incident handling, call categorization, prioritization, dispatching, and continued proficiency in handling Text-to-911 and services to individuals experiencing disabilities.

4.3.3.4 *Communication Techniques*

Objective: Enhance the PSTs' ability to communicate with callers, field responders and colleagues.

Topics could include but are not limited to: Handling challenging callers, high-stress situations, crisis communication, de-escalation strategies, and interpersonal communication.

4.3.3.5 *Health and Wellness*

Objective: Support the PST's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being.

Topics could include but are not limited to: Stress management, resilience training, recognizing and mitigating compassion fatigue, and accessing PST support programs.

4.3.3.6 *Continuity of Operations and Emergency Preparedness*

Objective: Ensure PSTs are prepared to maintain operations during emergencies or system failures.

Topics could include but are not limited to: Training on continuity of operations plans, maintaining communication during system outages, emergency protocols for phone, CAD, or radio failures.

4.4 Recertification Approval Process

No less than 14 days before the expiration of initial or legacy certification, the employing agency must complete and submit the PST recertification application to the SECO for evaluation. The application must include training completed by the PST, the training's relevant recertification category, training duration (in hours) and the date of completion.

The applicant's certification will remain valid until they are notified by SECO.

If the criteria are met, the SECO will notify the agency that recertification has been approved for the three-year cycle. If criteria have not been met, the agency will be informed of the necessary requirements for meeting certification criteria and the process for resubmission.

4.4.1 Expired Certifications

Agencies will be notified within 30 days of PST expiration. Agencies have 30 days to submit the PST recertification application or request an extension.

4.5 Appeals and Extension Process

4.5.1 Recertification Extension Requests

If an agency requests an extension for recertification, it must send a formal request for the extension directly to the Certification Board by submitting a written appeal at least 30 days before the deadline detailing the reason for the extension. The request will be reviewed, and the decision communicated directly to the agency. Valid reasons for extensions may include medical leave, state or federal guaranteed leave, unforeseen circumstances, other significant events.

4.5.2 Recertification Denial Appeals

Agencies may appeal a denied recertification to the Certification Board by submitting a written appeal within 30 days of receiving the denial. The appeal must detail why the agency disagrees with the denial and provide supporting facts. The Certification Board will review the appeal within 30

days of receipt and notify the agency of its final decision. If the denial is upheld the agency must re-apply for recertification.

5 STATE APPROVED TRAINING PROGRAMS

State-approved PST training programs are governed by the Certification Board as per Chapter 38.60 RCW. Candidates should contact the State 911 Coordination Office (SECO) for preliminary information before submitting for approval.

The Certification Board reviews new and renewal applications annually, with a submission deadline of January 31. Missed submissions must wait until the next application year.

5.1 Approved Training Programs and Providers

This section will list state approved programs, provider information and the review date.

5.2 Non-agency State Approved Training Programs

The Certification Board will work in cooperation with the board for community and technical colleges or the superintendent of public instruction to adopt a process for community colleges, vocational/technical institutes, skill centers and secondary schools as described in chapter 28B.50 RCW.

Other non-agency programs may submit their program to the Certification Board for approval following the same processes as agency programs.

5.3 Accredited or Certified Training Programs

Candidates with APCO P33 certification can apply for fast-track approval. The agency must submit a letter of interest (LOI) and completed application with supporting documents to SECO for review. Satisfactory applications proceed to the Certification Board.

5.3.1 Fast Track Requirements

APCO P33 certification requirements are reviewed against the state certification requirements. Requirements identified by the Certification Board that are not included in APCO P33 must be reviewed during the approval process. These requirements will be labeled “Fast Track.” Agencies applying for the fast-track approval will need to provide supporting documentation for all fast-track requirements in addition to a copy of the agency’s current APCO P33 certification.

5.3.2 Effective Date

Agencies that receive APCO P33 certification can apply for state approval during the upcoming application period. The approval effective date will be back dated to the date the agency received accreditation or certification.

5.3.3 Expired or Revoked Programs

If an agency's APCO P33 certification is revoked or expires, the Certification Board must be notified within 30 days. The agency may either immediately submit its training program for a full review or choose to participate in a state training program to meet the training requirements outlined in the PST Certification Handbook. This does not preclude the agency from submitting its training program for approval during the next program review cycle.

5.4 Application Process

Candidates must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) on agency letterhead, an application, and training curriculum materials to SECO. The application should be no more than five double-spaced pages and include:

- Overview of the training program
- How the program meets state training requirements
- Training syllabus topics and hours spent
- Training materials and delivery methods

The Certification Board will appoint members from its membership, SECO, the 911 Advisory Committee Training Subcommittee, or other industry experts to a Training Program Panel and assign the submitted agency training program applications for their review. SECO staff will provide administrative support for the Training Program Panel. The Training Program Panel will meet in February. Candidates will be notified of the date the panel will review their training materials.

Applications are rated as satisfactory, unsatisfactory, or denied.

- Satisfactory applications will be forwarded to the Certification Board for review and approval.
- Unsatisfactory applications will be returned to the agency for revision.
- Denied applications will be returned to the agency with the reason for denial. The candidate may appeal the decision following the appeals process.

5.5 Approval Process

Satisfactory applications, including those from appeals, are forwarded to the Certification Board for final approval. Candidates are notified of the meeting date and approval status. The Board will strive to complete the review, approve and any appeals by March 31 of each year.

5.6 Revision Process

Candidates asked to revise their program will be given all revision notes in an initial change request. Candidates may either appeal the revision request or resubmit revised materials to SECO for a second review by the panel. Revisions or appeals must be submitted within 30 days of notification.

If the candidate submits revisions, the panel will review the changes and update its rating. Should further revisions be required, the candidate will have an additional 30 days to submit for a third review. If the program is not approved after three attempts, the agency must wait until the next application cycle to reapply.

5.7 Appeals Process

5.7.1 Level 1 Appeals

Candidates can appeal the Training Program Panel's determination by submitting a written appeal to the Certification Board within 30 days of notification. The appeal must detail disagreements and supporting facts. The Certification Board may appoint a new appellate panel or have the original panel review the appeal.

The appellate review will determine if the appeal is sustained or denied. Sustained appeals will be sent with the program application to the Certification Board for final review and approval. Denied appeals will be sent back to the candidate. The candidate and the Certification Board will be provided with a report detailing the findings of the appellate review.

Candidates may bypass the level 1 appeals process and appeal directly to the Certification Board.

5.7.2 Level 2 Appeals

Candidates can appeal directly to the Certification Board by submitting a written appeal within 30 days of notification. The appeal must include why the candidate disagrees with its denial or requests for revision and the facts upon which they have based their argument. The Board will review the appeal within 30 days of receipt and notify the agency of its final decision. If the denial is upheld the agency must re-apply during the next cycle.

If the revision request is upheld, the agency will receive a due date for resubmission. Candidates whose appeals are denied must wait for the next program application cycle to re-apply for training program approval.

5.8 Biennial Review of Approved Programs

Biennial reviews of approved programs require a Letter of Intent (LOI) and a statement of changes. The review of approved programs will follow the same process as initial program applications, but only program changes are evaluated.

The Board reviews applications annually, with a submission deadline of January 31. After three successful biennial reviews or if the agency's training program has changed significantly the Certification Board may request a full program review.

6 APPENDIX A - GLOSSARY

Accreditation: The formal recognition by an authorized body that a public safety telecommunicator training program meets specific standards and criteria, ensuring the quality and consistency of the training provided.

Agency Having Jurisdiction (AHJ): the agency or organization that has the legal authority and responsibility for overseeing public safety operations and ensuring compliance with laws, regulations, and standards within a specific geographic area.

Call : A generic term referring to a request for assistance made to a PSAP, typically initiated by the public, regardless of the media used to make the request. This term can appear in conjunction with specific media, such as “voice call,” or “text call” when the specific media is of importance. Calls usually require a response from law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, or other public safety agencies.

Call taker: A telecommunicator who processes incoming calls by analyzing, prioritizing, and disseminating information to aid in the safety of the public and field responders in accordance with general practices, agency parameters and national, state and local laws.

Certification Board: the voluntary Public Safety Telecommunicator Certification Board, authorized by RCW 38.60, responsible for establishing and maintaining certification, training, and recertification standards for public safety telecommunicators in Washington State.

Certification Expiration Date: The date on which a public safety telecommunicator’s (PST’s) certification expires if not renewed through the recertification process. PSTs must complete all necessary recertification requirements before this date to maintain their certified status.

Challenge Test: An assessment that allows a public safety telecommunicator to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without having to complete a formal training program. Passing a challenge test may be used to fulfill certification or recertification knowledge requirements.

Continuing Education: Ongoing training and educational activities that public safety telecommunicators (PSTs) must complete to maintain their certification. These activities are designed to update, enhance, or expand the PST’s knowledge, skills, and abilities in line with current industry standards and practices.

Dispatcher: A telecommunicator who provides dispatch services by analyzing, prioritizing, and processing calls while maintaining radio contact with field responders to ensure safe, efficient, and effective responses to calls for service in accordance with general practices, agency parameters and national, state and local laws.

Grace Period: A designated time frame after the expiration of a PST’s certification during which the individual may still complete the recertification requirements without needing to reapply for initial certification. The grace period is typically provided under specific circumstances, such as a lapse in service.

Incident: an entry created within a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system that documents the details of a 911 call. The incident serves as the record used by first responders to manage and coordinate the appropriate response to the situation.

Initial Certification: The certification granted to a public safety telecommunicator upon successful completion of the required training and assessment, signifying that the individual has met the minimum standards established by the state to perform the duties of a PST in any category referenced in 3.1 Training Requirements and Documentation.

Knowledge: Fundamental understanding one must have to perform a specific task or duty effectively, typically encompassing theoretical concepts, practical skills, and relevant information.

Legacy Certification: A certification automatically granted to public safety telecommunicators who were already serving independently in call-taking or dispatching roles at the time the new certification standards were implemented. This certification is valid for two years, after which the individual must renew their certification according to the standard recertification process.

On-the-Job Training (OJT): Practical, hands-on training that occurs in the work environment, allowing PSTs to develop and demonstrate the necessary skills and competencies required for their role under the supervision of experienced personnel.

Outcomes: Specific, measurable actions or tasks that a public safety telecommunicator must demonstrate to show competence in performing their duties, typically assessed through on-the-job training, simulations, or live call handling.

Professional Conduct: The expected behavior and ethical standards that public safety telecommunicators must adhere to in the performance of their duties. This includes maintaining a high level of integrity, responsibility, and respect for the public and colleagues.

Public safety answering point (PSAP): primary public safety answering points that receive 911 calls directly from the public and secondary public safety answering points that receive 911 calls only on a transfer or relay basis from the primary public safety answering point.

Public safety telecommunicator (PST): a first responder working in a primary PSAP, regardless of title, who has successfully completed the training, certification, or recertification standards established in the state of Washington. Primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch 911 emergency and non-emergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services by telephone, radio, or other communication devices.

Recertification: The process by which a public safety telecommunicator renews their certification to ensure continued competence in their role. This involves completing required continuing education and meeting other criteria established by the Certification Board.

Simulated Call: A training exercise that replicates real-world scenarios, allowing PSTs to practice and demonstrate their ability to handle various types of calls for service in a controlled environment.

State-approved training program: a public safety telecommunicator certified training program approved by the certification board to meet the requirements of a state-approved public safety telecommunicator training, certification, and recertification standards.

Training Curriculum: A structured set of training materials, lesson plans, and educational activities designed to impart the necessary knowledge and skills required for PST certification. This curriculum must meet the standards set by the Certification Board.

Training Program Panel: A group of individuals appointed by the Certification Board to review and evaluate training programs submitted for state approval. The panel may include members of the Certification Board, SECO staff, and other industry experts.

7 APPENDIX B – TRAINING SYLLABUS

Equipment & Technology
Network Security (2.1.3: Security)
Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Equipment (2.1.1: Equipment)
Radio Equipment (2.1.1: Equipment)
Telephone Equipment (2.1.1: Equipment)
Automatic Number and Location Identification (ANI/ALI) & Error Reporting (2.1.2: Location Services)
Class of Service (Wireline, Wireless Phase 0, 1, 2, VoIP, etc.) (2.1.2: Location Services)
Wireless Device Activations (automatic fall detection, satellite texting, crash notification) (2.1.2: Location Services)
Text-to-911 Processing (2.1.2: Location Services)
Integrated or Standalone TTY Equipment, Video Relay Services (2.1.1: Equipment)
Failure Operations (Phone, CAD & Radio) (2.1.1: Equipment)
Procedures and Techniques for Call Receiving
Accurate & Precise Location Identification (2.2.1: Accurate & Precise Location Identification)
Call Categorization & Prioritization (2.2.2: Incident Categorization & Prioritization)
Minimum Information to Process a Call (6 W's) (2.2.3: Minimum Information to Process a Call)
Reporting Party Interview Techniques (Type of Callers, Customer Service, Active Listening) (2.2.4: Reporting Party Interview Techniques)
Call Transfer (2.2.5: Call Transfer)
Caller and Scene Safety (2.2.6: Caller and Scene Safety)
Documentation (2.2.7: Documentation)
Crisis Intervention Training (2.2.9: Behavioral Health and Crisis Events)
Special Situations (Domestic Violence, Suicidal, End of Life Events) (2.2.8: Special Situations)
High Risk/Low Frequency Events (2.2.8: Special Situations)
Behavioral Health and Crisis Events (2.2.9: Behavioral Health and Crisis Events)
Missing Persons and Related Alerts (2.2.10: Washington State Alerts)

Procedures and Techniques for Dispatching

Minimum Information to Dispatch a Call ([2.3.1: Minimum Information to Dispatch an Incident](#))

Radio Speech & Etiquette ([2.3.2: Radio Speech & Etiquette](#))

Phonetic Alphabet ([2.3.3: Phonetic Alphabet](#))

Dispatch Updates ([2.3.4: Dispatch Updates](#))

Unit Tracking ([2.3.5: Unit Tracking](#))

Field Responder Safety Considerations ([2.3.6: Field Responder Safety Considerations](#))

Policies and Procedures

WA Public Safety Telecommunicator Certification Overview ([2.4.1: PST Certification Overview](#))

Professionalism, Respect, Civility ([2.4.2: Professionalism, Respect & Civility](#))

Continuity of Operations Plans ([2.4.3: Continuity of Operations Plans](#))

Agency and Personal Liability in Public Safety ([2.4.4: Agency and Personal Liability in Public Safety](#))

Public Records Act & Confidentiality ([2.4.5: Public Records Act & Confidentiality](#))

Health and Wellness

Stress Management ([2.5.1: Stress Management and Resiliency](#))

Resiliency ([2.5.1: Stress Management and Resiliency](#))

Compassion Fatigue ([2.5.1.: Stress Management and Resiliency](#))

Critical Incident Stress Management and Debriefing (CISM/CISD) ([2.5.1: Stress Management and Resiliency](#))

Employee Assistance Program ([2.5.2: PST Support Programs](#))

8 APPENDIX C – FAQs

Who is required to obtain PST certification?

All individuals who independently handle 911 calls or dispatch 911 incidents at an agency within Washington State must be certified as a Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST). This requirement ensures consistent and professional standards across all PSTs within the state.

How can I become eligible for PST certification?

To be eligible, you must be affiliated with a Washington State Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) or be enrolled in a state-approved training program. Additionally, you must complete a Washington State-approved Call Taking or Dispatching Telecommunicator Training Program and pass the applicable state examination.

What are the certification options for PSTs?

Certification is offered in three categories: Call Taking, Dispatching, and Dual Certification. You can apply for certification in one category or both, depending on your role and training within the PSAP.

What is Legacy Certification?

Legacy Certification is automatically granted to PSTs who were independently serving in a call-taking or dispatching role at the time the new certification standards were implemented. This certification is valid for two years, after which it must be renewed every three years to maintain active status.

How long is my PST certification valid?

Initial certification is valid for three years. Legacy certifications are valid for two years initially and then require renewal every three years thereafter. Recertification requirements must be completed before the expiration date to maintain an active certification status.

What are the continuing education requirements for recertification?

To renew certification, PSTs must complete a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education annually. This education covers key areas such as call handling, dispatching, crisis communication, and technology use to keep PSTs current with industry standards and practices.

What happens if my certification expires?

If certification expires and the PST is rehired within six months, they will have a six-month grace period to complete recertification requirements. If the certification has been expired for over six months, the PST must reapply through the full certification process.

Will new hires that were previously certified be required to take the certification test if they are expired beyond the grace period?

PSTs whose certification has been expired for more than six months must re-apply for certification including pass a state approved certification test.

Are there any costs associated with certification or recertification?

Yes, fees may apply for certification or recertification processes. The employing agency is typically responsible for covering these costs, along with the cost of ongoing training and continuing education needed for recertification.

Can I appeal a denial of my certification or recertification application?

Yes, agencies or individuals can appeal a certification or recertification denial. The appeal must be submitted in writing to SECO within 30 days of the decision, including details supporting the appeal. The Certification Board will review the appeal and issue a final decision.

What types of training are recognized for recertification?

Recognized training includes agency-provided training, state-approved training programs, and courses offered by industry associations. Training must align with continuing education categories listed in the handbook, covering areas such as legal updates, technology proficiency, crisis communication, and health and wellness.

Can training obtained through non-agency programs count toward certification?

Yes, non-agency training programs, such as those from community colleges or vocational institutes, may count toward certification if they are state-approved. These programs must meet the same standards as agency programs to be eligible.

How are changes to certification requirements communicated?

All updates to certification requirements are communicated through official email notifications, updates on the Certification Board’s website, newsletters, and relevant state 911 newsletters. A minimum of 90 days’ notice is provided before any new requirement takes effect, except in cases of immediate legal or regulatory changes.

Will laterals from out of state be allowed to be immediately certified in WA?

At this time there is no reciprocity with any other states. The Certification Board is planning to investigate this topic in future work.

What types of training will count towards continuing education?

Continuing education requirements are designed to be flexible, allowing agencies to select topics that align with their specific operational or PST needs. Please see section 4.3.3 Continuing Education Categories for more information.

Will CE be required to be related to the 5 main competencies listed in the syllabus?

Continuing education requirements are designed to be flexible, allowing agencies to select topics that align with their specific operational or PST needs. Please see section 4.3.3 Continuing Education Categories for more information.

Will a test of some kind be required for CE training?

Tests are not required for CE to be approved.

How will tracking the 24 hours of CE work for certification versus the state contract?

Right now, the two tracking and reporting mechanisms are separate. We believe the state contract policy may change to eliminate dual reporting.

Can the 24 hours per year of CE be averaged over the 3-year certification period?

No, the intent is for each PST to receive 24 hours per year.

Will the hours be tracked based on the fiscal year, calendar year, or the cohort the employee is certified with?

Training hours will be reported based on the PSTs recertification date (April 1 or October 1.)

Will the title of the state classes change from T1/T2 to TC (call taker)/TD (dispatcher) to match the certification options?

This question needs to be addressed to the state office.

Will the certification board have its own website with updated information about and contact information for members?

The certification board has a page on the State Emergency Management website, found at <https://mil.wa.gov/911-certification-board>.

Will there be a database of certified employees available to the public?

This may be obtained through a public records request.

How should agency training certification applicants submit their materials (USB, email, printed, etc.)?

The State 911 Coordination Office is managing the processes and is currently working this out.