



**Weakley County 911
Accreditation Audit
September 18, 2012**

I. Introduction

I am pleased to be able to recognize the commitment that Weakley County 911 has made to being a quality agency by awarding them with Total Response Elite Accreditation. An audit was conducted on September 17-18, 2012. The following areas were a part of the agency assessment:

- Review of agency documentation
 - Standard of Care
 - Policy and Procedure
 - Call reviews
- Observation of dispatch practices
- Stakeholder interviews
- Agency plan for improvement

Each area assessed indicated that Weakley County 911 has complied with the requirements for Elite Accreditation.

II. Agency Overview

The Weakley County 911 center dispatches for 12 fire districts, four municipal police departments, three EMS stations, the sheriff's departments, THP, and numerous first responders and rescue personnel. They provide dispatch services with 10 dispatchers, one supervisor and one director.

Weakley County conducted Quality Assurance training on Monday, May 23, 2011. By August 2011, they had their Quality Assurance process in place and were monitoring the calls received by their staff.

On September 18, 2012, Weakley County 911, under the leadership of Director Jamison Peevyhouse and Supervisor Christy Fulcher, achieved Elite Accreditation. It was evident from the first dispatch observation to the stakeholder interviews that the commitment to quality permeated the entire organization.

The dispatchers at Weakley County will tell you that Jamison has always made the expected standard of care very clear: Make your focus taking care of callers and first responders and you will never have a problem. The QA program began with complete transparency to all members of the center. Their buy-in to the process was gained by

including them from the very beginning in establishing the process. Strong leadership and commitment to the development of employees has resulted in an environment where professionalism is evident in every customer contact and there is genuine care and concern for the citizens and first responders served.

Director Jamison Peevyhouse committed to the accreditation process to ensure that his agency was providing a consistently high level of service, with written policy and procedure based on industry best practices.

III. Documentation Review

The Standard of Care and Policies and Procedures required to establish an effective QA program were submitted for review in August 2012. The agency conducted the self-evaluation and submitted an Improvement Plan for final review in September 2012. Those documents will be attached as an addendum to this report.

Supervisor Christy Fulcher has the primary responsibility for QA call reviews. She provides each dispatcher with a monthly summary report where they can see their individual score and the scores attained by others, without any names. This has encouraged dispatchers to work harder to be sure that their scores are as high, if not higher than, their coworkers. She also meets with dispatchers face-to-face to provide feedback on their performance.

The hospital has been an active partner with Weakley County on the EMD portion of the protocols. They wanted to be able to track the Chest Pain calls and the resulting effect on the patients they were seeing. Christy indicated that this had a positive effect in that the dispatchers increased their attention to these calls and the performance and scores steadily improved in this area.

Christy would look for performance on specific types of calls from month-to-month. The documentation clearly demonstrated that some dispatchers were struggling as the documentation began in January 2012. It was interesting to note the steady improvements made in the following five months.

Monthly average QA scores were reported as follows with the beginning benchmark average score being 88 percent:

January	88%
February	96%
March	98%
April	97%
May	99%
June	95% (first month for all LEN calls)

Christy indicated that she worries about the credibility of the program and listens to calls, especially ones where the performance was poor, several times to be sure that she has her

information correct when evaluating the call. She also takes an extra step with high scores to make a personal note of encouragement to ensure continued good performance. Christy said she has had dispatchers tell her that they appreciate her comments.

As Christy has become more comfortable with the review process, she has noticed trends that she has investigated. One was dispatchers classifying calls as MISC. She looked to see if they could have been classified more accurately. This resulted in the dispatchers making better decisions on call classification.

The results of the monthly QA call reviews are presented to the 911 Board every two months. Christy said that they always felt they had a good center, and with the QA documentation, they are now able to prove it.

The next step in the documentation review was to listen to several calls while assessing the call review that had been conducted on the call. The calls were consistently accurate and reflected how well the employee had adhered to the protocol. One call that exemplified the professionalism and care the Weakley County dispatchers provide to their citizens was a chest pain call. After listening to the call, Christy gave me the background of the caller. Although the caller was a frequent flyer, the dispatcher was very compassionate, as if they were a first time caller. The dispatcher's actions were even more extraordinary because earlier that night a co-worker had been killed in an accident. Several times the dispatchers told me, "We just remember what Jamison always says: to take care of your callers and your first responders."

a. Summary

QA documentation was thorough and organized. Reviews appear fair and balanced, addressing both strengths and weaknesses of the individual and the center as a whole.

The expected standard of care is clearly supported in the written policy and procedures. The expectations for employee performance, responsibility, and accountability are clearly outlined.

IV. Dispatch Observation

On Monday, September 17, I observed the night shift with Tabby. Only one 911 call was received during my observation on this shift. The call was from an elderly woman who said that she was sick and couldn't reach her neighbor who usually picked up her mail for her. Tabby spent several minutes with the caller trying to resolve her problem. Finally, the patrol lieutenant on her way home stopped by the woman's home and retrieved her mail. This was my first indication that the commitment to quality permeates the entire organization.

Tabby was able to explain the Policy and Procedure relative to Total Response. More importantly, she believed it. She explained the improvements she has noticed since implementing the protocols and QA. She commented on how they use training to update their staff. When a dispatcher attends training, such as a protocol class, they are

responsible for bringing any updates back to the other dispatchers. They are able to keep their skills current, and everyone is able to benefit, even if they all cannot attend the training.

On Tuesday, September 18, I observed with dispatchers Daniel and Shawna. Shawna has been with the agency since January 1996 and Daniel has been with Weakley County for seven years. Daniel is a CTO. Daniel has noticed using the protocols has decreased the time it takes to train new dispatchers. The trainees are more confident and their ability to retain information has improved.

a. Summary

Dispatchers are aware of Policy and Procedure and the practices in the center mirror the P&Ps. Each is aware of the expected Standard of Care and strives to achieve it in the performance of their duties. I was very impressed with the commitment each dispatcher had to the citizens and first responders they serve. They went the extra mile each and every time to provide a high level of quality service.

V. Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews are conducted to judge the perceived effectiveness of the Total Response protocol system and the improvements noted as a result of implementing a QA program.

a. Randy McGowan, Chief Investigator, Weakly County Sheriff's Office

Investigator McGowan has been a dispatcher and EMT and has worked his way up the ranks and is now the Chief Investigator for the Sheriff's Office. He feels the dispatchers are meeting the Standard of Care and are "religious" about following the protocols. He is concerned that the center is understaffed. At times, there is only one dispatcher on duty when a minimum of two is needed at all times. He has noticed that the service provided to the public has improved, especially with the EMD pre-arrival instructions. His concern is that it has been harder on first responders because the dispatcher is busy handling the call and has less time to talk to first responders. He also noted that the dispatchers were better equipped to provide answers to officer's questions.

Investigator McGowan expressed his concern with the challenges the dispatchers face. The call volume has steadily increased and the staffing has not. Finding addresses is difficult because road signs are destroyed or stolen, and the county cannot afford to replace them. He would like to see new dispatchers required to ride along with patrol to learn the county firsthand.

b. Ricky Cobb, Assistant Chief, Dresden PD

Assistant Chief Cobb has been with the Dresden Police Department for 26 years. He had nothing but praise for the Weakley County 911 dispatch staff. He said they are accurate and prompt in gaining enough information for officers to be aware of what they are walking into. They are professional, getting good

information and addresses. He said, “They are a good bunch who have evolved and gotten better over time.” He referred to the dispatchers as “our dispatchers” and said they know what to do and when to do it. They know their priorities and follow the protocols. They are good about providing updates to help officers prepare for what they will find on scene.

Assistant Chief Cobb commented that the EMA (Jamison) tightened things up and brought everyone together so that all are on a level playing field. He has implemented plans for dispatch and ensures that all public safety trains together for earthquakes and tornados. He confidently stated that whatever happens, this dispatch center can handle it.

He would like to see the center stay on track with the direction it is going.

c. *Rick Workman, Paramedic Supervisor & TJ Rook, Paramedic*

Rick has been a paramedic since 1983. He has worked at two other agencies before coming to Weakley County. He said, “Jamison and his folks are heads above the other dispatchers I’ve worked with. We are always blessed with the people we have.” They are quick to address issues and do a good job of training the dispatchers. Response times have improved because of the efficiency of the dispatchers. He noted that most of the dispatchers had a medical background. The new hires coming on without a medical background have done better as a result of having the EMD protocols. Rick commented that when dispatch suspects there may be a problem on scene requiring law enforcement, they always have our backs and are looking out for us.

One area that still needs to be improved is more with radio communications and locating houses. He told me the same story that Randy McGowan had about missing street signs and the difficulty of finding addresses. He would like to see the public educated about EMD and the technologies they have available to them.

d. *Kim Higgs, Lieutenant, Weakley County Sheriff’s Office*

Lt. Higgs is the department’s training officer. She is responsible for reviewing calls for service. She voiced strong concern over how the narrative from CACH appears. Since going to CACH, the content of the narrative and how it is presented has slowed her down in her ability to do her QA. The narrative is very difficult to read. There needs to be one concise paragraph for officers to be able to see what happened on a call. Officers can’t use the notes to remember what happened on a call like they used to prior to CACH. These notes used to be relied on when going to court.

Lt. Higgs feels this is a document that is used in court and makes their agency look bad. It should be readable and understandable for anyone looking at it. I tried to explain that the way EmergiTech parses the data is the problem. PowerPhone will send Jamison examples of narratives from other CADs to show what is possible if the CAD vendor will work to correct the issue.

VI. Improvement Plan

The agency self-evaluation revealed that the dispatchers were having difficulty with the pre-arrival instructions and asking the primary questions. Christy worked with the dispatchers to improve their understanding of how best to use the protocols and the expectations for compliance.

In the beginning, it seemed as if the longer-tenured employees were having a hard time adapting to the protocols, whereas the newer employees were very quick to adopt the protocols. I believe it was easier for the newer employees for the fact that they weren't responsible for remembering all the questions and making sure they asked the correct questions. Once everyone started getting used to the protocols, the scores increased.

Weakley County has been effectively making CACH work for their agency's needs. When they come across an area where their procedures need to be reflected, they contact Greg Sheehan with PowerPhone and work to make the system work more effectively for them.

VII. Closing Meeting

Normally the closing meeting is used to review the findings of the accreditation audit and to make suggestions for improvement. Weakley County's QA program is working exactly as it should be. I really was not able to identify anything specific that they needed to work on or improve upon in the next two years. They are progressing and making improvements with each month's QA review. The results are being used effectively to identify trends, training needs, staffing needs, etc. Jamison was able to secure one additional dispatcher who will start in the near future.

Jamison and Christy did have some suggestions for ideas where PowerPhone could better work to help the agencies we work with. They would like to see a newsletter that addresses issues, such as tech support, what different agencies are doing, how other agencies have implemented QA, and the successes and challenges they have encountered. They would like to see specific sections for QA on scoring and tactics used.

Accreditation is being awarded to Weakley County 911, effective September 18, 2012.

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Addendum I

Agency Plan for Improvement

The Quality Assurance (QA)

- Each dispatcher shall have a minimum of one random call per month submitted to QA. Also, each dispatcher shall have a minimum 3 Nature code: Chest Pain submitted to QA each quarter.
- The copy of all scores and copies of calls that are reviewed are given back to the dispatcher; the dispatcher will see everyone's scores but only see a name by their individual score.
- The dispatcher also receives a copy of the card that was pulled and reasons listed on the card of which, if any, questions they missed.
- Helpful hints are added to the bottom of scores page. Provide pre-arrival, attempt to ask all questions, even if caller wants to get off phone, etc.
- We set our standard at 85% as the group score average.

Agency Self Evaluation

- All dispatchers/call handlers are certified in all three disciplines (LE, FD, and EMD) through PowerPhone at this time.
- We have adopted both Total Response call handling disciplines.
 - The dispatchers are required to use the CACH program for every call for service when the CACH program is initiated.
 - The flip charts are also located at each call taking station in case of a computer malfunction.
- We have 3 dispatchers that attended the Total Response Quality Assurance Certification Course and are certified.

Findings

- QA reviews identified that Pre-Arrival Instructions has been identified as a weakness for our call takers. In most cases it seemed like the call taker would disconnect before attempting to provide pre-arrival. They were advised that pre-arrival will be offered on every call where CACH is provided. They were also advised by not providing the pre-arrival it affects their score which in turn affects their future raises.
- Also identified is that some dispatchers are not asking ALL questions. Most common cause I found is call takers stating they didn't feel like all the questions were applicable. For instance, Motor Vehicle Accident; they didn't feel like "has anyone been thrown from the vehicle?" was necessary if it had already been established that there were no injuries involved. Also some didn't feel appropriate asking 80 or 90 year old females if

they were pregnant. Another scenario they had was the questions involved with the Alarm Sounding call. In which I spoke with Greg at PowerPhone and we added a new question into the file that takes into consideration when the call comes from an Alarm company. These problems were addressed either by the Dispatch Supervisor or a PowerPhone employee. Other scenario involved when a caller requested to get off the phone, the dispatchers disconnected instead of attempting to ask further questions. (We have always advised our dispatchers not to make someone stay on the line when they are uncomfortable.)The dispatchers were advised if they attempted to ask the caller or advised caller they had more questioning then their scores would not be affected by the matter.

- Dispatch staff is providing a consistently high level of customer service thus.
- In the beginning it seemed as if the longer tenured employees were having a hard time adapting to the protocols where the newer employees were very quickly to use the protocols. I believe it was easier for the newer employees for the fact that they weren't responsible for remembering all the questions and making sure they asked the correct questions. Once everyone started getting used to the protocols then the scores increased.
- I believe giving the dispatchers the copy of the card that was graded and writing comments on the card stated what they missed or how they could improve helped them as well. Also, by making comments where they were superior helped boost their morale about the program.
- Copies of all Chest Pains calls that are graded are sent to the local hospital. By knowing that outsiders are seeing the call takers' scores, I think it helps make them strive to have better scores as well.

Addendum II

Standard of Care

Weakley County 911 Emergency Communications District PO Box 911 – Dresden, Tennessee 38225

Standard 1: All call handlers will be certified in all three of the call handling disciplines.

Any employee who, in the performance of their duties, is responsible for handling an emergency phone call for service from the public must be certified in all three of the Total Response disciplines (LE, FD, and EMD). All new employees should be certified within one year of employment.

Standard 2: Weakley County 911 has adopted both of the Total Response call handling disciplines.

The flipcard protocols and CACH will always remain available for immediate use at each appropriate work station. The flipcards will remain on each console at all times. At the start of every shift it is the responsibility of the dispatcher to log into the CACH program and it shall remain active during the entire shift.

Standard 2.1: The expected standard of care is that the Total Response protocols will be used on every appropriate call for service.

In adopting the call handling procedures, Weakley County 911 is committed to a consistent standard of care using the protocols. The expectation of the call handlers is to ask primary questions and provide pre-arrival instructions for all calls where appropriate.

Standard 3: At least one member of the agency will be certified and trained to implement the QA process; the agency will sponsor employees in the Total Response Assurance Certification Course. The course will provide the employee(s) with the knowledge and tools needed to implement an effective QA program.

Standard 4: Weakley County 911 has implemented a QA process in accordance with the specifications put forth in the QA Certification Course. The program has means to define, measure, and improve quality.

Weakley County 911 wants to provide every citizen/caller with the same standard of care as the next.

Addendum III

Policy and Procedure

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5.4 Call Taking

5.4.1 When taking calls in progress, the telecommunicator shall use the appropriate aids to obtain information from the caller and dispatch the appropriate units. These aids include, but are not limited to: CACH, flipcharts, CAD system, HazMat booklets.

5.4.1.1 The Center is a Total Response Agency; therefore the telecommunicators will use and adhere to the Total Response Protocols in every instance where the protocols are available.

5.4.1.2 All telecommunicators will be certified in Public Safety Dispatching within the first year of employment. All telecommunicators will be re-certified every two years.

5.4.1.3 All questions shall be asked in a timely manner and pre-arrival instructions shall be offered when necessary.

5.4.1.4 Quality Assurance will be monitored to make sure telecommunicators are using the program as required. Telecommunicators will be advised of their scores and remediation will be provided if necessary. Telecommunicators are also advised future raises will be affected by QA scores.

5.4.2 In most cases, the caller should be kept on the line when reporting crimes in progress, providing progressive reports, or when the telecommunicator may provide pre-arrival instructions that will affect the outcome of the call.

5.4.3 The caller should not be kept on the line if the caller is in a situation or location that is detrimental to their well-being or safety. If the caller may be in jeopardy, the telecommunicator shall instruct the caller to move to a safer location. The telecommunicator may ask the caller to leave the phone off the hook so that the telecommunicator may audibly monitor the scene.

5.4.4 When obtaining the location of an incident, the telecommunicator should obtain the address, nearest crossroad, resident's name, landmark, residential description, or any other information that may assist the responders in finding the caller's location.

5.4.5 The telecommunicator should understand that information given over the phone may be given under duress, and therefore, possibly not true. The telecommunicator should always consider that the caller may give false information or that the caller may be the victim or the assailant.