



City of Roanoke E-911 Center

Memorandum



To: Sonya Roman, Department Manager
CC: E911 Staff
From: Joshua Mason, Training Coordinator
Date: February 4, 2022
Re: 2021 Community Involvement Annual Report

The Community Involvement Annual Report gives the 911 Center an opportunity to survey outside factors in our community that may impact our Department and Public Safety services delivery in general. This report also serves to highlight attended events and track interaction with the citizens of Roanoke. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Community Involvement Team was only able to attend one public event during 2021.

During this year, while our team was only able to attend one public event, the group focused on revamping materials and utilizing social media, when applicable, to keep the community informed and engaged.

Community Education

We are committed to educating the citizens of Roanoke to ensure understanding of our public safety system and how to best access and use this service. Like most communities we continue to see an increase in cellular phone calls for our services and we have found that the vast majority have misconceptions of how this technology works. Since implementing services such as Text-to-911 in 2016, the department has seen a consistent increase in the number of citizens contacting the department by this method. It is important for the department to continue to educate citizens to ensure their understanding of the benefits and challenges of this technology

and other equipment and technologies we utilize. The department also utilizes social media as a means of community education by posting information during high priority events such as storms, staff achievements, job openings, the accreditation process, and highlighting community involvement efforts.

There were 14 members of the Community Involvement Team in 2021. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, there was no attendance goal set for this year. However, there was a 27% increase in team membership when compared to 2020 (11 members). Also, there was a more even distribution, department wide of team members. Had the team been able to participate in events it likely would not have faced the same scheduling conflicts due to this more even distribution of members.

As the pandemic continues to be a concern in 2022 an attendance goal is harder to project. Exposure possibilities remain of high concern to both the members of the team and the potential impact to operations in the center. The team will focus much of its efforts for 2022 in digital engagement via social media and other means. When it is deemed safe to do so, the team will return to in-person events.

Social Media

The 911 center launched a department Facebook page in March of 2015. In 2018, we had approximately over 2,500 likes. By the end of 2021 we were at approximately 3900. 400 of those were added in 2021. This is significant because it shows a sustainable online presence and growth in spite of the pandemic and restrictions on in-person events. We have grown our presence by 10% annually for the last 3 years running. We have utilized the page to push out general information to our citizens, during severe weather events and to share special events such as progress on the new center, staff achievements, and other activities related to the center. Much of the increase in followers is contributed to high quality content and strategic posting days and times.

In 2021, we specifically utilized social media to educate the public about employee achievements and recognition, as well as job postings and recruiting. This was a vital element in our communication with the public to both inform as well as recruit. During the height of the pandemic we continued promote open positions and hire.

We include a statement on our Facebook page advising citizens not to use Facebook as a means of reporting an emergency to the department. We will continue to work closely with the City of Roanoke office of Citizen Engagement to enhance and improve our social media exposure.

Our use of social media in 2021 was similar to 2020 in the number of people we were able to engage with. We reached over 110,000 people over the span of the year and averaged 11,000 people reached per month. Again, this is significant due to the fact that the team had nearly zero in-person, face to face contact with citizens in 2021.

Media Requests

In 2021, other than basic media requests related to calls for service, there were two requests from media. One was related to the Center's Telecommunicator of the Year, and the other was related to an equipment malfunction in the 911 center requiring response from the Fire Department. In 2021, we will continue to look for ways to interact with the news media to highlight achievements and accomplishments in the center and as a means to further inform and educate the public.

Recruitment Events

We will continue to work with our Human Resources Department to expand our departments' efforts to attend both local and regional recruitment opportunities. Our team members who attend these recruitment events will continue to receive specialized training in this area.

Translation Services

The Hispanic population in the City of Roanoke increased to 6.3 percent as of the Decennial Census Count, April 1, 2020. The E-911 center utilizes Voiance to assist us with interpretation on a multitude of languages. In 2020, we took a total of 725 calls requiring translation services. 667 of those calls were for Spanish translation (92%). This is 1 percent lower than 2020. There was 9.5% increase in the total number of calls requiring an interpreter. In 2020, we had a total of 662 calls requiring an interpreter. 618 of those calls were for Spanish translation, representing 93 percent of requests.

We had translation requests for a total of 12 different languages in 2021 (14 in 2020). The second highest demand of translation services was Swahili with 16 calls or 2.2 percent of total calls. These numbers reflect that our total number of calls has increased. The numbers reflect calls requiring Spanish interpreters increased by 49 calls compared to 2019. However, the percentage of calls requiring translations services for Spanish went down slightly. This reduction is not reflective of any population changes. It is most likely attributed to a general increase in call-volume due to ongoing pandemic issues and the current socio-political climate.

It should also be noted that the use of translation services is useful to track multi-cultural requests for service but does not accurately reflect the true composition or percentage of callers. Some of the requests for service may be from other cultures. However, the caller or a relative of the caller may communicate well enough in English to not require translation services through a language service. It should also be noted that foreign language speaking families living in the City of Roanoke may have school aged children who are bi-lingual and can translate for family members.

We will continue to work with the City's Neighborhood Services and Human Resources department to increase our exposure to the Hispanic and other diverse communities.

Summation

Our department faced extreme challenges this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the team was not able to operate as it normally would, the members all remain extremely passionate about educating the public and interacting. The team is committed to raising awareness and education about the functions and services of the department while also being the face of its recruitment efforts. The team is looking forward to a possible return to normal in 2022.