DISPATCHER RENTENTION GUIDE

Practical Strategies to Reduce Turnover and Strengthen Team Culture

TrackIT
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Introduction: Why Dispatcher Retention Matters

High turnover is one of the biggest challenges facing 911 dispatch centers today. When a seasoned dispatcher leaves, it doesn't just leave a gap in the schedule. It affects morale, increases stress on the rest of the team, and slows down onboarding for new hires. The cost of recruitment, training, and the risk to response quality make dispatcher retention a mission-critical issue.

This guide is designed to help leaders take proactive, thoughtful steps toward reducing turnover and building strong team culture. These strategies are based on real-world practices that work. They can be implemented at any scale and adapted to fit your agency's structure. Whether you lead a small communications unit or a large regional center, these tools will help you build a stronger, more connected team.

Strategy One: Build a Recognition Culture That Feels Genuine

In the high-pressure world of 911 dispatch, a simple "thank you" goes a long way. Yet recognition is often overlooked because the job moves so fast. Recognition doesn't need to be complicated or expensive. What matters most is consistency and authenticity.

Ideas you can use right away: **RSH**

• **Recognize** - Create a regular routine of recognizing one great moment each shift. It might be someone who stayed calm during a high-stress call or stepped up to support a teammate.

• **Shout It Out** - Start a rotating shoutout board in the break room where peers can acknowledge one another.

• **Huddle Up** - Host a monthly huddle where supervisors recognize team members not just for performance but for attitude, resilience, or adaptability.

These small moments, repeated regularly, build a culture where people feel seen, valued, and proud of their work. That emotional connection is one of the strongest drivers of retention.

Strategy Two: Establish a Peer Support or Mentorship Program

New hires often struggle the most in their first 6 to 12 months. Having a designated support person can make the difference between staying and leaving. A peer support or mentorship program doesn't need to be formalized with policies and paperwork. It just needs structure and clarity.

Ideas you can use right away: **MAPS**

• **Mentor** - Identify veteran dispatchers who naturally support others and ask if they'd like to mentor new hires.

• **Assist** - Provide loose guidelines such as weekly check-ins, availability for questions, and modeling of positive workplace habits.

• **Praise** - Encourage mentors to focus on listening and encouragement rather than training or correction.

• **Share** - Create a shared digital check-in form for mentors and mentees to track progress.

You can also create check-in forms or journals for new hires to reflect on their first months and guide conversations. These tools help mentors build trust and show investment in each person's growth.

Strategy Three: Improve Fairness and Clarity in Performance Reviews

Many dispatchers express frustration with how they are evaluated. Either the criteria are vague, or the process feels inconsistent. When reviews lack clarity, they can feel like judgments rather than growth opportunities.

Ideas you can use right away: **CARE**

• **Clarify** - Align your review forms with the actual responsibilities of dispatchers.

• **Assess** - Use specific, real-life examples when giving both praise and feedback.

• **Review Often** - Rather than saving all feedback for one annual review, consider holding quarterly or even monthly check-ins.

• **Empower** - Invite self-assessments so employees can reflect on their own strengths and areas for growth.

When employees understand how they're being measured and feel that the process is fair and transparent, they're more motivated to stay and improve.

Strategy Four: Catch Burnout Before It Becomes a Crisis

The signs of burnout often show up subtly. A dispatcher might become withdrawn, less engaged, or more irritable. These are often the early indicators of deeper exhaustion. If left unaddressed, burnout can lead to resignation or serious health concerns.

Ideas you can use right away: **CSS**

• **Check-In** - Build monthly wellness check-ins into your scheduling routine.

• **Survey** - Use short, optional surveys to gauge how people are feeling.

• **Share-** Support your team and share mental health resources during onboarding and in shared spaces.

Creating a rhythm of wellness check-ins can prevent burnout from growing quietly in the background. These conversations help staff feel cared for, and they offer leaders a chance to step in early when someone is struggling.

Strategy Five: Offer Growth Without Forcing Promotions

Not every dispatcher wants to move into a leadership role, but everyone wants to grow. Creating opportunities for skill development, new responsibilities, or cross-training can keep even veteran team members engaged.

Ideas you can use right away: **GROW**

• **Give Options** - Offer optional roles such as training support, community outreach, or special project leadership.

• **Reflect** - Use surveys or check-ins to ask employees what they would love to learn or try.

• **Offer Learning** - Provide training or guest speakers for topics outside of daily responsibilities.

• **Work Toward Goals** - Encourage team members to set personal goals during performance reviews.

When people see a future for themselves beyond doing the same job for 20 years, they are more likely to stay motivated and invested in their career.

Final Thoughts: You're building something that matters.

If you're ready to create a more sustainable, supportive team culture, these steps are a great starting point. Begin by choosing one strategy from this guide and try it out with your team.

Explore Our Platform

Managing a large team of dispatchers can be challenging, but TrackIT makes it easier. Leaders can log performance feedback, track progress, and ensure every team member receives the support they need—all in one organized system.

Explore how TrackIT can help you and your team by visiting: www.trackitpm.com/911-dispatch/

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