



## CRISIS RESPONSE UNITS

**Request:** Seek funding of \$3,315,620 annually in grants to fully fund and continue to build the Crisis Response Units through the Phoenix Fire Department.

**Community Value:**

The Crisis Response Units provide 24-hour on-scene crisis intervention and victim assistance services to citizens of the Phoenix metropolitan area. The units are housed in fire stations and staffed by volunteers and interns who respond to community needs by providing emotional support in times of crisis. Crisis Response Units assist individuals and families on a wide range of calls. They either respond on initial dispatch or can be requested by fire or police personnel once they are on the scene and determine a need.

The Crisis Response Units have become a vital component in reducing response times for fire apparatus and police officers responding to emergency incidents. Crisis Response Units allow first responders to go back in service by relieving them of their on-scene duties. Crisis Response staff continue care, assess needs and provide resources or referrals to the customers.

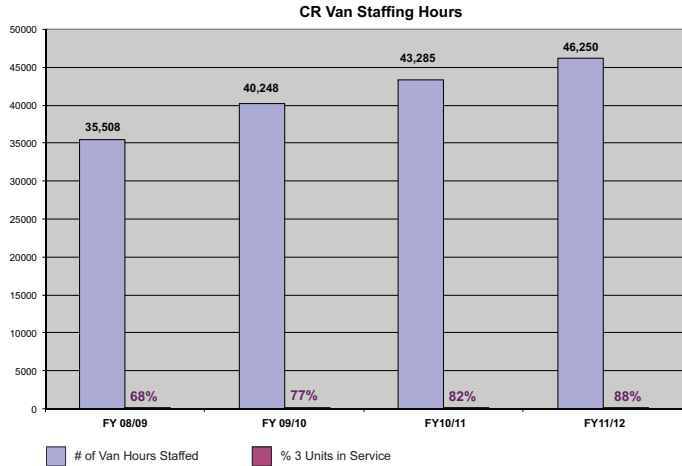


**Background:**

The Crisis Response Units started as a volunteer program in partnership with the ASU School of Social Work. The ability to accept interns and provide leadership and mentoring while exposing interns to the needs of the public is a valuable experience. Today, the Phoenix Fire Department partners with numerous universities, offering internships to various fields of study. Each year, the interns and community volunteers contribute more than 20,000 volunteer hours in order to keep the Crisis Response Units in service 24/7.

The majority of the funding for this program has always been reliant upon grants. Currently, this program obtains Victim of

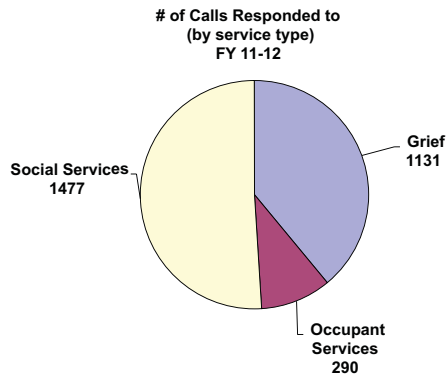
Crime Act, Arizona Criminal Justice Commission and Justice Assistance Grant funding. The Crisis Response Program also received funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which have since been expended. The goal now is to either maintain the current level of service, which is three vans in service 24/7, or to increase the level of service. There are hundreds of customers and first responders who do not obtain the benefits of Crisis Response Units because the units are on another call or out of service due to insufficient staffing.



The majority of the services needed and provided by Crisis Response Units are social service-related. Examples include finding shelter for a homeless person; assisting family and first responders who continually respond to a substance abuser; helping an elderly woman who can no longer care for herself, keeps falling and needs in-home or assisted living resources; and de-escalating a situation involving a seriously mentally ill subject and connecting them to proper resources.

Providing grief services is another key resource that the Crisis Response Units provide. When someone passes away at home, the family is not always aware of what will occur next or what their responsibilities are. Crisis Response Units will stay on scene for hours, waiting with the family of the deceased and providing support until the medical examiner's office or funeral home can respond, thus freeing up police personnel who would otherwise need to stand by.

Crisis Response Units also provide on-scene assistance to victims of sexual assault, homicide, child and elder abuse, domestic violence and traffic fatalities. Last year, Crisis Response Units assisted nearly 11,000 victims and family members.



**Types of calls for service:**

- Grief: homicides, drowning, death notifications, suicides, natural deaths and car accident fatalities.
- Occupant Services: residential and commercial fires, evacuations and disaster response.
- Social Service: mental health, victim advocacy, substance abuse, homelessness and repeat caller/follow-up cases.

The services the Crisis Response Units provide are relied upon by police officers, firefighters, victims of crime and members of the community, often on the worst day of their lives. A consistent stable funding source is needed to continue to provide these vital services.



**Funding:**

The Phoenix Fire Department is seeking and reliant upon competitive grant funding to sustain and continue to build the Crisis Response Program. Current grant funding is inconsistent and encompasses many service delivery restrictions, which impacts the types of calls and customers that can be assisted. When the number of Crisis Response Units in service dwindles, the number of customers served, and first responders put back in service, suffers.

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