



# Anchorage Fire Department

## CORE Team

1140 Airport Heights Drive

Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone (907)267-5088 / Fax (907)267-4977



The Community Outreach, Referral and Education (CORE) Team was established in June of 2018 following the completion of a Community Needs Assessment by the Anchorage Fire Department (AFD). It was determined that High Utilizers of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) had a significant impact on AFD response numbers and total patient contacts. This assessment found that approximately 1% of patients accounted for 10% of the total patient encounters by AFD personnel.

The CORE Team is focused on improving the health and wellness of High Utilizers by providing alternative solutions for these patients and reducing the impact this group has on the availability of emergency services and Hospital Emergency Departments (ED). Observational evidence suggests some factors for the increased utilization include the following: lacking or not engaging with a Primary Care Provider, lacking transportation options, non-compliance with prescribed medication, and reduced cognitive function and/or chronic medical condition(s) complicated by co-occurring substance use and behavioral health disorders. . Our CORE Team concept includes the addition of a social worker, a behavioral health specialist, and police officer to the in the field team, providing expertise in all aspects of the difficulties experienced by this population.

The AFD works collaboratively with our community partners to address the needs of this identified population. But the CORE Team's Firefighter/Paramedic (FF/PM) is also uniquely qualified and positioned to fill existing gaps within the system by providing the following unique services not found elsewhere:

- High Utilizers are already calling 911 for entry into the healthcare system. The CORE Team is able to effect outcomes by navigating these patients to an appropriate level of care other than a hospital ED.
- Using AFD patient care data, the FF/PM is able to identify, locate (sometimes by searching shelters or the streets itself), and monitor individuals going into medical or behavioral health crisis.
- The majority of outreach performed to meet the needs of this population is done within the community, for example on the streets, at private residences, at assisted living facilities, and in the ED's. As First Responders we are already working across this very dynamic spectrum.
- FF/PMs, due to their specialized training, protocols and equipment, can begin treatment of life-threatening injury and illness immediately. FF/PMs have direct contact with AFD Dispatch and provide continuity of care to the ED where a thorough transfer of patient care to nursing staff occurs.
- A high-level of safety is built into FF/PM training and responses. With direct contact to AFD Dispatch for accountability and Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) for location tracking, providers can quickly summon additional AFD resources or the Anchorage Police Department (APD).

The AFD is a respected public service organization. This public trust gives the AFD CORE Team members (FF/PM, social worker, behavioral health specialist) the unique ability to be welcomed into people's homes to provide compassionate care and assistance. It is not the intent of the AFD to duplicate services that other community partners are currently providing, but to fill gaps in the healthcare and social service systems that already exists within the community. Often these patients have been unable to have their very complicated needs met by other agencies and services due to the limitations of those respective programs, including the lack of field training, protocols, cooperative agreements, and street-level experience.

With the CORE Team's broad scope of assistance and integration within the community, the CORE Team is able to navigate the patient to the appropriate service(s) and provide support to our partners while the individual is being stabilized. When appropriate, the CORE Team will disengage and look to help the next patient, allowing our partners to continue their respective mission to improve the global health and wellness of the patient.