

BETST MINUTES

July 21, 2026



Board on Emergency Telecommunications Standards
and Training

Pearl, MS

Meeting Information

The Mississippi Board of Emergency Telecommunications Standards and Training (BETST) met on July 21, 2026. The meeting was called to order at approximately 10:10 a.m.

Attendance

Board members in attendance included:

- Kristen Campanella (Chair)
- Jason McElhenney (Vice Chair)
- Barry Burnside
- Tony Carleton via telephone
- Charlie Sims via telephone
- Teresa Windham
- Kyle Jones, Board Attorney

Also present:

- Amy Vanderford, Director of the Office of Standards and Training
- TJ Boyd, Telecommunications Program Manager

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes of the May 27, 2026 meeting.

Board Action: Director Jason McElhenney made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, with Deputy Director Barry Burnside providing the second. The motion carried.

Old Business

No old business was presented.

Recognition of Recent Active-Duty Losses

Manager TJ Boyd recognized three Mississippi emergency telecommunicators who had recently passed away while actively serving their communities: Jimmy McLemore of Webster County E911, Byron Moffett of MHP Troop H, and Tanya Willems of Monroe County E911.

Manager Boyd stated he wanted their service and dedication to the 911 profession to be formally recognized and advised that letters of condolence had been sent on behalf of the office and the Board to their respective agencies for presentation to their families and coworkers. Chair Kristen Campanella extended the Board's thoughts and prayers to their families, friends, and first responder families.

Mississippi Justice Information Center Training Room Improvements

Deputy Director Robin Layton presented a request for funding to renovate and modernize the Mississippi Justice Information Center training room.

Deputy Director Layton explained that the current classroom contains outdated and sometimes functionally unsafe furniture, mismatched chairs, computer monitors positioned below the work surface, and an outdated audiovisual white wall. The existing monitor placement requires students to continually look downward and makes interaction with instructors difficult. It also requires instructors to repeatedly turn their backs to the class to view information displayed on the monitors.

The proposed improvements included new training tables and chairs, repositioning the computer monitors, storage and bookcases for training materials, a buffet credenza, and replacement of the existing projection system with high-definition televisions. The redesigned classroom would increase capacity from the approximately 20 students to 32 students.

Deputy Director Layton advised that the furniture was available through state contract and therefore required only one quote. The furniture portion totaled

\$38,026.26. The audiovisual improvements included a 98-inch television and additional televisions positioned throughout the classroom, along with the necessary labor, cables, and connections.

Director McElhenney clarified that the initial plan referenced a 115-inch monitor, but the difference between the 115-inch and 98-inch models was approximately \$10,000. The size was reduced to 98 inches to better meet budget requirements.

Chair Campanella asked who currently uses the training room. Deputy Director Layton explained that it is used to training Terminal Agency Coordinators and dispatchers, including a 40-hour TAC class, inquiry and entry classes, and NIBRS training. The classroom is also made available for other law enforcement training when needed.

Chair Campanella then asked whether the improved classroom could also be made available to Standards and Training instructors as another location where they could schedule and conduct training. Deputy Director Layton confirmed that it could.

Chair Campanella also asked what would happen to the existing tables and chairs, noting that although the furniture may be outdated for the training room, some local emergency communications centers may still be able to use it. Director McElhenney explained that because the furniture is state property, it would have to go through the appropriate surplus-property process. Once transferred to surplus, eligible agencies could potentially obtain the furniture through that process. Director Vanderford confirmed the property could therefore be rerouted for other use.

No additional questions were raised.

Board Action: Director Teresa Windham moved to approve the training room request in the amount of \$47,000.22. Deputy Director Barry Burnside seconded. Director Jason McElhenney abstained. The motion carried.

Manager Course Approval Activity

Manager TJ Boyd presented his first report of training courses reviewed under the authority previously delegated by the Board to the Telecommunications Program Manager to approve or deny courses between Board meetings.

The report included approval of Vector Solutions as an online training provider, with approximately 35 telecommunications-related courses identified as meeting applicable APCO/NENA standards.

Manager Boyd also reported approval seven in-person MLEOTA courses, which had been added to the telecommunications training calendar.

The *High in Plain Sight* substance-abuse prevention course was denied for telecommunications continuing education because the course content was determined not to be sufficiently related to the duties and responsibilities of an emergency telecommunicator.

Board Action: Deputy Director Barry Burnside moved to approve the Manager Course Approval Activity Report. Director Teresa Windham seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Upcoming Pilot Courses

Manager TJ Boyd provided an update regarding newly certified instructors Patricia Simmons and Orlando Redd.

Simmons' scheduled July course had been cancelled and had not yet been rescheduled. Redd had a 40-hour basic course scheduled for August.

Manager Boyd advised that he intended to attend and review the course.

No Board action was required.

Tuition Reimbursement Cap Increases

Manager Boyd presented proposed revisions to the Board's tuition reimbursement caps. He explained that several existing caps no longer reflected the actual cost of nationally recognized public safety communications training. Updated pricing from Priority Dispatch/IAED and other approved providers demonstrated increased costs for both in-person and virtual training.

Rather than increasing only the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) reimbursement cap, Manager Boyd recommended revising the reimbursement schedule as a whole.

The Board considered the following changes:

Training	Current Cap	Proposed Cap
8-hour Continuing Education Course (In-Person)	Up to \$175 tuition	Up to \$200 tuition
16-hour Continuing Education Course (In-Person)	Up to \$350 tuition	Up to \$400 tuition
40-hour Basic Telecommunicator Course	Up to \$495 tuition	Up to \$550 tuition
Emergency Medical Dispatch Course	Up to \$350 tuition	Up to \$450 tuition
CPR Course	Up to \$50 tuition	No Change
Basic Quality Assurance (EMD, EFD, or EPD)	Up to \$500 tuition	Up to \$700 tuition
Online/Virtual Training (8-hour block of instruction)	Up to \$200 tuition	Up to \$300 tuition
Online/Virtual Training (16-hour block of instruction)	Up to \$400 tuition	Up to \$500 tuition

No change was proposed to the existing Out-of-State Conference reimbursement policy.

The Board discussed whether sufficient funding was available to support the increases and was advised that funding was available.

Board Action: Director Teresa Windham moved to approve the revised tuition reimbursement caps as presented. Deputy Director Barry Burnside seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Policy & Procedures Manual Update

Manager Boyd reported that he was continuing a comprehensive review and revision of the BETST Policies and Procedures Manual.

The revisions are intended to incorporate previous Board actions, remove outdated provisions, and ensure that the written policies accurately reflect current Board practices and requirements. At the time of the meeting, Manager Boyd had progressed through approximately Chapter 7 of the 12-chapter manual.

No Board action was requested.

MLEOTA Classroom Availability

The Board was advised that four classrooms at MLEOTA were available for use by BETST-approved instructors. The rooms vary in size, with the largest accommodating approximately 40 students.

Approved instructors may contact MLEOTA directly to schedule available classroom space. There is no charge simply for use of the classroom.

No Board action was required.

Mississippi Public Safety Communications Academy Concept

Manager Boyd presented an early concept for the development of a centralized Mississippi Public Safety Communications Academy, initially based at MLEOTA.

He emphasized that this was not requesting Board approval or implementation at this meeting. The purpose was to present the concept, receive feedback from the Board and members of the telecommunications community, and determine whether the idea warranted further development.

The concept would create a more standardized academy-style experience for newly hired telecommunicators. Manager Boyd discussed eventually developing a Mississippi-specific 40-hour basic curriculum based on APCO, NENA, and other recognized national standards.

The concept included rotating approved instructors, incorporating simulated 911 calls and potentially AI-based training technology, providing training materials through the program, and holding a formal graduation ceremony similar to those used in other public safety disciplines.

Manager Boyd advised that he had toured MLEOTA and believed the facility had the classrooms, lodging, meals, and infrastructure necessary to support the concept. Current expenses associated with sending an individual to a 40-hour basic course can total approximately \$1,200 to \$1,800, while the proposed academy model could potentially reduce that cost considerably.

Board and Audience Discussion

Chair Campanella asked who would teach the academy. Manager Boyd explained that his initial thought was to use existing approved instructors on a rotating basis, with participation by instructors being voluntary.

Director McElhenney asked whether the academy would be an additional option or the only avenue for completing the 40-hour basic requirement. Manager Boyd explained that his initial vision was for the academy to become the primary avenue so that new telecommunicators would receive consistent training, potentially through the Mississippi-specific curriculum.

Questions were raised regarding how instructors would be paid, since BETST-approved instructors are not employees of the Board. Possibilities discussed included contracts and reimbursement mechanisms. Manager Boyd advised

that the financial and contractual structure had not yet been developed and would require additional research.

Director Windham and Deputy Director Burnside questioned whether a single academy location would support the volume of new telecommunicators statewide. Manager Boyd advised that MLEOTA had multiple classrooms and could potentially operate more than one class simultaneously. He had also discussed the concept with Director Carleton, who believed MLEOTA could accommodate the anticipated volume.

Chair Campanella suggested rather than conducting academies twice each month, the program might consider larger quarterly academies with published dates so agencies could plan ahead. Manager Boyd noted that new telecommunicators currently have one year to complete the basic requirement, which could provide agencies some flexibility in scheduling.

Several instructors and communications professionals addressed the Board.

Concerns included the difficulty smaller or short-staffed communications centers may experience releasing an employee for five consecutive days, as well as travel, childcare, family responsibilities, and the impact on part-time telecommunicators. One suggestion was to hold a centralized testing, scenario, and graduation day while allowing the instructional portions to remain more flexible.

Others supported the academy concept because it would provide greater structure, centralization, consistency, and statewide standards. Suggestions were also made that the concept could eventually expand beyond the 40-hour basic course to include other requirements such as EMD and CPR.

A suggestion was made to begin with MLEOTA in central Mississippi and eventually establish regional academy options in north and south Mississippi. Manager Boyd advised that this was consistent with his longer-term vision and noted that there are seven academy locations throughout the state that could potentially be utilized after initial trial runs at MLEOTA.

Attendees also discussed the potential use of AI-based simulated call technology. Representatives from agencies already using similar systems described their usefulness for pre-employment screening and preparing new dispatchers for realistic caller interactions. Manager Boyd advised that demonstrations had already been conducted with companies offering simulated-call technology and that such a system could potentially be used both as an academy training standard and as a resource available to agencies.

The issue of part-time employees was specifically raised. Manager Boyd acknowledged that flexibility would likely be necessary and suggested that existing instructors could potentially continue providing alternative 40-hour basic courses for individuals unable to participate in the centralized academy model.

The Board expressed general interest in continuing to explore the concept. No action was taken.

Instructor Certification Reimbursement Policy

Manager Boyd presented results of his review of the Board's instructor reimbursement policy under Chapter 11.

He explained that under the existing policy, an agency may pay for an employee to obtain instructor certification and subsequently receive reimbursement from BETST. Once certified, many instructors establish businesses or LLCs and provide training to other agencies for compensation. Those agencies may then submit their own reimbursement requests to BETST for the training.

Manager Boyd stated that this caused him to question whether E911 service charge revenues should continue to fund the initial instructor certification when that certification may later be used to operate a private training business. Rather than making an assumption, he requested a legal review through DPS Legal Counsel.

DPS Legal confirmed that the Board has statutory authority to reimburse instructor certification training costs, but recommended that the Board reevaluate the policy.

Manager Boyd recommended amending Chapter 11 to eliminate reimbursements for instructor certification training while continuing to certify qualified instructors. Under the proposal, the cost of obtaining instructor certification would become the responsibility of the individual instructor or sponsoring agency.

Discussion

Chair Campanella questioned whether there was a way to distinguish instructors who obtain certification solely to train personnel within their own agency from instructors who later establish private training businesses.

Deputy Director Burnside expressed the view that if an agency paid to certify an instructor and the instructor subsequently provided training to that sponsoring agency without charging an additional instructor fee, the agency had received the benefit of its investment. He compared the situation to other public safety certifications that may later be used for secondary or part-time employment.

Discussion also addressed the fact that BETST reimburses the sponsoring agency rather than the individual instructor. Chair Campanella questioned whether the policy could potentially be revised to ensure that the sponsoring agency receives a direct benefit rather than eliminating reimbursement altogether.

Manager Boyd also pointed out that existing Chapter 11 provisions require instructors seeking reimbursement to teach outside their own agency, creating a concern that the policy simultaneously reimburses the certification while requiring the instructor to use it outside the sponsoring agency.

A suggestion from the audience was to consider tying reimbursement to a service obligation, such as requiring a reimbursed instructor to teach a certain number of courses for the proposed state academy.

After discussion, the Board elected not to change the reimbursement policy at this meeting. The matter was tabled to allow additional review, legal guidance, and consideration of alternative policy language.

ACADIS Implementation Update

Manager Boyd provided an update on the telecommunications program's transition into ACADIS.

He reported that Long Beach Police Department was the first telecommunications agency migrated into the system. The migration is being conducted in phases using agency rosters to establish and verify personnel records.

Once fully implemented, individual telecommunicators will have ACADIS profiles, containing their certification, employment, training, and related records. Agencies will also have designated points of contact capable of managing appropriate personnel information and workflows.

Manager Boyd explained that virtually all existing telecommunications paper processes are expected to move into ACADIS, with reimbursements remaining outside the system.

The Board was advised that participation in ACADIS would ultimately be mandatory for telecommunications agencies.

Director Vanderford advised that telecommunications and detention were expected to continue transitioning during the fall, with the goal of having the majority of personnel migrated by approximately the following year.

Director Vanderford also advised that they were trying to get a contract employee brought in to assist Manager Boyd with the telecommunications reimbursement workload in an effort to improve processing times and responsiveness.

Rick Seavey Instructor Certification Matter

The Board addressed the pending instructor certification matter involving Rick Seavey.

Seavey had been offered the opportunity for an informal hearing but requested that the matter be addressed at the conclusion of the regular Board business.

When the matter was called, Seavey expressed concern regarding discussion of the allegations in a public meeting and requested that the matter be considered in executive session.

Board Counsel explained that the Board is subject to the Mississippi Open Meetings Act and that the actual hearing would have to be conducted publicly. Seavey subsequently requested that the matter proceed instead to a formal hearing.

The Board entered closed session to determine whether an executive session was appropriate and subsequently entered executive session concerning the matter.

Upon returning to open session, Board Counsel reported that the Board had unanimously voted to schedule a formal hearing for August 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

No action was taken regarding the merits of the underlying instructor certification matter at the July 21 meeting.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

Chair Campanella advised that the next regular Board meeting was being planned for October 2026, rather than August due to the upcoming 911 conference.

Adjournment: Director Windham made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Deputy Director Burnside seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.