

## **Alternative Response Unit Adds Team Members, Capacity, Hours of Service**

SANTA FE, September 6, 2022 -- The Santa Fe Fire Department has added personnel to bolster the Alternative Response Unit (ARU) that was first deployed in May 2021. The addition of an Emergency Medical Services Captain and three case managers brings the unit's total personnel to 13 members. This enables a service increase from four to five days per week and doubles workforce capacity on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The ARU was established by the Community Health and Safety Department as a collaborative effort between City Fire, Police, and Community Services departments to provide an appropriate level of response to a variety of calls that come in through the RECC dispatch center to serve people in need of social and behavioral health services.

Previously, even calls that did not indicate violence deployed police cars, fire trucks, and ambulances in responses. This was inefficient, diverted Police and Fire personnel from their primary missions, and could be counter-productive for people in mental health or substance abuse crises. The ARU response teams include a paramedic and case managers trained in crisis intervention and social services, with backup from the Police Department as needed.

"We're building on the successes of the program since it launched 16 months ago," says Kyra Ochoa, Director of Community Health and Safety. "We've seen how much it means to people in crisis to have this alternative approach to meeting their needs and getting them the care they need. I'm grateful to the new members who are joining the ARU, who bring the expertise and compassion that are the hallmarks of our public safety departments as a whole. We will continue to assess and evaluate the program and further develop it according to needs and availability of resources."