

Marcus Alert

Newsletter on Marcus Alert and the Crisis Transformation for Region 4 of Virginia

Region 4 Trainings

Crisis Services Transformation Training

To learn more about the expansion of mental health crisis services across our nation, state, and region, sign up for the Region 4 Crisis Services Transformation Training on Tuesday, February 10th from 1-3pm via Zoom. CSB employees can register on [Relias](#) with the code 021026. Partners can email hannah.neukrug@rbha.org to sign up.

Marcus Alert Training

To learn more about the Marcus Alert legislation and its impact on crisis response in our region, sign up for the Region 4 Marcus Alert Training on Tuesday, March 3rd from 1-3pm via Zoom. CSB employees can register on [Relias](#) with the code 030326. Partners can email hannah.neukrug@rbha.org to sign up.



911 Q&A

What is the history of 911?

In 1968, the U.S. adopted 911 as the single, universal emergency phone number. However, it took many years for 911 to be built into what we know today. 911 covered just 17% of the population in 1979, expanded to 50% by 1987, and finally reached near-total coverage in the early 2000s. Today, the technology behind 911 continues to evolve to support a faster, more accurate, more resilient, and more connected system.

What is the role of 911 in mental health crisis response?

It is estimated that about 20% of 911 calls are related to a mental health or substance use crisis. 911 Emergency Communications Officers (ECOs) receive these calls, gather vital information, and dispatch first responders as appropriate. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers an alternative to 911 for these calls. However, 988 is still in its infancy, and a recent survey indicates that over half (54%) of U.S. adults would call 911 during a mental health crisis ([Ueda et al., 2025](#)).

How does Marcus Alert impact 911 operations?

A key component of Virginia's Marcus Alert legislation involves 911 centers diverting behavioral health calls to behavioral health responses. To do so, each 911 center works with their locality to develop a framework for triaging mental health 911 calls. This framework must include transferring mental health calls classified as "low-level" to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. If available, the framework may also include dispatching community response or co-response teams. To learn more about Marcus Alert, check out [DBHDS's website](#).

Richmond 911 Feature

In this newsletter, we are featuring two Emergency Communications Officers (ECOs) from Richmond's Department of Emergency Communications, Preparedness and Response, also known as Richmond 911! Keep reading to learn about Dominique and Kim.



What is your role with Richmond 911?

Dominique: I am an Emergency Communications Officer (ECO).

I am going on year three come November. I am a call taker, police dispatcher, and fire dispatcher.

Kim: I am an ECO, and I have worked here for one year. I am a call taker, and I am training on radio.

What made you interested in working at Richmond 911?

Dominique: I wanted a career change. I was previously working in the healthcare sector specializing in geriatrics, mental health, and intellectual disabilities.

Kim: I think the job found me – I was in banking for 30 years and was laid off. I was looking for something new and different. To me, it's a way to give back and help the citizens of Richmond.

What is the most challenging part of job as it relates to taking mental health crisis calls?

Dominique: Not being able to continue with follow-up care. I am a QMHP, and I am used to assisting the person in crisis with being linked to community resources. Once I take the call, that's it. I don't know if the person ever received the help they needed.

Kim: Trying to make sure that those in crisis get the help they need when they need it. For instance, sometimes sending the police can irritate or aggravate the situation even more.

What is the most rewarding part of your job as it relates to taking mental health crisis calls?

Dominique: Being able to participate in the Mental Health Incident Review Committee. I feel like I can use my educational and professional experiences to collaborate on other responses that can be provided to our citizens.

Kim: When help arrives – Making sure that they are getting help, whether that is the 988 crisis line or an in-person response.

What is something you wish the general public knew or understood about being an ECO?

Dominique: It's not like TV - We are not chasing anyone out of the center. We are your first responders. We can be the voice that really matters in a time of crisis.

Kim: As the call takers, we put in the call for service and send the appropriate response, but we cannot give suggestions or advice. Also, we have to ask certain questions and there is a purpose for them. Asking the questions does not delay help.



Have questions?

Feel free to contact Hannah Neukrug, Marcus Alert Coordinator for Region 4, at: hannah.neukrug@rbha.org