BETST MINUTES

April 8, 2026

Board on Emergency Telecommunications Standards and Training

Canton, MS

Meeting Information

The Mississippi Board of Emergency Telecommunications Standards and Training (BETST) met on April 8, 2026, at the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, Public Safety Planning Office in Canton, MS. Vice Chair Sheri Hokamp presided in the absence of Chairman Stan Alford. A quorum was established.

Attendance

Board members present included:

- Sheri Hokamp (Vice Chair)
- Barry Burnside
- Kristen Campanella
- Tony Carelton
- Jason McElhenney
- Trevell Dixon
- Kyle Jones, Board Attorney

Also present:

- Josh Bromen, Executive Director
- Amy Vanderford, Director of the Office of Standards and Training
- TJ Boyd, Telecommunication Program Manager
- Marie Fivecoat
- Karen Goodman

Old Business

Training Course Approvals

The Board reviewed previously submitted course approvals.

- Courses submitted by Joe Serio had completed the pilot process and were approved.
- Courses submitted by Ebony Ross had not yet completed pilot presentations and remained under consideration.
- Previously approved MLEOTA funding had already been awarded.

Board Action: Chief Trevell Dixson made a motion to approve. Director Kisten Campanella seconded the motion. Motion approved to remove completed and approved courses from the agenda and retain Ebony Ross's courses under Old Business until piloting requirements are completed.

New Business

CJIS/FBI Training Presentations

Ginger Coley, Mississippi CJIS Systems Officer, presented a statewide training initiative being conducted jointly with the FBI following findings from a recent CJIS audit.

The FBI requested four (4) hours of continuing education hours for attendees. Training locations included Tupelo, Cleveland, Brandon, Lincoln County, and Hattiesburg. The training was offered at no cost.

Board Action: Director Jason McElhenney made a motion to approve the FBI CJIS statewide training for four (4) hours of continuing education. The motion also approved salary reimbursement eligibility for employees attending on agency-authorized paid time, clarified that travel time is not reimbursable, and limited reimbursement eligibility to agency-authorized attendance. Chief Trevell Dixon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Policy Amendments

Salary Reimbursement Clarification

TJ Boyd presented revisions to Chapter 6 reimbursement language to better align reimbursement calculations with:

- Initial certification requirements
- Three-year recertification cycles
- Existing reimbursement practices

The amendment simplified language and clarified eligibility standards.

Board Action: Director Kristen Campanella made a motion to approve the proposed amendments to the salary reimbursement policy. Chief Trevell Dixon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Private Ambulance Eligibility

TJ Boyd presented amendments updating BETST policy to align with Mississippi Code §19-5-357.

The amendment:

- Allows contracted private ambulance services providing primary emergency response under local government contracts to become eligible for reimbursement funding.
- Brings BETST policy into compliance with statutory changes.

Board Action: Director Jason McElhenney made a motion to approve the proposed amendment regarding reimbursement eligibility for contracted private ambulance services. Chief Trevell Dixon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

150-Mile Reimbursement Clarification

TJ Boyd presented proposed amendments to clarify the Board's reimbursement policy for training conducted more than 150 miles from an agency. He explained that the current policy language resulted in inconsistent interpretation and application and presented two potential options for the Board's consideration.

Discussion centered on:

- Inconsistent historical interpretations.
- Prior Board actions that had not been incorporated into written policy.
- Historical exceptions for conferences, out-of-state instructors, and extenuating circumstances.
- The need for a clearly documented standard and clarification regarding staff authority to approve qualifying exceptions.

Board Action: Director Tony Carleton initially made a motion to approve the proposed amendment, which was seconded by Director Kristen Campanella. Following discussion, Director Carleton withdrew his motion and made a new motion to table the proposal to allow Standards and Training staff to revise the language for future Board consideration. Director Kristen Campanella seconded the motion. The motion to table carried unanimously.

TCPR / IAED Dispatcher-Directed CPR Recognition

TJ Boyd presented a proposed amendment recognizing IAED Dispatcher-Directed CPR (DD-CPR) as satisfying the TCPR requirement for initial certification for agencies utilizing the IAED EMD protocol system. The amendment applies only to agencies operating under the IAED EMD protocol system and does not change the TCPR requirement for agencies using other approved training programs.

Board Action: Director Kristen Campanella made a motion to approve the proposed amendment recognizing IAED Dispatcher-Directed CPR as meeting the TCPR requirement for applicable agencies. Director Tony Carelton seconded the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

Out-of-State Conference Policy Revisions

TJ Boyd presented a proposal to incorporate previously approved Board guidelines for out-of-state conferences into the BETST Policies and Procedures. He explained that the guidelines had been approved by the Board in 2022 but had never been incorporated into the written policy, resulting in inconsistent application among agencies.

The proposed amendment would:

- Codify the existing Board-approved conference guidelines.
- Award continuing education hours based on the actual verified instructional hours attended rather than limiting conference credit to sixteen (16) hours.
- Maintain the reimbursement limit of $2,000 per telecommunicator.

- Continue requiring conference agendas and proof of attendance for reimbursement and continuing education credit.

The Board discussed documentation requirements and methods for verifying conference attendance while recognizing that documentation provided by conference sponsors may vary.

Board Action: Director Kristen Campanella made a motion to approve the proposed amendments as presented, including awarding continuing education credit based on the actual verified instructional hours attended. Director Jason McElhenney seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Expedited Course Approval Process

TJ Boyd presented a proposal to establish an alternative course review process for experienced instructors and established training programs. The proposal would allow the Board to consider course materials in lieu of requiring a pilot class for instructors with a documented history of successfully teaching the same or similar courses or who are already approved BETST instructors with an established record of instruction in Mississippi.

The proposed process would require instructors to submit course curricula, lesson plans, learning objectives, instructor qualifications, and supporting documentation for review by Standards and Training staff. Following review, the Board would retain the authority to approve the course without a pilot, approve it with conditions, require a pilot class, or deny approval.

Board members discussed maintaining oversight of course quality while reducing unnecessary delays in making established training programs available. Board Attorney Kyle Jones advised that the proposal should also be incorporated into the Administrative Code to ensure consistency between Board’s policies and administrative rules.

Board Action: Director Barry Burnside made a motion to approve the proposed rule amendment incorporating the alternative course review process into the Administrative Code. Director Kristen Campanella seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Conference Agenda Approval Process

The Board discussed the process for approving conference agendas and whether the Board should continue reviewing individual conference agendas after a conference has been approved. Discussion focused on distinguishing conference approval from agenda approval and the role of Standards and Training staff in reviewing conference agendas for compliance with BETST requirements.

Board members agreed that staff should continue reviewing conference agendas to verify instructional content and continuing education eligibility before making recommendations to the Board, consistent with longstanding practice.

Board Action: Director Kristen Campanella made a motion to authorize Standards and Training staff to review and approve conference agendas on behalf of the Board after a conference has been approved. Director Tony Carleton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Training Simulation Platforms

TJ Boyd and Director Amy Vanderford provided the Board with an overview of two AI-driven simulation training platforms being evaluated for future use in Mississippi. The cloud-based systems would provide scenario-based training for telecommunicators through simulated 911 calls and radio traffic and could be utilized at training academies throughout the state.

The Board discussed the potential benefits of the platforms, including skills development, scenario-based practice, confidence building, and pre-employment assessment tools. Staff advised that the estimated cost for each platform was approximately $20,000 annually and emphasized that the proposal was still in early planning stages.

Board members expressed support for the concept and requested that both vendors provide demonstrations at a future Board meeting for further evaluation.

No formal Board action was taken.

NCIC Security & Privacy Training Credit

TJ Boyd presented a proposal to recognize NCIC-related training for continuing education credit. During discussion, the Board learned that the FBI now requires annual NCIC Security and Privacy Training as a prerequisite for NCIC certification and recertification. Board members discussed the distinction between awarding credit for testing versus training and agreed that continuing education credit should recognize the required training component.

The Board also discussed the amount of continuing education credit to award for the initial training and required annual refresher training during a telecommunicator's three-year certification cycle.

Board Action: Director Kristen Campanella made a motion to approve awarding four (4) hours of continuing education for initial NCIC certification and one (1) hour of continuing education for each required annual training thereafter. Chief Trevell Dixson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ride-Along Continuing Education Program

TJ Boyd presented a proposal to reinstate ride-alongs as an eligible continuing education activity. The proposal was brought forward in response to requests from multiple agencies and would allow telecommunicators to receive continuing education hours for participating in approved ride-alongs with law enforcement, fire, or emergency medical services.

The Board discussed the educational value of ride-alongs, emphasizing the importance of exposing telecommunicators to field operations and strengthening their understanding of responder responsibilities. Members also discussed appropriate documentation requirements and clarified that ride-alongs would be eligible for continuing education credit only and would not qualify for reimbursement.

Board Action: Director Barry Burnside made a motion to reinstate ride-alongs as an eligible continuing education activity, allowing telecommunicators to receive up to eight (8) continuing education hours during each recertification cycle. Director Kristen Campanella seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

BETST Training Calendar and Website Discussion

Director Amy Vanderford led a discussion regarding the BETST website and the publication of instructor training calendars. She explained that maintaining course dates, locations, and pricing for private instructors required significant staff time and raised concerns about using state resources to advertise private training businesses.

Board members, instructors, and agency representatives discussed the importance of the BETST website serving as the official source for approved training. Several participants expressed concern that agencies had historically relied on the BETST training calendar to verify that classes were approved for reimbursement before authorizing employee attendance.

Following discussion, staff indicated the website would continue to be maintained.

No formal Board action was taken.

<u>Director's Report</u>

Director Amy Vanderford reported that Standards and Training had recently issued a warning letter to a telecommunicator as part of the Board's disciplinary process. She advised that the office is implementing a progressive disciplinary approach, including warning letters, probation, and suspension, to promote consistency with the disciplinary practices used by the other Standards and Training boards. The goal is to ensure disciplinary matters are handled consistently and fairly across all boards.

Director Vanderford reported she had no additional business to present.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The Board announced that the next regularly scheduled meeting would be held on August 13, 2026, and would be the final meeting of the calendar year.

Director Vanderford advised that the meeting would be held at the new Mississippi Department of Public Safety Headquarters in Pearl, MS. Board members also discussed the possibility of reinstating a virtual attendance option for future meetings.

Adjournment

With no further business before the Board, Vice Chair Sheri Hokamp entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chief Trevell Dixson made the motion to adjourn, and Director Tony Carleton seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.