



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SHELBY COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT DISPATCHERS TRAIN ON MENTAL
HEALTH EMERGENCY CALLS; NEW PROCESS PUT IN PLACE TO HELP
VICTIMS IN AN EMERGENCY**

Shelby County, TN – Over the course of the past week, the Shelby County Fire Department Dispatch Office has received nationally recognized training to handle a wide variety of mental health, behavioral emergency, and suicide calls. As a result of the pandemic, mental health crises from anxiety, depression and loneliness are reported to be on the rise. When each skilled dispatcher completes this course, they will be even better trained to answer mental health emergency calls and equipped with current practices to ensure the best possible resolution to these very difficult situations. The training is provided by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED). Upon completion of the course test, dispatchers will receive certificate in Medical Priority Dispatch System Protocol for Psychiatric, Abnormal Behavior, and Suicide Attempts.

Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris: “When residents call 9-1-1 we want them to receive the appropriate response and service that they need. Mental health emergencies are complex and often require a specialized response that starts with the dispatcher. I applaud the Shelby County Fire Department for their focus on continuous training of dispatchers to provide first responders with the information they need to respond to these emergencies.”

Shelby County Fire Chief Alvin Benson: “Dispatchers are a critical link in our emergency response. This training will help ensure that our staff can follow an appropriate protocol to de-escalate situations when possible and ascertain the right information to help first responders as they respond to mental health crises.”

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