



County Technical Assistance Service
INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

May 01, 2025

Dispatchers

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Dispatchers

Reference Number: CTAS-1239

While sheriffs do not have a statutory obligation to provide dispatching services, dispatching is a necessary and reasonable support activity that helps the modern sheriff's office carry out the sheriff's statutory duties. *Jones v. Mankin*, 1989 WL 44924 (Tenn. Ct. App. 1989) (Courts may approve the cost of support personnel when they are required).

Minimum Qualifications.

After May 1, 1989, any person employed as a public safety dispatcher shall:

1. Be at least 18 years of age;
2. Be a citizen of the United States;
3. Be a high school graduate or possess equivalency;
4. Not have been convicted or pleaded guilty to or entered a plea of nolo contendere to any felony charge or to any violation of any federal or state laws or city ordinances relating to force, violence, theft, dishonesty, gambling, liquor or controlled substances;
5. Not have been released or discharged under other than an honorable or medical discharge from any of the armed forces of the United States;
6. Have their fingerprints on file with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation;
7. Have passed a physical examination by a licensed physician; and
8. Have a good moral character as determined by a thorough investigation conducted by the employing agency.

T.C.A. § 7-86-205(d).

Notwithstanding other provisions of law to the contrary, the law in effect prior to May 1, 1994, relative to public safety dispatchers applies to any person who had more than five years of continuous employment as a public safety dispatcher on May 1, 1994. T.C.A. § 7-86-205(f).

Training

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 7-86-205(a), all emergency call takers and public safety dispatchers who receive initial or transferred 911 calls from the public are subject to the training and course of study requirements established by the Emergency Communications Board created pursuant to T.C.A. § 7-86-302.

Beginning July 1, 2006, all emergency call takers and public safety dispatchers must have successfully completed a course of study approved by the Emergency Communications Board. All emergency call takers and public safety dispatchers employed after July 1, 2006, have six months from the date of their employment to successfully complete the approved course of study. T.C.A. § 7-86-205(c) and (e).

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