

New Day Recruitment & Retention

Wake County Strategies

Darrell Alford – Fire Services and Emergency Management Director

Donald Garner – EMS Chief Operating Officer

Trinija Martin – Human Resources Deputy Director

August 24, 2023



@wakegov    

wake.gov

Presenters

Darrell Alford

- 37 Years in Fire Service & Emergency Management
- 20+ years in Public Safety Management

Donald Garner

- 26 years in EMS
- 21 years in Wake Co
- Instructor, Training Officer, Deputy Director
- Q/A, education, operations, logistics

Trinija Martin

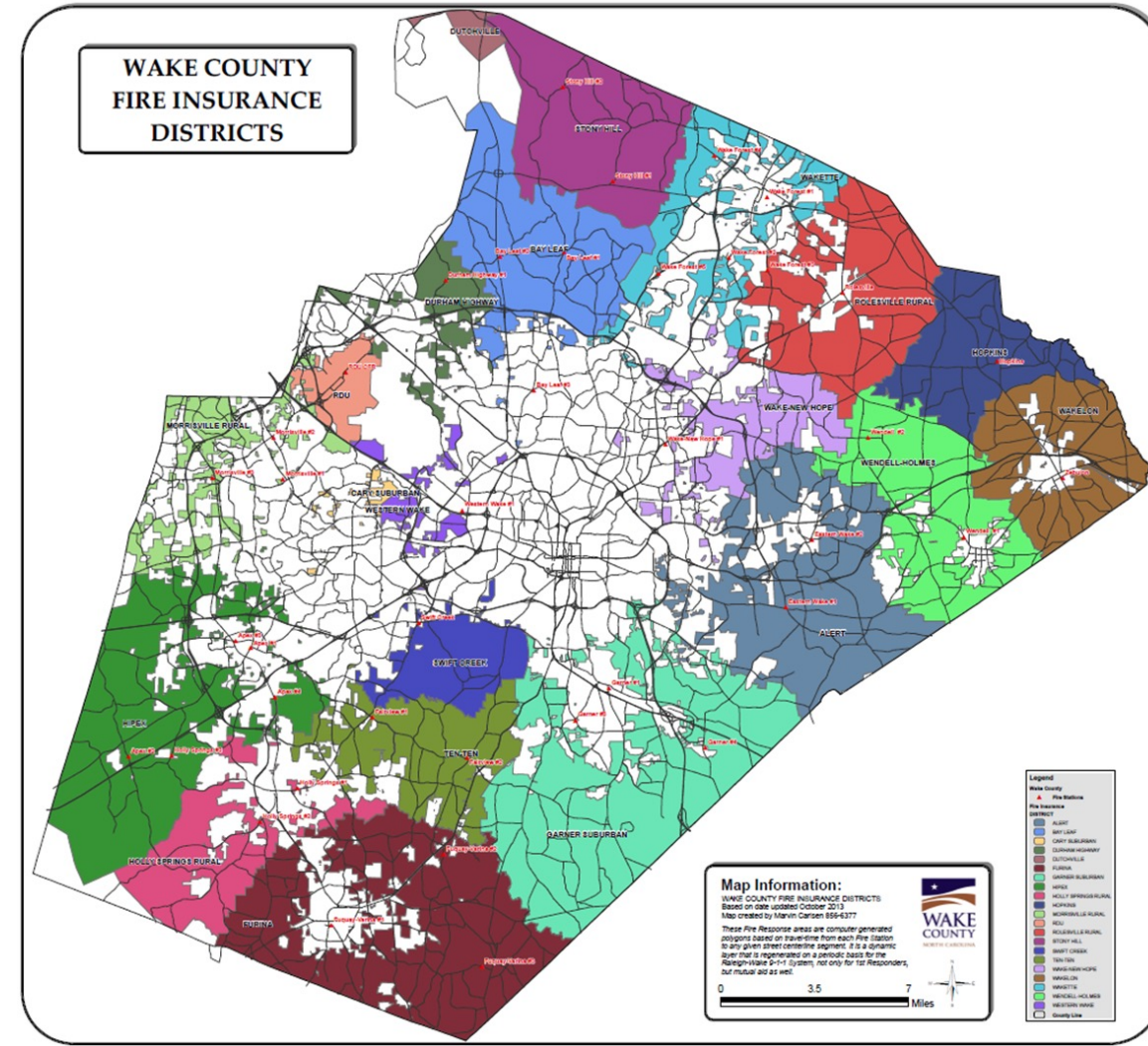
- 20+ years in Human Resources
- 15+ years of Organizational Development & Talent Management

Presentation & Discussions

- Fire and EMS Service Delivery in Wake County
- Local and National Fire/EMS Turnover Rates
- Demographics
- Recruitment Strategies & Opportunities
- How Did We Do?

Fire Service Delivery

- Single Fire Tax District that includes the Town of Wendell.
- 17 fire departments (excludes Raleigh & Cary)
 - 8 not-for-profits
 - 9 cost shares



Fire Service Delivery

- 242 staffed positions 24 hours a day
- Over 51,000 incident responses last year (12% increase over 2021)
- One out of three incidents results in a concurrent call for a department

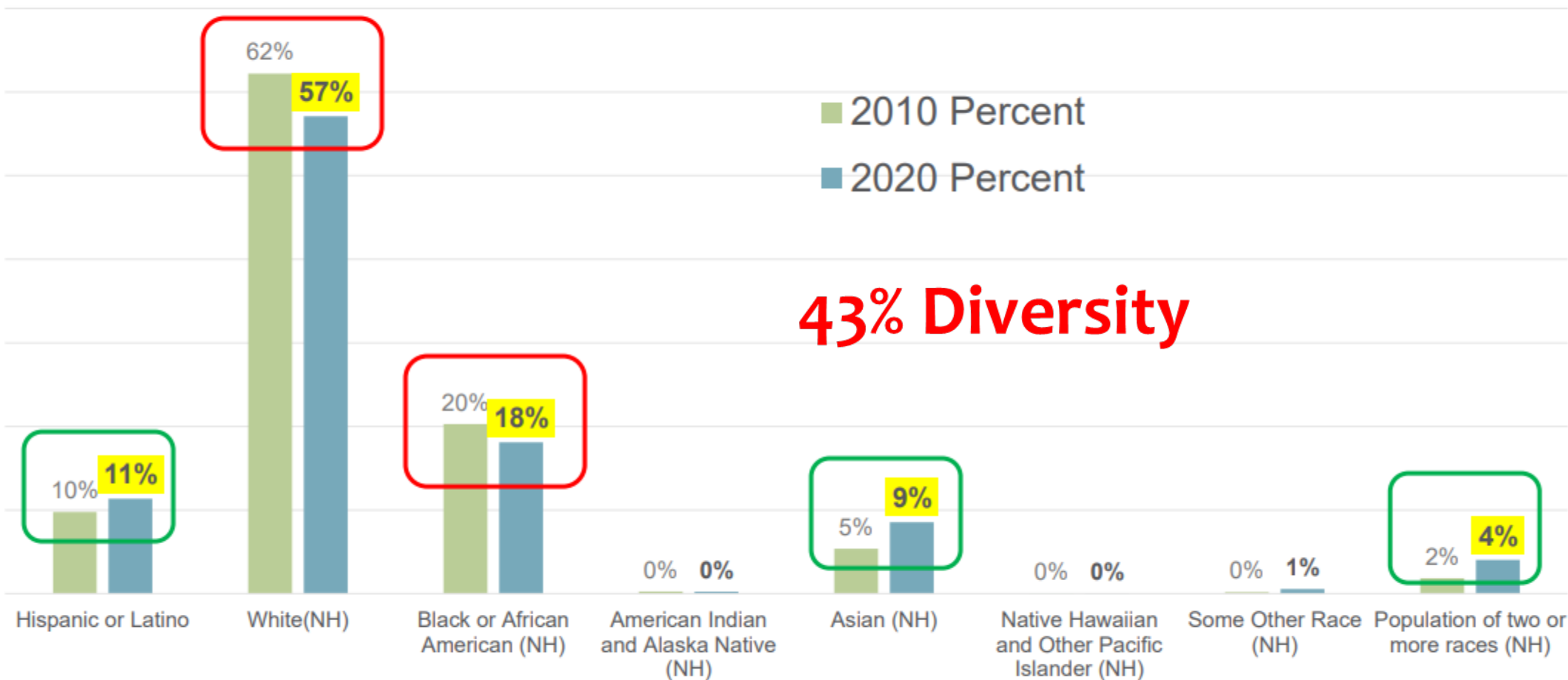
Fire Service Turnover Rates

Wake County

- Firefighter ranks – within the first four years of employment, one out of four left their job.
- Cost nearly \$10K per firefighter for equipment, uniforms, medical exams, etc.



2010 to 2020: Wake 's Race & Ethnicity (% rounded)



Fire Service Demographics

National Averages

- 90% male
- 85% white
- 15% Hispanic/Latino
- 8% African American

Wake County

- 97% men
- 94% white
- 1.4% Hispanic/Latino
- 4.5% African American

Fire Service Challenges = Opportunities

- Wake County fire departments were challenged with three personnel issues:
 - High turnover rates
 - Small candidate pools
 - Lack of diversity in the workforce
- Wake County partnered with our municipalities and Wake Tech to develop a recruitment and retention strategy that would change our business model moving forward.

Recruitment & Retention Plan

First Steps

- **Focus Group Meetings**
 - Actual honest feedback from employees
- **Internal Assessments**
 - Culture
 - Pay
 - Policies
 - Promotions



Fire Tax District

Diversity Recruitment Initiative



Recruitment & Retention Plan

Grassroots Recruitment

- Paid academy
- Community informational sessions
- High visibility marketing
- Veterans career fairs
- Removed barriers
- Physical agility prep course



Recruitment & Retention Plan

- #CareerInAYear
- Wake County Human Resources and Communications Office
 - One Stop Shop
 - Wake County website with links
 - Application processing

Where Do I Apply?

- Durham Highway Fire Department
- Fairview Fire Department
- Fuquay-Varina Fire Department
- Garner Fire Department
- Northern Wake Fire Department
- Wendell Fire Department



For more information: [WAKEGOV.COM/FIRECAREER](https://www.wakegov.com/firecareer)

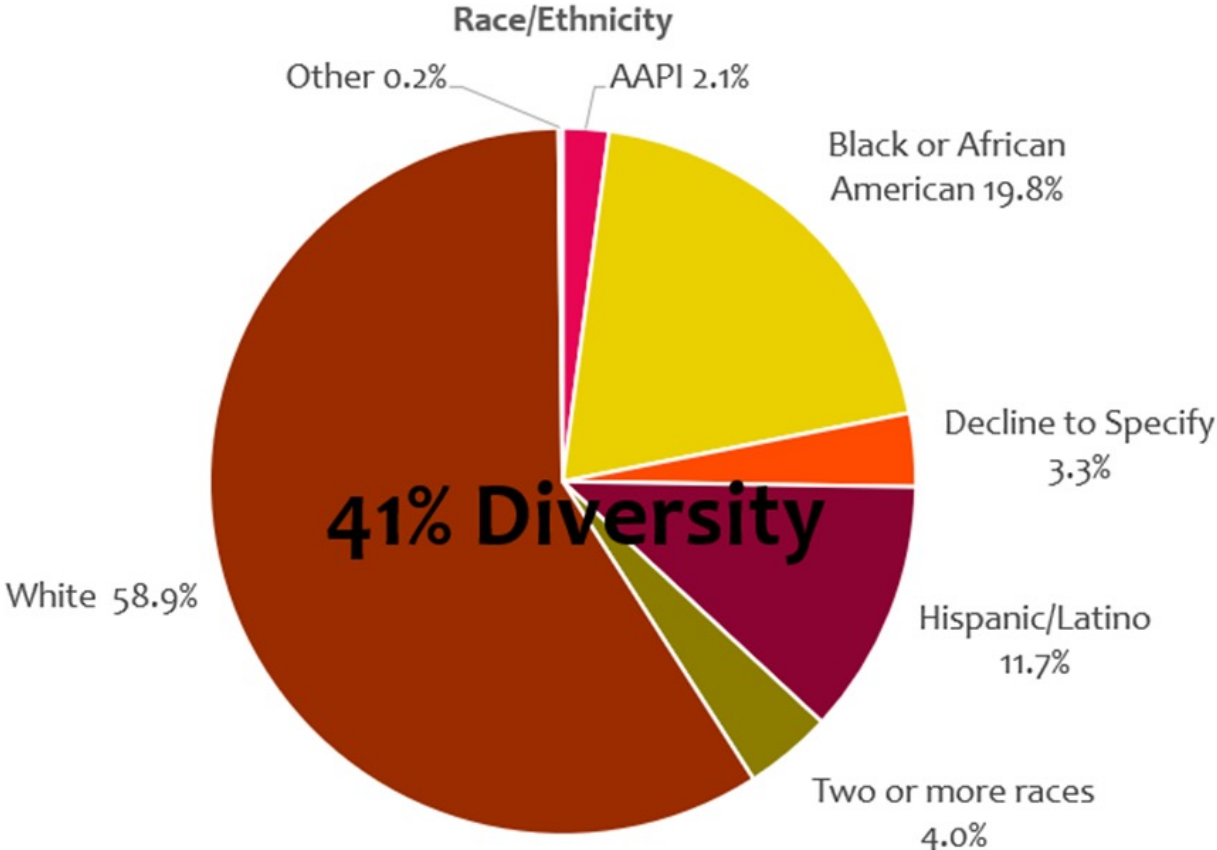
Did the Recruitment Plan Work?

Total Number of Recruit Positions 30

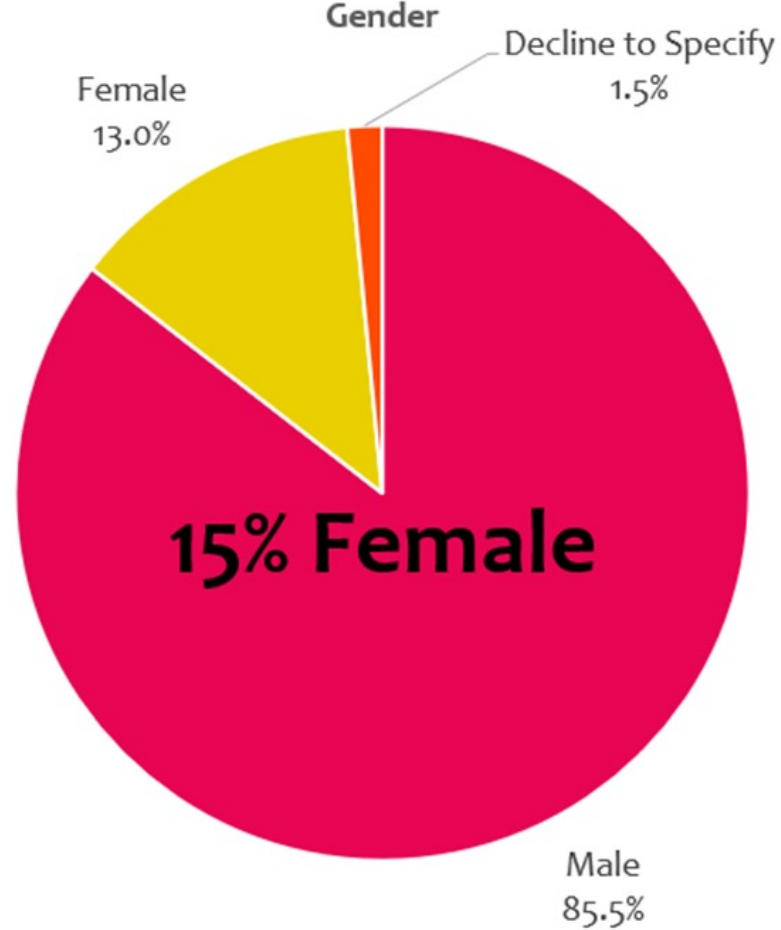
| Fire Department | # of Applicants |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Fairview | 195 |
| Wendell | 215 |
| Durham Highway | 199 |
| Northern Wake | 237 |
| Garner | 94 |
| Fuquay-Varina | 106 |

Total Number of Applications 1,046 (NEVER BEFORE SEEN NUMBERS)

Candidate Pool Demographics



41% Diversity



15% Female

19% Veterans*



Fire Academy: In Their Own Words







We celebrated 28 graduates on June 20, 2023

How Can This Work for Other Counties?

- Encourage the fire departments to partner with the County on **social media engagement** to cast a larger net.
- Incorporate **career informational sessions** on every speaking engagement and opportunity.
- Hold fire department **safety days** in different parts of the area.

How Can This Work for Other Counties?

- Provide a **clear obtainable path** for certifications.
- Look for **new and different** ways to incentivize.
- Work with the **community colleges** on scholarship programs for career-oriented recruits.
- Provide annual **re-occurring funds** for salary/benefits.

EMS Service Delivery

Wake County EMS is the sole delivery agency in Wake County.

- **Ambulances**
 - Day – 38
 - Peak – 11
 - Night – 32
- **Supervisors**
 - 8 staffed 2x12
- **Advanced Practice Paramedics**
- **2022 requests for service – 127,000**



Historical Challenges



EMS Workforce



**Increase
demand for
EMS services**



**Need for
additional
funding**



**Increase in task
time**

EMS services warn of 'crippling labor shortage' undermining 911 system

"We're not bleeding any longer – we're hemorrhaging," one ambulance service operator said of a decadelong worker shortage exacerbated by the pandemic.



Rising costs and dwindling volunteers creates a slow motion crisis for rural EMS

by Jimmy Jordan March 3, 2022

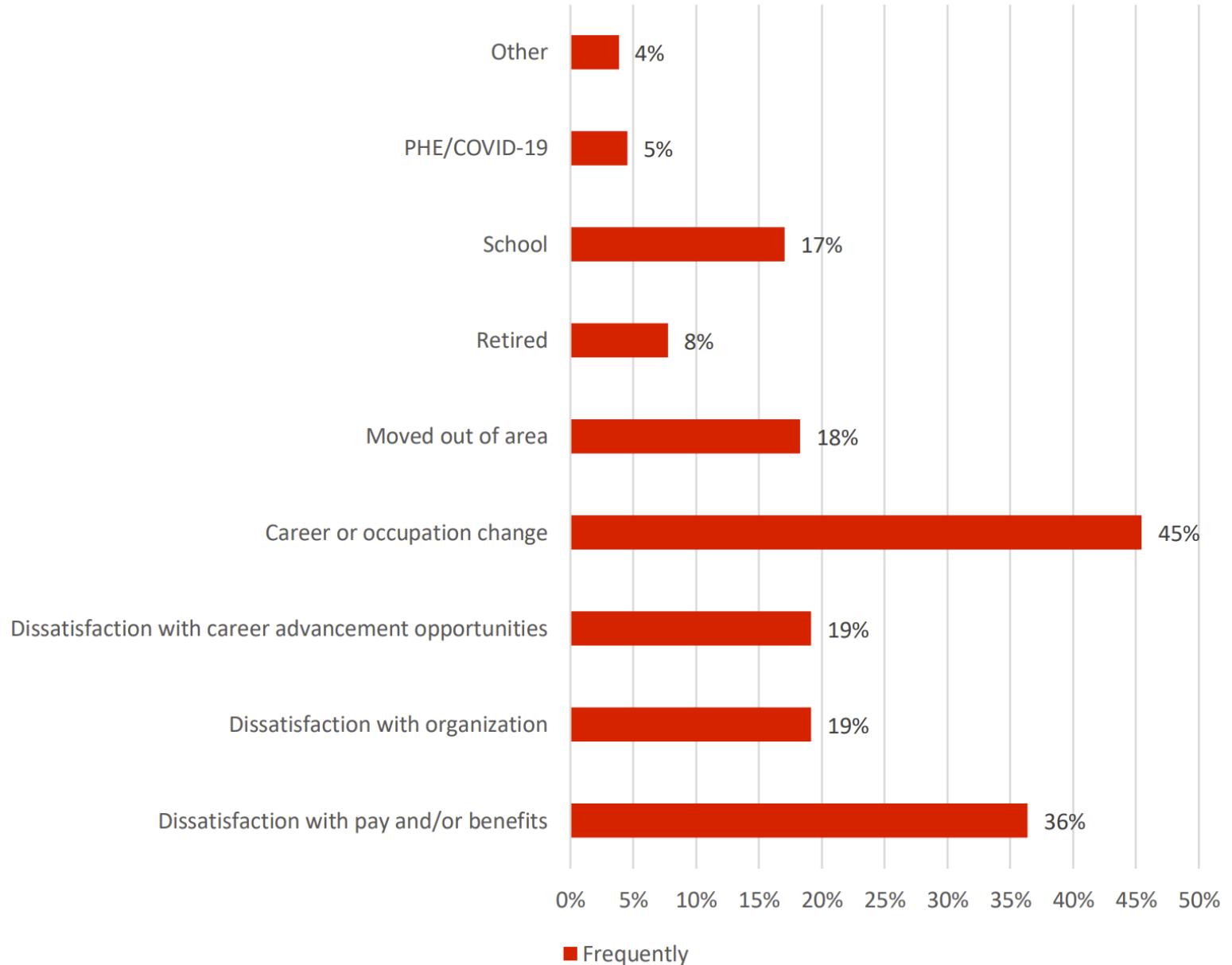
Credit: Kelsey O'Connor | The Ithaca Voice

TOMPKINS COUNTY, N.Y.— Emergency services, unfortunately, don't pay for themselves.



“Voluntary and overall turnover increased for 2022, with the turnover rate being in the 20-36% range for EMTs and paramedics, a 6% increase over the prior year – meaning that EMS agencies are experiencing a full turnover of all staff every 3-4 years.”

Reasons for Voluntary Turnover for Full-Time Paramedics



Wake County EMS Staffing

- Current vacancy rate: 10%
- Current turnover rate: 5.4%
- Hired 141 field personnel in FY 23.
- Post-COVID we had a vacancy rate as high as 18%.



Grow Your Own

- **Initial EMT class at North Wake College & Career Academy**
 - Focuses on graduating students to ensure college and career ready.
 - Students earn credits toward Associate in Applied Science degrees.
 - Partnership between WCPSS, Wake Tech and Wake County EMS.
- **5th Period Initial EMT class for all Wake County High Schools**
 - Open to any 12th grader
 - Competitive process
 - Taught by EMS staff at our facility
- **Three additional high schools teach EMT class**



Grow Your Own

- **Initial Paramedic Program**
 - In-house initial paramedic education
 - Fully paid for with an employment contract
 - Competitive process open to all Wake County EMS employees
 - 35 graduates since 2019





KENS-TV San Antonio

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Paid EMT training program in San Antonio aimed at addressing Texas paramedic shortage

Story by Victoria De Leon • Feb 19, 2022



Comments

Allina Health EMS to offer paid EMT training program

Apr 8, 2019 Updated Apr 8, 2019  0



Emergency Notifications Register of Deeds

Guilford County

STATE of NORTH CAROLINA

Services Our County

FIRSTHEALTH EMS PARAMEDIC ACADEMY

Apprenticeship

- The apprenticeship model formalizes an individual's steps to become a paramedic.
- The apprenticeship is merely a funding source and official partnership with NC Community Colleges, allowing Wake County EMS to sponsor individuals interested in becoming an EMT or paramedic.

ApprenticeshipNC

Process Overview

Step 1 Contact Us



Contact ApprenticeshipNC
Consultant

Step 2 Build Program



Provide New Employer
Information to
ApprenticeshipNC Consultant

Step 3 Program Check



ApprenticeshipNC Director
Reviews and Approves
Customized Standards of
Apprenticeship Developed
with Employer's Input

Step 4 Program
Registered



Consultant Receives Finalized
Standards of Apprenticeship
and Certificate of Registration

Step 5 Launch Program



Employer Implements
Registered Apprenticeship
Program

Grow Your Own

| | High School (CTE) | WakeWorks® | Traditional |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Target Market | High School EMT students | Students taking CE EMT course at WTCC | Medically cleared EMTs |
| Prerequisites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hired as an EMT within 120 days of high school graduation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepted into paramedic program at WTCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal hiring process |
| Tuition Funding | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition waiver (NC Community Colleges) NC Community Colleges (grants) Tuition reimbursement – Wake County Gov. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Community Colleges (grants) WakeWorks® Funding Tuition reimbursement – Wake County Gov. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NC Community Colleges (grants) Tuition reimbursement – Wake County Gov. |
| Entry Point(s) | Senior year of high school | During initial EMT course at WTCC | Anytime after RTP (BLS) |

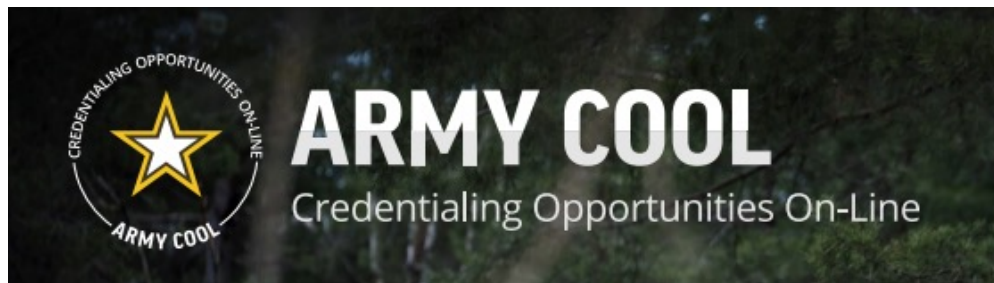
Veterans

What is SkillBridge?

Connecting returning service members to career job training opportunities.

Hiring Our Heroes

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation



A group of approximately 20-30 youth are gathered in a large room, likely a classroom or community center, for a CPR training session. They are sitting on mats on the floor, practicing on mannequins. Some are standing and observing, while others are actively performing CPR. The room has large windows and a whiteboard. The overall atmosphere is focused and educational.

Youth Programs

EMS Cadets



- Structured classes once a week offering in-depth instruction on EMT topics
- Started in 2020
- Competitive entry program
- Average 54 applicants per year
- 51 graduates

EMS Camp

- Weeklong day camp in June and July
- Provides extensive hands-on instruction on EMS
- Two weeks of Basic Camp
- Two weeks of Advanced Camp
- Youths ages 14-19



EMS Club

- Monthly session of hands-on instruction on EMS
- Second Monday of each month
- High-school aged youth



Takeaways

- Maximize **social media**
- Leverage your **community college** and **public school system**
- Start **recruiting** early
- **Grow your own** and create multiple pathways





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