

University of Massachusetts Boston

ScholarWorks at UMass Boston

Edward J. Collins Center for Public
Management Publications

Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public
Management

10-24-2008

Operational Services Brief: 311 in Massachusetts

Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management, University of Massachusetts Boston

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cpm_pubs



Part of the [Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management, University of Massachusetts Boston, "Operational Services Brief: 311 in Massachusetts" (2008). *Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management Publications*. 10.

https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cpm_pubs/10

This Research Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management at ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact scholarworks@umb.edu.



OPERATIONAL SERVICES BRIEF

311 In Massachusetts

Executive Summary:

Non-emergency constituent phone service (also known as “311”) is a growing nationwide trend among municipalities looking to provide more efficient services and improve communications with their citizens. According to an ICMA report, about 15% already use such a system, and another quarter are considering one. As an example of 311’s effectiveness, 43% of local governments reported a significant decrease in non-emergency 911 calls following implementation of a centralized customer service system.

In Massachusetts, 311 is just starting to gain popularity. It currently exists in at least five places (i.e., the cities of Somerville, Springfield, Boston and Worcester; and Dukes County), and there numerous others considering it.

The following provides a very brief overview of this service in the Commonwealth, as well as country-wide information from ICMA studies (International City/County Management Association) on the matter.

Overview of Massachusetts 311 programs:

What follows is very basic information on the existing 311 programs in Massachusetts:

- Somerville: operational 311 municipal service.
 - First implemented: December, 2005
 - Source: http://www.mma.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1273&Itemid=95
 - Initial startup cost: \$50,000
 - FY07 budget appropriation: \$186,663.70
 - Proposed FY08 budget appropriation: \$318,457.54
 - Source: http://www.ci.somerville.ma.us/CoS_Content/documents/forms/FinalBudget6.4.07_Reduced.pdf
- Dukes County (Martha’s Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands): operational 311 service.
 - Source: http://www.dukescounty.org/Pages/DukesCountyMA_Sheriff/3-1-1
- Boston: operational 24 Hour Hotline for Constituent Services.
 - Number: 617-635-4500 (not 311)
 - Source: http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2008/04/14/boston_misses_the_call/
 - FY09 constituent services budget appropriation: \$838,627
 - Source: http://www.cityofboston.gov/TridionImages/01%20Mayor%27s%20Office%20Cabinet_tcm1-3128.pdf
- Worcester: operational 24 hour Customer Service Center administered by the city’s Technical Services Division (TSD).
 - Number: 508-929-1300 (not 311).
 - <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/> (follow “Customer Service Center” link)
 - FY09 TSD budget appropriation: \$3,243,190.16 (does not describe specific appropriation for Service Center).

- Source: <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/reports/BudgetFY09.pdf>
- Springfield: implementing new CitiStat Department with 311 Citizen Service Center in FY09.
 - Springfield spent \$90,000 on start-up costs for 311 and anticipates annual operating costs of \$270,000, although the city already had call center within DPW that it absorbed into 311
 - Source: <http://www.mass.gov/Ador/docs/dls/publ/ct/2008/july08.pdf>
- Several other communities have 311 systems currently in various stages of planning

ICMA reports on 311:

The following summarizes information on 311 from the ICMA:

- ICMA Local Government Customer Service Systems 2007 Data Report:
 - Development and Implementation (defined as planning, design, consulting, and staff time): cost ranging from \$1,000 to \$4+ million.
 - Capital Expenditures (software and hardware): ranging from \$8,000 to \$525,000.
 - Annual Operating Expenditures (staffing, training, supplies, software, and non-capital hardware): ranging from \$1,350 to \$350,000.
 - Source: <http://icma.org/documents/ICMA%27s Local Government Customer Service Systems Survey, 2007.pdf>
- ICMA Article: “More U.S. Local Governments Turning to 311 Call Systems; 911 Calls Drop Sharply with 311 Use, Survey Shows”:
 - 42% of U.S. local governments have either implemented a centralized customer service system (15%) or are considering adopting one (27%).
 - 43% of local governments reported a significant decrease in non-emergency 911 calls following implementation of a centralized customer service system.
 - Source: <http://www.icma.org/main/bc.asp?bcid=923&p=1>
- ICMA Case Study: “Lynwood One Call City Hall”:
 - Lynwood, CA:
 - Population: 73,212.
 - Annual City Budget (FY 2006 – 07): \$92.3 million.
 - “One Call City Hall” Request for Services System budget appropriation (adopted in June, 2006): \$56,000.
 - Major System Components:
 - Physical Location: City Hall, City Manager’s Office.
 - Square Footage: 144 square feet office.
 - Number of phones: two (one for service requests and one for the hotline).
 - Number of computers: one.
 - Number of Staff: 1.25 full-time equivalents (FTEs), including a customer service manager to coordinate the system and a blockwatch coordination specialist who provides backup support.
 - Location within City Government: under the Quality of Life Department, reporting to the City Manager’s Office.
 - Type of System: centralized, online customer service request management system with a dedicated seven-digit phone number and voicemail.
 - Source: <http://icma.org/upload/library/2008-10/%7B53CF7BCE-5519-4CE1-86A6-9DFFEDAC93E9%7D.pdf>