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NENA  
Recommended Public Education Plan  
for  
Interim SMS Text-to-9-1-1

### **1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to assist NENA members with educating the public, special interest groups, and other key stakeholders regarding the implementation of Interim SMS Text-to-9-1-1.

The following best practice document can be easily adapted to fit the size, budget, and political nature of individual regions. Attached to this document are several sample educational materials and presentations that may be utilized in any combination.

### **2.0 Scope**

The scope of the attachments included herein are intended to be offered as examples only and 9-1-1 Authorities and PSAPs will need to consider how to implement or adapt each one to suit their individual agency needs.

9-1-1 Authorities and PSAPs will therefore need to review each of the attachments and carefully consider what changes or modifications are required to achieve the desired outcomes.

In addition, all aspects of the ever evolving technology must be constantly reviewed and therefore the attachments should be considered living documents that should be reviewed on a regular basis.

### **3.0 Public Education Plan**

The NENA NG9-1-1 Education and Training Working Group collected information from the early adopters of Interim SMS Text-to-9-1-1 and created a recommended public education plan. The plan is broken down into the logical steps necessary to create and implement a public education campaign based on local/regional considerations. The public education plan needs to be part of the overall interim Text-to-9-1-1 implementation plan.

#### **3.1 Identify the Issue/Reason for Public Education**

Interim SMS Text-to-9-1-1 service is quickly being implemented across the country by the four major wireless carriers. A comprehensive public education program must be planned carefully to notify the public of this important technological advancement and the proper way that 9-1-1 should be used in an emergency. There are various issues related to Text-to-9-1-1 technology that need to be properly expressed to various audiences.

In addition, there may be unique considerations to the text deployment that need to be conveyed to the public. For example, is texting available in a city but not the surrounding unincorporated areas or is it available in one or two jurisdictions but not the remainder of adjoining areas?

9-1-1 Authorities are encouraged to have a plan to help citizens identify their PSAP jurisdictions where Text-to-9-1-1 is available. For example, if 3-1-1 is utilized it may be considered a method for citizens to call and find out if their area has Text-to-9-1-1 capability. The 9-1-1 Authority may choose to publish a non-emergency number for the PSAP or direct the public to a content appropriate webpage.

9-1-1 Authorities are encouraged to identify the specific reason or issue they would like to address with their educational plan.

### **3.2 Identify Target Audience**

Before beginning an educational program, it is important to identify primary and secondary audiences. Pertinent information may differ by audience and may need to be disseminated in a different format.

#### **3.2.1 Primary Audience**

The primary audience is considered the user(s) of the service, such as the public. The primary audience may differ in each agency. One factor to consider when determining primary audience is jurisdiction(s). 9-1-1 Authorities and PSAPs may need to work with surrounding jurisdictions to ensure the public is aware of where the service is available. Consider your own community and identify partners within local organizations, associations, and community groups who can assist with the educational process.

Examples of primary audiences include:

- i. General Public
- ii. Deaf, hard of hearing, or individuals with speech disabilities
- iii. Domestic violence advocates
- iv. Persons who are unable to speak due to medical or other conditions
- v. College campuses and universities
- vi. Persons whose first language is not English
- vii. School-age children
- viii. Senior Citizens
- ix. Others with special needs

#### **3.2.2 Secondary Audience**

The secondary audience includes persons who will be sharing the information, such as public officials and users of the information, such as responders. Secondary audiences may need additional information including talking points, FAQs, etc.

Examples of secondary audiences include:

- i. Elected and Appointed Public officials and their staff
- ii. PSAP Personnel

- iii. Responders
- iv. Other Organizations such as emergency management
- v. Wireless Service Providers (WSPs)

### 3.3 Identify Recommended Message

The majority of 9-1-1 authorities still prefer citizens to make a voice call to 9-1-1 if at all possible. Based on several focus groups, NENA along with several other industry representatives, created the tag line: “9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t.” NENA believes that texting should only be used when a voice call to 9-1-1 is not possible.

#### 3.3.1 Logo

NENA developed the “9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t” phone logo and is in the process of trademarking it. The logo was created in order to encourage using a consistent message to the public across the nation in regards to Text-to-9-1-1. The graphic is available for use on promotional items, documents, in your social media, and anywhere else you are educating about Text-to-9-1-1. Use of the slogan “9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t” is highly encouraged even if you are unable to use the graphic.



NENA encourages the use of the slogan and the logo for public education by all industry partners and 9-1-1 centers/agencies across the nation. The trademark is being put in place only to protect the integrity of the logo and message. When using the logo please follow the rules in **Appendix A**.

#### 3.3.2 Messaging

The following messaging, created by the NENA NG9-1-1 Education and Training Working Group addresses the unique issues presented by the Interim SMS text-to-9-1-1 solution:

- The location information accompanying a text-to-9-1-1 call is not equal to wireless voice call location technology.
- As with all text messages, 9-1-1 text messages can take longer to receive, may be delivered out of order, or may not be received at all.
- Text-to-9-1-1 is not available if you are in a “roaming” situation.
- A text or data plan is required to place a text to 9-1-1.

- If texting to 9-1-1 is not available in your area, or is temporarily unavailable, you will receive a message indicating that texting 9-1-1 is not available and to contact 9-1-1 by other means.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 9-1-1 at this time.
- Text-to-9-1-1 cannot include more than one person. Do not copy your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1. Wait until you are safe to notify others of your situation.
- **Do not text and drive!**

It is also important to understand that each 9-1-1 Authority and text deployment is unique and NENA encourages modifying the messaging to address the communities' demographics, particular public safety needs, and levels of service available in the area.

### **3.4 Implement Campaign**

Once the public education plan is completed, the next step is to execute the plan. Below are some of the possible elements in implementing the educational campaign.

#### **3.4.1 Determine Timeline**

Before beginning any outreach activities, determine a reasonable timeline for implementation. It is important to know when the service will be available, where it will be available, and if it will include all or only some wireless providers. Special consideration should be made to surrounding 9-1-1 agencies within the same media market. For example, it may be more appropriate to contact the local/community newspapers instead of larger TV or radio outlets in areas where texting is not available everywhere.

#### **3.4.2 Types of Outreach**

##### **3.4.2.1 Proactive Outreach**

9-1-1 Authorities may consider meeting with select stakeholders prior to implementation of the interim texting solution. During the meeting provide stakeholders with basic information about the texting solution and solicit feedback.

For a list of suggested stakeholders and additional information see Section 3.4.2.5 Special Interest Group Communications. Stakeholder groups will vary based on local demographics.

##### **3.4.2.2 Response to Inquiries**

All 9-1-1 Authorities, especially those in or near a region that is deploying texting, are strongly encouraged to be prepared with a statement regarding the 9-1-1 organization's plan for implementation. In addition, be prepared to respond by having media talking points prepared. Always begin and end talking points with the purpose of the service – "9-1-1 Call if you can; Text if you can't."

##### **3.4.2.3 News Release**

A news release can be used in conjunction with a news conference or on its own. A news release is a document that informs the media about news that the public needs to know. If a news conference is held, a news release can be disseminated to those that attend as well as released after the conference even to those that did not attend (see below for more info about News Conferences). However, even if a news conference is not planned, a news release will help to disseminate a consistent message to all of the media in the local area.

News releases should be brief; one page is best and no more than two pages.

NENA strongly encourages the use of the Text-to-9-1-1 logo, as well as the slogan “9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can’t” in the news release. The body of the news release should cover the basic message and major takeaways and then provide a place that the public can go for further information, such as a webpage.

Providing one or two quotes from a local authority (Sheriff, Mayor, Director of 9-1-1, etc.) can help to break up the text and it also helps to provide legitimacy to the message. In addition, the media are more likely to cover the story if it features local authorities.

9-1-1 authorities are encouraged to notify both the WSP and the Text Control Center (TCC) when issuing a press release related to deployment.

Make sure that the news release is “press-ready” as many outlets simply run the story as it is written. As part of the setup of the document you will need to provide a contact name and phone number should the media want to do an interview or ask further questions. News releases should then be distributed to all media outlets in your area. Every agency should have a Public Information Officer (PIO) or a designated point of contact that can assist with completing and distributing the news release. A template news release is attached **Appendix C**.

A document outlining talking points should be created before putting out a news release. This document is for internal use and is meant ensure all partners deliver a consistent message if the public or media contacts them. It is extremely important the contacts listed in the news release have a copy of the talking points. Also provide a copy to the Public Information Officer and elected officials (including their team – for example, his/her Chief of Staff). The talking-points document is not intended to be published and should be written in a conversational manner. The four main components of a talking-points document are:

1. The issue: Why is this news worthy? What are the details behind why you think the media may be calling about this topic?
2. The key messages: Include approximately three key messages that you want the public to know or do in relation to the topic. These points should be memorized

and easy to recite. Use these messages at every opportunity (including when you want to deflect and bring the media back to what you want them to know).

3. The spokespeople: Include the name and contact information for the designated contact person.
4. Answers to likely questions: In this section, develop questions you think are going to be asked and provide appropriate answers. Do not avoid hard questions because it is better to be prepared than to have someone fumble through a question they are unprepared to answer. Remember, this document is for your partners as well as your spokesperson so remaining consist is key, especially on issues that are difficult or politically sensitive.

#### 3.4.2.4 News Conference

A 9-1-1 authority may choose to hold a news conference to effectively communicate the deployment of the texting service in an area. Prior to determining whether to hold a news conference, the following considerations should be evaluated:

- i. Ensure that a texting solution is available throughout the majority of the media market.
- ii. Determine if surrounding 9-1-1 jurisdictions will be impacted by an announcement.
- iii. Identify the percentage of the population covered by the deployed WSPs to ensure the majority is served.

If the 9-1-1 authority does not meet the considerations above; consider a news release rather than a news conference.

Create a media alert to invite the local media to the news conference. This should be a brief invitation with high level details of the event. In addition, the 9-1-1 Authority may want to consider inviting a member of the special interest community or a key stakeholder to participate in the news conference, or be available to answer questions afterwards. Prepare talking points for the speakers.

Provide a press kit to all attendees that includes:

- i. News release with contact information
- ii. A list of Frequently Asked Questions
- iii. Information on the 9-1-1 program including coverage area
- iv. Any public education materials available



When having a press conference, please consider including an American Sign Language interpreter and/or a captioning service as one of the target audiences is the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

#### 3.4.2.5 Special Interest Group Communication

It is essential that your public education outreach plan include various special interest groups or partners. There are local, state and national organizations, associations, and community groups who have avenues to reach the audiences defined in sections 3.2.1.

9-1-1 authorities are encouraged to consult with their local seniors, Deaf, hard of hearing, speech disability communities, local or state suicide hotlines, and local domestic violence shelters, to identify and address local concerns, and to ensure effective consumer outreach regarding Interim SMS Text-to-9-1-1. Such organizations will be key stakeholders in getting the word out that Text-to-9-1-1 in your area is being planned.

Early adopters of texting have reported many instances of callers using Text-to-9-1-1 in preventing suicides and providing safety for victims of domestic violence and child/elder abuse. Prior to making the announcement public, share the news with these special interest groups so they are fully aware and properly informed.

Many of these groups have websites, social media sites, email bulletins, newsletters, and regularly scheduled meetings with speakers. Take advantage of these and other resources that the groups use to share the Text-to-9-1-1 education message. Enlist the leaders of these groups to advocate and convey news about the text service. Provide each of them with key messages for website and email content, links to videos, pictures and additional resources. Research scheduled community events or conferences held by the target audiences. For example, there are local, state and national conferences and community events that serve persons with disabilities (i.e. Abilities Expo). Schedule public safety representatives to work a booth at these events, speak to attendees, provide printed material and answer any questions. NENA recommends creating a presentation and requesting an opportunity to be a scheduled speaker.

Several national advocacy organizations have local membership chapters with local contacts listed on their websites. Examples of these websites include:

- National Association of the Deaf (NAD)  
<http://www.nad.org/community/state-association-affiliates>
- Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)  
<http://www.hearingloss.org/content/hlaa-chapters-and-state-organizations>
- The ARC, for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities  
<http://www.thearc.org/find-a-chapter>
- The National Federation of the Blind  
<https://nfb.org/state-and-local-organizations>
- The American Council of the Blind <http://acb.org/node/9>
- American Association of Retired People (AARP)

- <http://local.aarp.org/?intcmp=AE-HP-LN-INFO-AARPLOCAL>
- The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: list of state coalitions: <http://www.ncadv.org/learn/state-coalitions>
- Links to state suicide hotlines: <http://suicide.org/suicide-hotlines.html>

Public education resources and links can be found on the following websites:

- NENA <http://www.nena.org/?page=textresources>
- APCO <https://www.apcointl.org/resources.html>
- Federal Communications Commission <http://www.fcc.gov/text-to-911>
- Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration National 9-1-1 Office [www.911.gov](http://www.911.gov) (E-mail: [nhtsa.national911@dot.gov](mailto:nhtsa.national911@dot.gov))

#### 3.4.2.6 Social Media and Website Postings

Social media is a quick and useful way for 9-1-1 entities to distribute information and reach a large audience with instructions on how to obtain additional information. Social media includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ and other similar sites.

Keys to engaging followers on social media:

- i. Graphics get more engagement than word posts.
- ii. Asking a question or holding a discussion allows interaction with your followers.
- iii. Presenting a shocking statistic often gets the reader's attention.
- iv. Pictures of kids and pets usually result in more engagement from followers.

Instructions for posting:

- i. Keep messages short. Twitter messages are limited to 140 characters; however the ideal length is 80-100 characters. If you have a link, use a link shortener – one example bitly. Facebook messages can be longer, but the ideal length is 40-80 characters.
- ii. Disseminate your message during the highest usage times for social media followers. It is important to take advantage of the times when most audience members are on a particular social media, otherwise all of the time spent developing the update will not get as much attention. Also, it is good to be proactive by scheduling posts ahead of time.

While all audiences are different, the times below may be used (recommended from PR Daily) as a general guide for the best times to post to each site:

**Twitter:** On weekdays during lunch time and weekdays and weekends from 1 p.m.-3 p.m.

**Facebook:** Weekdays 6 a.m. - 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.-5 p.m.

**Google+:** 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

- iii. Social media Analytics – After you have been utilizing social media to share information about texting you may want to review how well it is working. The collecting of reports, called analytics can be very helpful with determining more about what to say, when to schedule posts and more. There are free analytic tools available. Each social media service has reporting features and you can also use other services such as Google+ to learn about activity. Facebook Insights are available to managers learn about people's activity on their Page.
- iv. To provide a press release to social media followers, you can use Dropbox or Google Docs or other cloud storage services to attach the documents. (You must have an account, but they are both free to use)

## Appendix A

### Guidelines for Use of NENA Interim SMS Text-to-9-1-1 LOGO

The NENA Public Education and Training Committee, NG9-1-1 Education and Training Working Group, is providing a copyrighted LOGO, “**9-1-1: CALL IF YOU CAN, TEXT IF YOU CAN’T**”© for use in presenting a consistent message to the public regarding Text-to-9-1-1. This LOGO was developed by ALISA SIMMONS of DJ’s Print + Promo, and its use by NENA is with her permission. The LOGO may be used under the following terms and conditions:

1. NENA will allow the free use of the LOGO for all purposes consistent with public education regarding the implementation of Interim SMS Text-to-9-1-1.
2. Users may reproduce the LOGO for use in printed material, press releases, advertising and other forms of communication.
3. The LOGO may not be used to further economic gain or for the purpose of generating income of any kind or in association with any profit-making enterprise.
4. The LOGO shall not be altered, modified or changed in any way during its use.
5. The LOGO may only be used if credit is given to the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) for its use. The following is representative of the proper statement of credit:

“Used with permission of the National Emergency Number Association.”

## Appendix B

### Text-to-9-1-1 Frequently Asked Questions Voice calls are still the best and fastest way to contact 9-1-1

#### Text-to-9-1-1 is ONLY recommended when a voice call is NOT possible

#### About the Service

##### What is “Text-to-9-1-1” technology?

- Text-to-9-1-1 is the ability to send a text message to 9-1-1 from your mobile phone or handheld device.

##### Can I Text-to-9-1-1?

- Text-to-9-1-1 is not available everywhere and is not always available when roaming.
- {Insert local text deployment information – i.e. carrier & area deployed}
- You must subscribe to your wireless carrier’s text or data plan in order to make or receive text messages.
- If Text-to-9-1-1 is not available in your area, or is temporarily unavailable, you should receive a message indicating that Text-to-9-1-1 is not available and to contact 9-1-1 by other means.

##### When should I text 9-1-1?

- Text-to-9-1-1 is intended primarily for use in three emergency scenarios:
  1. For an individual who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, or has a speech disability.
  2. For someone who is in a situation where it is not safe to place a voice call to 9-1-1.
  3. A medical emergency that renders the person incapable of speech.
- ONLY text 9-1-1 in an emergency. Prank-texters can be identified and possibly prosecuted according to local laws/regulations.

##### What are the challenges with text-to-9-1-1 service?

- As with all text messages, Texts-to-9-1-1 may take longer to receive and respond to than a voice call, does not provide the location of the texter and could be received out of order, or may not be received at all.
- Text GPS location information is not equal to current wireless location technology.
- Voice calls are real-time communication and Text-to-9-1-1 is not.
- Pictures or videos cannot be received by 9-1-1 at this time.
- If you include anyone else on your Text-to-9-1-1 it may not be received by 9-1-1.
- {Insert your local ability to provide Translation services} At this time translation services for Text-to-9-1-1 are not available; please text in English only.

## **Text-to-9-1-1 Tips**

### **How do I text to 9-1-1?**

- Enter the numbers “911” in the “To” or “Recipient” field;
- The first text to 9-1-1 should be short, include the location of the emergency, and ask for police, fire or ambulance.
- Push the “Send” button.
- Answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.
- Text in simple words – no abbreviations or slang.
- Keep text messages short.

### **How will I know if 9-1-1 received my text?**

- A 9-1-1 call center should respond to the text.
- If Text-to-9-1-1 is not available, you should receive a message from the wireless carrier stating that Text-to-9-1-1 is not available and that you must place a voice or relay call to 9-1-1.

### **Is there a charge to text-to-9-1-1?**

- Standard text messaging rates apply.

### **When will I be able to text-to-9-1-1 from all cell carriers?**

- {Insert local deployment plans/timeline or remove if all carriers are deployed.}

### **Can I text to 9-1-1 in languages other than English?**

- The preferred language for texting to 9-1-1 is English.
- Translation services are limited.

{The language above is included as an example of how this is handled in some of the early adopter areas. Please insert your local policy and capability related to non-English text messages.}

## Appendix C

### News Release Template

#### **9-1-1: Call if You Can, Text if You Can't Voice Calls to 9-1-1 Are Still the Best and Fastest Way to Contact 9-1-1**

{9-1-1 Authority} announced {effective date} that it has begun accepting text-to-9-1-1 service for its territory—{area of service}. Carrier Name Wireless customers can now send a text (up to 140 characters) to 9-1-1 in an emergency. Text to 9-1-1 should only be used in an emergency situation, when placing a call is not possible: For instance, if the caller is deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech impaired, or when speaking out loud would put the caller in danger.

{Insert local spin – and/or quote}

**If there is an emergency and you are unable to make a call, remember these steps:**

- *Don't text and drive*
- In the first text message send the location and type of emergency.
- Text in simple words - Send a short text message without abbreviations or slang.
- Be prepared to answer questions and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 call taker.

**Don't Abuse 9-1-1—Text-to-9-1-1 service is ONLY for emergencies.**

- It is a crime to text or call 9-1-1 with a false report. {Optional statement} Prank-texters can be located.

**The Text-to-9-1-1 service will have many challenges.**

- A text or data plan is required to place a Text-to-9-1-1
- As with all text messages, messages to 9-1-1 may take longer to receive, may get out of order, or may not be received at all.
- {Agency policy on responding to text} If you do not receive a text response from 9-1-1, try to contact 9-1-1 another way.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 9-1-1 at this time.
- Text-to-9-1-1 cannot include more than one person. Do not send your emergency text to anyone other than 9-1-1.
- *Voice Calls to 9-1-1 Are Still the Best and Fastest Way To Contact 9-1-1*

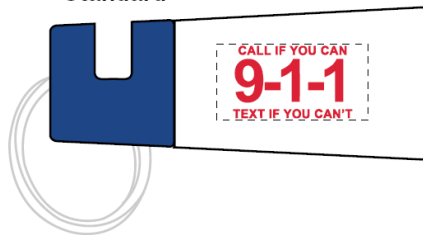
**Remember, Text-to-9-1-1 service is not available everywhere in {State} and the U.S.**

## Appendix D

### Sample Marketing Materials



Standard





Below is a sample of a printed brochure developed by NCTCOG

