

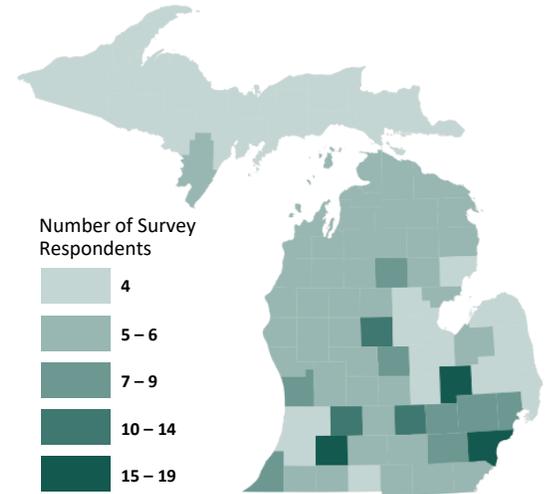
# Michigan Statewide Emergency Dispatch Survey

December 2021



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
School of Social Work  
Center for Behavioral Health and Justice

- This brief is the result of a partnership between the [Center for Behavioral Health and Justice](#) (CBHJ), the [National Emergency Number Association](#), and the [Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials](#).
- In 2021, the CBHJ administered an **online survey (N=114)** to Public Service Telecommunicators (PSTs) to understand the state's emergency dispatch system.
- Included here are the survey **findings** and **recommendations** to improve crisis response through dispatch.



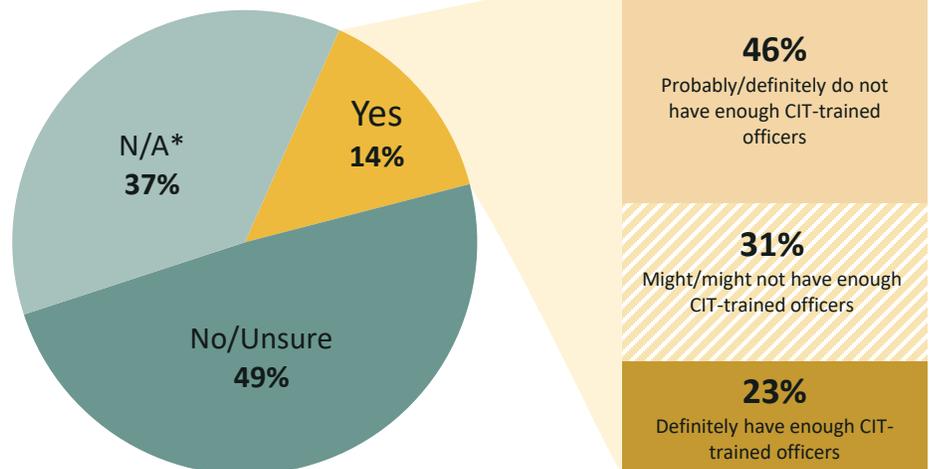
## Dispatch & behavioral health crisis lines

- **74%** reported that their Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) **receives calls from crisis lines**.
- Only **30%** of respondents said they will **refer callers to behavioral health crisis lines**.
- 19 respondents shared concerns of **liability** for transferring calls to behavioral health crisis lines.
- Many PSTs report they would benefit from more behavioral health training.
- Respondents shared concerns of **personal, PSAP, and emergency response system liability**.
- The risk of **not properly identifying low-risk mental health calls** was also a concern.

## Utilizing Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trained police officers

- Only **14% of respondents send CIT-trained officers** to crisis calls.
- Of those who have access to CIT-trained officers, only **23% reported “definitely having” enough officers**.
- Some dispatch centers **did not know about their local CIT program** until years after implementation.

Are CIT-trained officers specifically called out to behavioral health crisis calls?



\*No CIT-trained officers.

The Center for Behavioral Health and Justice envisions communities in which **Research, Data, and Best Practices** are used by multiple stakeholders to enhance the optimal well-being of individuals with mental illness and/or substance use disorders who come in contact with the criminal/legal system.

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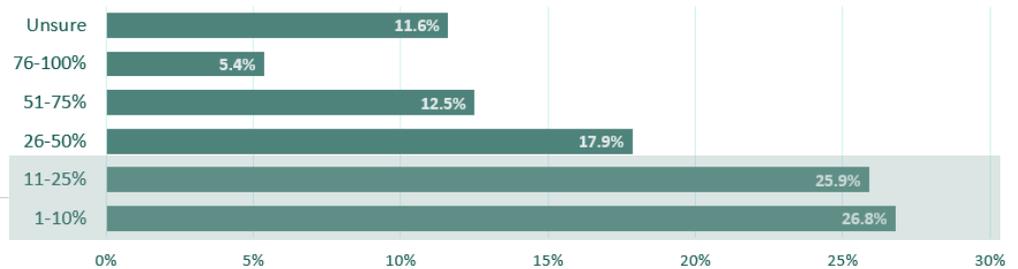


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## Identifying and coding mental health calls in dispatch systems

- There was no clear consensus on prevalence of mental health-related calls coming to 911.
- 50% of respondents estimate that **a quarter or less of all dispatch calls are mental health-related.**

Estimates of Mental Health-Related Calls as a Proportion of all Calls (n=112) \*



## Dispatch codes used for mental health crises

### MENTAL HEALTH (51.6%, n=47)

- Psychiatric
- Mental person or subject
- Insanity
- Emotionally disturbed person

### WELFARE CHECK (47.3%, n=43)

- Health & safety
- Safety/wellbeing
- With or without EMS

### SUICIDE (44.0%, n=40)

- Suicide in progress
- Suicidal person or subject
- Suicidal threat
- Suicidal thoughts or ideation

### OTHER (16.5%, n=15)

- Disorderly
- Disturbance
- Suspicious
- Weapons

### SUBSTANCE USE (12.1%, n=11)

- Overdose
- Drug
- Substance use or abuse

### MEDICAL (12.1%, n=11)

- Fire or police sick
- Ambulance
- Medical check
- Medic or medical

### ASSIST (5.5%, n=5)

- Assist citizen or person
- Service for department

- Across various call scenarios, **the most agreement** from dispatchers was **identifying a suicide call**, followed by substance use, then mental health related calls.
- There is **no uniform coding of mental health calls** across PSAPs.
- Out of 91 responses, including 31 unique counties\*, only **about half have specific call categories** for mental health needs.
- **New national dispatch standard from APCO recommends coding mental health crises.**

## Recommendations to improve crisis response collaboration with dispatch

- Behavioral health & criminal/legal **collaborations should include dispatch** to inform initiatives such as CIT, co-response, and mobile crisis units.
- Acknowledge **PSTs liability concerns** and role perception when considering crisis system change.
- Code behavioral health crisis calls within 911 data, like the **City of Detroit's Open Data Portal**. Without coding these calls, **we don't know how many mental health crises exist**, or how they unfold.
- Fund pilot programs that **embed crisis specialists, cross-train, and route calls** from 911 to crisis lines.

\*Some respondents did not answer every survey question, hence the smaller sample size in these two figures.

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