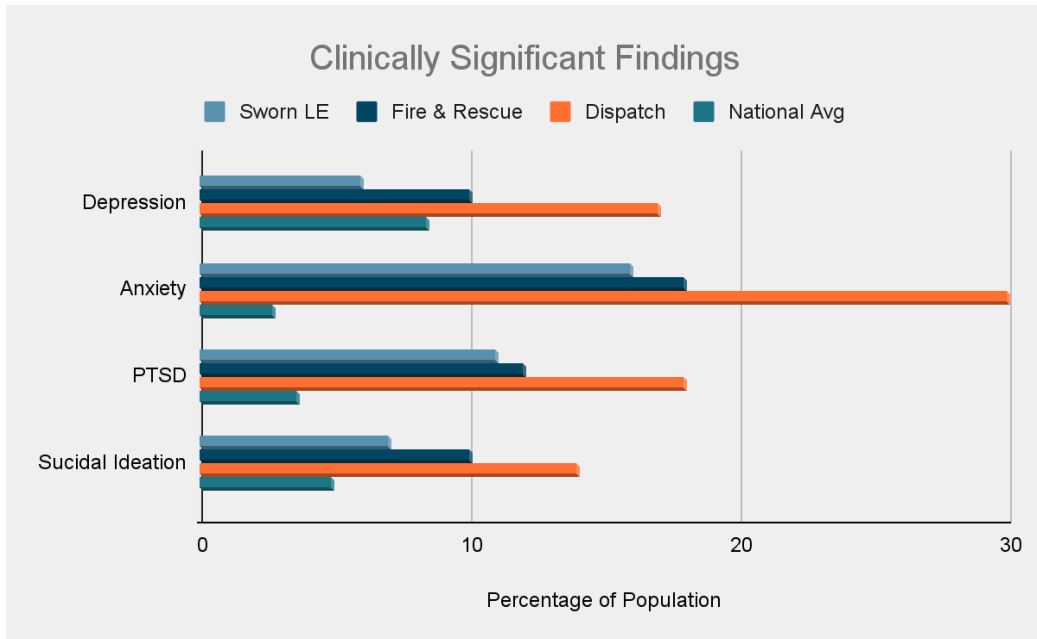


Telecommunicators as First Responders

There is an overwhelming need to address the wellness of public safety personnel. Given high rates of repeated exposure to traumatic events, research has shown elevated mental health concerns in this population, namely depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse, and suicide.¹ 8,710 respondents from 165 agencies and 25 states were represented in the survey.

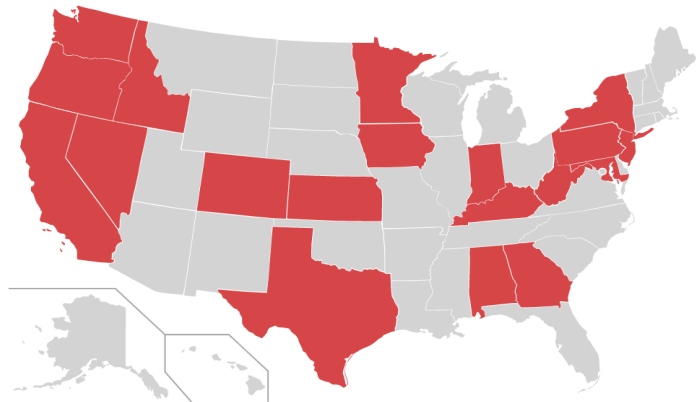
Findings

Recent data reported by NIMH illustrates how those in 911 dispatch are **much more likely** than the national average or other public safety agencies to meet or exceed diagnostic criteria for depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidality.



Dispatch Exposure to Trauma

Dispatchers reported PTSD symptoms when handling traumatic calls **as they were happening**. Typically, dispatchers are reluctant to utilize mental health resources. Reasons cited include stigma, fear of losing their job or security clearance, or confidentiality.



Conclusion

Despite repeated exposure to critical incidents, low job satisfaction, and high mental health diagnoses, dispatchers are not classified federally as first responders; thus limiting their protections and access to resources. The data supports that it is beyond time to reclassify dispatchers and emergency call takers as first responders.

Only 19 of 50 states² recognize dispatchers as first responders, with many states deferring to the federal classification. Recognition is too slow to be handled on a state level. Federally, dispatchers **must** be recognized as first responders and afforded the same protections and considerations as their partners in Law Enforcement, Fire, and Rescue.

¹ National Wellness Survey for Public Safety Personnel Summary Report (November 2022)
² National Emergency Number Association Telecommunicator Reclassification Map. (2023)