Workgroup to Study Implementation of an Expanded 3-1-1 Nonemergency System

Meeting Minutes
7/29/2025

Roll Call

Voting Members Present: Sara Elalamy (Secretary Designee),Senator Cheryl Kagan , Senator Paul Corderman, Delegate Tiffany Alston, Delegate Lesley Lopez, Renee Stainrod, Cecilia Warren, Charlynn Flaherty, Lorenzo Cropper.

Voting Members Not Present: Jack Markey, Barry Scheitlin, Chris Thompson, Kevin Kinnally, Karen Saymansky, and Christina Cornwell.

Others Present: David Propert - Policy Analyst - DLS, Donavan Ham - Policy Analyst - DLS, Matthew Jeweler - Chief of Staff - Office of Senator Cheryl Kagan, Julie Losh - Charles County.

Summary

Sen. Cheryl C. Kagan, Laura Dunwoody, and other participants discussed the implementation of 3-1-1 services, highlighting Denver's successful model where 3-1-1 reduces 9-1-1 non-emergency calls, particularly through self-service digital options like AI-powered chatbots. Laura Dunwoody elaborated on the cost-efficiency of digital channels, their positive impact on staffing and accessibility through multilingual support, and strategic marketing to drive adoption. Subcommittee updates from David Propert, Sen. Cheryl C. Kagan, and Senator Corderman focused on technology standards, marketing, and governance, with an emphasis on AI-powered chatbots and the need for clear data, funding, and a definitive timeline for Maryland's statewide 3-1-1 implementation.

Presentation notes

- **Evolution of Denver's 3-1-1** - Laura Dunwoody explained that Denver's 3-1-1 started as a call center in 2016 to reduce the number of phone numbers residents needed to

navigate. It has since evolved into the "gateway to Denver city services," accessible via a three-digit short code within Denver and a 10-digit number for out-of-area callers.

- **Self-Service Digital Options** - Laura Dunwoody strongly advocated for self-service digital options, such as denvergov.org and an AI-powered chatbot named Sunny, as the most cost-effective solution for Maryland. She noted that a live 3-1-1 agent in Denver requires six months of training, making a multi-county agent impractical and expensive.

- **Chatbot Capabilities and Accessibility -** Laura Dunwoody highlighted the transformational impact of their chatbot, Sunny, launched in March of the previous year. Sunny recognizes 72 distinct languages without requiring manual selection, significantly improving accessibility for Denver's diverse population and revealing previously unacknowledged linguistic communities.

- **Benefits of 3-1-1 Services -** Laura Dunwoody outlined the advantages of 3-1-1, including providing a single point of contact for questions and services, ease of use with a three-digit number, and allowing agencies to focus on service delivery rather than fielding calls. This approach integrates with their Salesforce CRM system, enabling residents to create work orders directly, bypassing 3-1-1 agents and instantly forwarding requests to relevant departments.

- **Cost Efficiency of Digital Channels -** Laura Dunwoody detailed the significant cost savings of digital channels, stating that a live agent interaction costs approximately $4, while an AI assistant interaction costs only 35 cents. She mentioned that 98% of 3-1-1 calls occur during business hours, leading Denver to reduce 24/7 staffing and rely on digital channels for after-hours requests, which are now used more frequently than calls were previously.

- **Impact of Digital Channels on Staffing** - Laura Dunwoody shared that despite a significant reduction in frontline agents from 25 to 16 due to budget deficits, Denver's 3-1-1 still maintains an average phone answer time of under one minute thanks to digital channels. This demonstrates the effectiveness of their AI-powered solutions in maintaining service levels during lean times.

- **Marketing and Adoption of Digital Solutions -** Laura Dunwoody discussed their marketing strategies, which involved leveraging social media for tech-savvy users and traditional methods like billboards, TV, and vehicle stickers to reach a broader audience,

particularly older demographics. She emphasized focusing marketing on practical use cases, such as ordering a garbage can or reporting a pothole, for greater traction.

- **Data Curation and Website Optimization** - Laura Dunwoody stressed the importance of having clean and accurate underlying data for digital options to be effective. She noted that Denver's website was reduced by half, from over 4,000 pages to 2,000, to eliminate conflicting information and improve the chatbot's ability to provide correct answers.

- **Maryland's 3-1-1 Recommendations** - Laura Dunwoody recommended that Maryland lead with an AI-powered chatbot, as it is cost-effective and can integrate with individual county software, offering native language capabilities. She suggested combining this with an AI-assisted Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to seamlessly route calls to appropriate county or agency call centers, avoiding the need for a single, monolithic call center for the entire state.

- **Complaint Escalation Process** - In response to Cecilia Warren -MDOD-'s question about complaint escalation for digital users, Laura Dunwoody explained that the process is contained within the 3-1-1 environment, primarily handled by team leads and supervisors. The 3-1-1 team acts as a liaison between residents and agencies to resolve issues.

- **Chatbot Vendor Selection** - Regarding the selection of CityBot for Sunny, Laura Dunwoody explained that after extensive due diligence, she chose CityBot over larger providers like AWS, Google, and Meta because CityBot offered a near turn-key solution and understood the limited resources of local government. The implementation of Sunny resulted in an 80%+ satisfaction rate, which has continued to increase.

- **Audit Functions and Data Tracking -** Laura Dunwoody discussed their audit functions, noting that their department monitors bot and digital transaction data for accuracy. she also provide an aging report dashboard, accessible city-wide, that tracks the average time from case opening to closure for service requests, ensuring issues are not overlooked. Customer satisfaction surveys are linked to case closures, providing valuable feedback on service perception and resolution speed.

- **Interconnectivity with 9-1-1 and Other Services** - Laura Dunwoody detailed the integration between 3-1-1 and 9-1-1, particularly focusing on the Denver Police Department's non-emergency line. The system assesses if a call is an emergency, routing it to 9-1-1 if necessary, or allowing users to create police reports via vocal Q&A for non-

emergencies, freeing up 9-1-1 resources. She also mentioned transfers to 211 (Mile High United Way) for social services and the ability to transfer to internal or external destinations, though inter-jurisdictional transfers incur costs.

- **IVR System Technology** - Laura Dunwoody clarified that Denver's current IVR system was built on AWS but is based on older technology. She advised Maryland to consider an AI-powered IVR, which would be easier to launch and more effective by automatically updating based on website changes, unlike their current system which requires manual workflow adjustments.

- **ADA Compliance -** Laura Dunwoody addressed ADA compliance, noting that Colorado passed a law exceeding federal requirements in 2021, necessitating all internal and external technology, including their chatbot, to be WAG2.0 doubleA compliant. Denver undertook a two-year project to achieve this standard, with their practices being adopted statewide.

- **Marketing Campaign and Layoffs** - Laura Dunwoody shared that Denver is preparing for its third marketing campaign, budgeting $80,000 per campaign, with $160,000 already spent on previous campaigns. She indicated that the next campaign would focus on strategies that have proven effective. Dunwoody also highlighted the impending layoffs in Denver in 2026, primarily impacting 3-1-1, and stressed the importance of driving residents to digital channels to mitigate service slowdowns caused by increased call volumes to 3-1-1 if other call centers lose headcount.

- **Chatbot Privacy and Functionality** - Laura Dunwoody explained that the chatbot does not track any Personally Identifiable Information (PII) unless users voluntarily provide it, ensuring anonymity. She stated that contact information, if provided, is housed in their Salesforce CRM, enabling follow-up and resolution notifications for reported issues. Sen. Cheryl C. Kagan shared a positive personal experience with the chatbot, noting its immediate and accurate response, as well as its seamless language switching capability from English to Spanish within the same interaction.

- **Multilingual Support and Diversity -** Laura Dunwoody highlighted the extensive multilingual capabilities of their 3-1-1 system, supporting 42 different languages. She noted a surprisingly diverse user base for the bot, including speakers of Irish and Scandinavian languages, which indicated a broader demographic reach than initially anticipated for Denver. Sen. Cheryl C. Kagan specifically mentioned Tagalog as the language of the Philippines after Dunwoody had also identified diverse language use.

Subgroups reports & discussion notes

- **Technology Standards Subcommittee Update -** David Propert summarized the discussions from the Technology Standards subcommittee, chaired by Jack Marky, which focused on the technical aspects, scope, and challenges of a statewide 3-1-1 system. The subcommittee discussed the need for 3-1-1 to lighten the load on 9-1-1 by handling non-emergency calls, and its functionality should include phone calls, mobile apps, text, and multilingual support. Propert mentioned that a survey was sent to 10 Maryland jurisdictions with existing 3-1-1 functions to gather data on AI usage, staffing, call volume, and multi-language support, with results still pending. Sara Elalamy - DoIT-shared preliminary survey results from four jurisdictions, indicating that online portals and mobile apps are the most common contact methods, and that while AI usage is currently low, it is a potential future area.

- **Marketing and Outreach Subcommittee Update** - Sen. Cheryl C. Kagan provided an overview of the Marketing and Outreach subcommittee's findings, drawing insights from Washington D.C.'s 3-1-1 system. They highlighted DC's use of social media platforms, apps, and various methods for reporting problems, with a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement and focus groups to ensure user-friendliness. The subcommittee also discussed strategies for educating the public on when to call 9-1-1 versus 3-1-1, using examples like "Smoke" for 9-1-1 and "Someone parked outside my home" for 3-1-1 to differentiate emergency from non-emergency situations. Heather McGaffen from DC 3-1-1 noted that training for 3-1-1 specialists takes 8 weeks, significantly less than the 8 to 12 months for 9-1-1 specialists, with an additional two weeks for DMV-related calls due to their challenging nature.

- **Governance and Feasibility Subcommittee Update -** Senator Corderman presented the findings from the Governance and Feasibility subcommittee, which delved into cost and governance questions for a statewide 3-1-1 system. The discussion included analyzing the costs and funding sources of existing 3-1-1 systems in Maryland's 10 counties. Senator Corderman suggested that an AI-generated chatbot is likely the initial path forward for a statewide system, pending full group consensus, which would then guide further exploration of funding mechanisms.

- **Funding and Timelines for 3-1-1 Implementation** - Sen. Cheryl C. Kagan discussed potential federal funding for 3-1-1 by clearly linking its benefits to 9-1-1, noting that the

9-1-1 board has unspent budget which might subsidize a 3-1-1 chatbot. Julie Losh confirmed that Charles County's 3-1-1 system is county-funded.

Next steps

- Sara Elalamy -DoIT- will work on sending doodle polls for meeting times in August and September.
- Sara Elalamy -DoIT- will share the different responses received from the counties once she receives more.
- The group will decide next steps for the subgroups and presentations.

Meeting minutes drafted by: Sara Elalamy - DoIT
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