

crisis
services

this moment forward

2024 **ANNUAL** **REPORT**

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I reflect on 2024 — **my 25th year of service at the agency** — I am both humbled and inspired by the strength of our community and the dedication of our team. At Crisis Services, we are more than a 24/7 crisis center — we are a lifeline. We answer every call, meet every moment, and walk alongside every person who turns to us in their darkest hour. This year, we stood together to meet complex and growing needs, reaching tens of thousands of individuals across Erie County with critical, trauma-informed care.

Our numbers tell a story about community need:

- 78,067 calls came through our 24-Hour Crisis Hotline — each one answered with empathy, urgency, and hope.
- 855 survivors of domestic and sexual violence received support from our Advocates at 11 area hospitals.
- 5,859 people in a mental health crisis were met in their homes or communities by our Mobile Outreach team.
- Over 17,553 residents engaged with our community education efforts, learning life-saving skills and connecting with resources.

These outcomes are the result of our team's tireless commitment — first responders, advocates, mental health professionals, volunteers, and staff — all united by one mission: to save lives, reduce harm, and restore dignity.

In 2024, we also laid the groundwork for our **2024–2026 Strategic Plan**, with bold goals centered on two key priorities: strengthening recruitment and retention and deepening our impact with underserved communities. This plan reflects who we are and where we're going — a compassionate, data-informed organization that evolves alongside community needs.

This year also brought meaningful work to the bargaining table. In partnership **with our Employees' Union, CWA Local 1122, we reached a new three-year union contract** that reinforces our shared belief in the value of both those we serve and, equally, those we serve alongside. Our staff deserve more than thanks — they deserve competitive pay, strong benefits, and a supportive workplace culture. We're proud of what this agreement represents.

Of course, 2024 brought challenges. Like many in our field, we grappled with the continued impacts resulting with workforce shortages, burnout, and gaps in the overall behavior health system infrastructure. But in every challenge, we leaned on our values: resilience, equity, partnership, and compassion. **We piloted flexible staffing models, expanded training, rebuilt COVID-suspended programs, and grew our outreach and education efforts.**

Crisis doesn't wait — and neither can we. Every hour, every day, we are there: on the phone, in the field, in hospitals, courtrooms, and training rooms. And we're only able to do this because of you — our donors, partners, and community champions. Thank you for investing in our mission and believing in the people behind the work.

As we enter 2025, I feel both urgency and optimism. The needs are great — and growing. But so is our resolve. There is much to be done, and I know we will meet it — together.

With gratitude and determination,



Jessica C. Pirro
President & CEO



2024 | **By the Numbers**

78,067

of 24-Hour Crisis Hotline callers who received support, help, and hope from our First Responders.

84

% of suicidal calls were diverted from needing 911 emergency services.

855

of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors who received the support of our Advocates at area hospitals.

5,898

of individuals who received life-saving mental health intake, assessment, and intervention by our Mobile Outreach team.

17,553

of Erie County residents reached via Community Education and Outreach efforts, including safeTalk, Talk Saves Lives, and QPR Gatekeeper suicide prevention trainings.

2024–2026 Strategic Plan: Crisis Services' Path Forward

Crisis Services has long served as a vital lifeline for Erie County, providing 24/7 support through our Crisis Counseling Program, Emergency Mental Health Response Services, and Advocate Department. As the County's comprehensive, around-the-clock crisis responder, we've continually evolved to meet the complex needs of Western New York. This evolution is driven by ongoing assessment, meaningful collaboration, data-informed outcomes, and strategic foresight – elements that guide and strengthen our planning for the future.

To strengthen our impact, the Agency and Foundation Boards laid the groundwork to design and adopt a 2024–2026 Strategic Plan focused on **two key priorities, or pillars**:

- **Enhancing Employee Recruitment and Retention**
- **Deepening Engagement with Underserved Communities**

Improve Community Partnerships	Increase Capacity & Harness Technology	Improve Work-Life Balance	Pilot Alternative HR Practices
<p>Hire DEIB Coordinator to implement engagement program with underserved communities; establish funding for position.</p> <p>Conduct needs and opinions assessment of community served for informed decisions and tailored program development.</p> <p>Alternative recruitment strategy that involves underserved community.</p>	<p>Research feasibility of expanded volunteer opportunities and create position to support.</p> <p>Research internship agreement with universities and build pipeline to employment.</p> <p>Evaluate technology upgrades to enhance efficiencies and reduce paper.</p>	<p>Research and pilot 24-hour staffing model.</p> <p>Explore new on-call structure.</p> <p>Implement wellness opportunities.</p> <p>Improve diversity training to engage with underserved communities and foster inclusivity.</p>	<p>Revamp new hiring orientation.</p> <p>Enhance staff development opportunities.</p> <p>Diversity workforce by expanding how we recruit candidates.</p> <p>Conduct comprehensive salary assessment for identified positions.</p> <p>Implement Leadership Academy Training Program to improve job satisfaction and retention.</p>

2024–2026 Strategic Plan Priorities to Achieve Pillars

Led by the Strategic Planning Committee of Crisis Services' Agency Board of Directors, this plan was shaped through a collaborative, inclusive process involving staff, board members, volunteers, and community partners – guided by consultants, Althea Luehrsen (August Moon Consulting) and Parker Harrington (The Parker Circle) with deep ties to Crisis Services.

Grounded in shared values, the plan emphasizes data-driven action, honest reflection, and continuous improvement, supported by clear goals and performance dashboards. Through this plan, Crisis Services reaffirms its commitment to evolving as a responsive, inclusive, and sustainable 24/7 Crisis Center – supporting both the dedicated team that powers our work and the individuals and communities we serve.

Strengthening Our Workforce

A New Union Agreement

As 2024 came to a close, so did Crisis Services' previous union contract. A strong union contract is vital to ensure that the dedicated, front-line professionals who deliver lifesaving, 24-hour support to our community are protected, valued, and fairly compensated. It reflects a shared commitment between agency leadership and staff to uphold the dignity, stability, and sustainability of crisis response work. Crisis Services direct services staff have been unionized since 1980.

Following several months of collaborative negotiation, Crisis Services' executive leadership, and the **Crisis Services Employees' Union CWA, AFL-CIO, Local 1122** reached an agreement on a new three-year union contract, effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2027.



CWA 1122 and Crisis Services at the bargaining table (Photo: CWA 1122)

The updated agreement includes key enhancements to the collective bargaining agreement, such as:

- Increased Compensation and Health Benefits
- New Paid Time Off Structure
- Expanded Bereavement Leave
- Implementation of a new Critical Incident Leave
- Advanced Educational Degree Recognition
- Flexible Scheduling
- Professional Licensure Support
- Position Change Provisions

We are proud of the outcome of this process, which was overwhelmingly positive and conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration. **Thank you and congratulations to the entire bargaining team for this great success!**

Advancing Equity and Resilience

IDEAA & TIROES at Crisis Services

In 2024, Crisis Services' IDEAA Working Group – which stands for **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accountability, and Awareness** – continued to advance its mission to promote equity, resilience, and healing across our agency. Recognizing that trauma affects not only our clients but also our staff and broader community, IDEAA remains committed to building systems that support everyone we serve.

This year marked a transformative step through our partnership with the **National Council for Mental Wellbeing**, a national leader in helping human service agencies improve care, quality and staff support. Together, we launched the Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented, Equity-Focused Systems (TIROES) initiative – an evidence-based model that aligns with our agency's mission, vision, and values.

In May, we introduced the initiative with a foundational training, "TIROES for Everyone," led by Dr. Amelia Roeschlein, DSW, MA, LMFT, a consultant with the National Council (**pictured right with members of the IDEAA Working Group**). During her on-site visit in June, Dr. Roeschlein conducted an Environmental Scan of Crisis Services and facilitated in-depth interviews with 17 team members and board representatives. These insights prepared us for a full Organizational Self-Assessment (OSA) completed later in the summer.

Based on the OSA results, the IDEAA Working Group selected Domain 3 of the TIROES framework as the priority area for 2024–2025: **A Trauma-Informed, Educated, and Responsive Workforce**. The goals under this domain include increasing staff awareness, knowledge, and skills to deliver timely, respectful, and person-centered care, while also implementing policies and practices that build and sustain a trauma-informed workforce.

This initiative represents a critical investment in our agency's future. By embedding trauma-informed and equity-focused practices across all levels of service, we are enhancing the well-being of our team, improving client outcomes, and fostering a culture where everyone feels safe, supported, and seen.



2024 | Crisis Counseling Program

Our Crisis Counseling Program (CCP) stands at the forefront of Crisis Services' mission to deliver immediate, compassionate care to individuals in distress. Staffed by highly trained crisis counselors, CCP operates our **24-Hour Hotline (716-834-3131)** around the clock and serves as the regional responder for the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**, as well as the **Chautauqua County Crisis Line**. Additionally, CCP provides:

- Resource connection and referrals to Emergency Mental Health Response Services (EMHRS) or trusted community partners
- After hours care for clients of 13 local mental health agencies across Erie County

2024 Program Snapshot

In 2024, the Crisis Counseling Program continued to provide essential, around-the-clock support to individuals in distress. Our team handled more than 78,000 calls, the majority of which were successfully resolved during the initial contact. For callers requiring additional care, follow-up was provided through thoughtful coordination and referral to appropriate services. Real-time documentation in iCarol (the agency's helpline software) enabled seamless collaboration with EMHRS and Advocate programs, ensuring personalized, compassionate responses.

To maintain constant coverage, staff rotated on-call shifts with unwavering commitment. With support from 988-designated funding, CCP added two coordinator roles to strengthen leadership and improve operations. The team also advanced its training infrastructure, revamping the Training Manual and onboarding process under a new Professional Development Supervisor.

We are proud of our team's dedication and continue to invest in the systems and support they need to sustain this life-saving work. As we reflect on the year, we remain deeply proud of the resilience, teamwork, and compassion shown by our hotline staff. We are committed to investing in the tools and structures they need to continue delivering life-saving care.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

As the Crisis Counseling Program's reach grows, so do the challenges of sustaining 24/7 care. Staffing remains the top concern — especially overnight — causing burnout and high turnover as counselors cover both routine and emergency shifts. New hires often have limited experience, requiring extended training and compounding retention issues.

The long-suspended volunteer program has yet to rebound post-COVID, placing more pressure on paid staff. Leadership capacity is also stretched: the vacant Program Supervisor role has shifted day-to-day oversight to senior leadership. The CCP Director continues to fill frontline shifts, including overnights, limiting their ability to focus on program strategy and growth.

Moving forward, the program must rebuild its leadership structure, strengthen recruitment and retention efforts, and restore volunteer support. These investments are imperative to sustaining this community service for the long term.

2024 | Emergency Mental Health Response Services

Crisis Services' Emergency Mental Health Response Services (EMHRS) deliver critical, on-the-ground support to individuals experiencing mental health emergencies — anytime, day or night. This department offers specialized programs designed to provide immediate care, reduce unnecessary hospitalization or police intervention, and promote long-term stability for individuals in crisis. Our EMHRS programs include:

- **Mobile Outreach Program (MOR):** Rapid mental health crisis response aimed at de-escalation and diverting individuals from ERs or law enforcement when possible.
- **Mobile Transitional Support (MTS):** Clinical support for individuals transitioning from inpatient care, promoting stability and preventing re-hospitalization.
- **CIT Crisis Case Management:** Short-term support for individuals with frequent law enforcement encounters due to mental health needs, reducing repeat crises.
- **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training:** Collaborative training that equips law enforcement to respond to mental health emergencies with empathy and effectiveness.

2024 Program Snapshot

In 2024, Emergency Mental Health Response Services (EMHRS) faced consistently high demand, particularly within the Mobile Outreach Program. Despite heavy caseloads, staff remained focused on providing rapid, stabilization-focused care and connecting individuals to ongoing support.

To manage rising needs, staff were frequently reassigned across programs — demonstrating flexibility, but also revealing the urgent need for more consistent staffing.

Key milestones included the successful rebuilding of the CIT Program, enhancing collaboration with law enforcement, and the reintegration of Peer Specialists into the Mobile Transitional Support team, enriching care with lived experience.

To strengthen workforce sustainability, EMHRS piloted creative strategies such as **30-hour work weeks** and **clinical supervision for licensure** — steps aimed at reducing burnout and supporting long-term staff development.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite being more essential than ever, EMHRS continues to face systemic challenges that threaten long-term sustainability. Chronic under-staffing — especially in the Mobile Outreach Program — has led to burnout, high turnover, and a growing need to onboard less-experienced hires, placing further strain on the system. Fortunately, the implementation of our 30-hour Mobile Outreach position is already showing strong potential in helping to alleviate under-staffing.

Additionally, field collaboration with law enforcement remains critical but complex, requiring ongoing coordination to ensure safe and effective responses.

Looking ahead, EMHRS is focused on key priorities: stabilizing staff, advancing workforce development through flexible scheduling and clinical supervision, and centering staff well-being. The strength of this work lies in the people who deliver it: committed professionals building a more responsive, sustainable crisis system for all.

2024 | Advocate Department

The Advocate Department at Crisis Services provides confidential, around-the-clock support for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse. In addition to crisis intervention, the department oversees the agency's **Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) Program**. Since 1983, the Advocate Department has proudly served as **Erie County's designated Rape Crisis Center**, as recognized by the New York State Department of Health. We are also a **NYS-approved non-residential Domestic Violence Service Provider**.

In 2024, our team continued to provide compassionate, trauma-informed care to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, family violence, and other crimes. Advocates were available 24/7 to respond in person at hospitals, police departments, and other community locations – ensuring that no survivor faced trauma alone.

This year, 855 individuals received direct support through the Advocate Department. Our services included providing emotional support, safety planning, medical and legal advocacy, and ongoing connection to critical resources.

Through our SAFE Program, 213 Sexual Assault Forensic Exams (commonly referred to as "rape kits") were conducted for survivors who presented at a **Kaleida or Catholic Health hospital, including:**

Buffalo General Medical Center
DeGraff Medical Park
Kenmore Mercy Hospital
Lockport Memorial Hospital
Mercy Ambulatory Care Center
Mercy Hospital of Buffalo
Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital
Mount St. Mary's Hospital
Sisters of Charity Hospital
Sisters of Charity
St. Joseph Campus

In May 2024, we expanded our SAFE Program to include services for children presenting at **Oishei Children's Hospital**. This important partnership allows us to provide comprehensive, trauma-informed care to individuals of all ages impacted by sexual abuse. We further deepened our partnership with **The Scott Bieler Center at BestSelf** to provide a coordinated community response to children impacted by our abuse in the County.

In addition to direct service, the Advocate Department delivered 89 outreach and education training courses, reaching 3,473 individuals across Erie County. These sessions focused on sexual violence prevention, bystander intervention, and increasing awareness of available support services, strengthening community readiness and encouraging survivors to come forward.

2024 | Community Education & Outreach



In 2024, Crisis Services significantly expanded **our community outreach and education efforts, engaging with more than 17,500 people** through parades, community events, and targeted training sessions. Each interaction helped raise awareness about the critical services we provide and strengthened our connection to the Western New York Community.

Led by Cameron Burns, Community Education and Outreach Coordinator, Crisis Services offers **safeTalk, Talk Saves Lives, and QPR Gatekeeper suicide prevention trainings** for audiences of all compositions. In collaboration with **Dr. Celia Spacone of the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Erie County**, Cameron trained 198 individuals to recognize the warning signs of suicide, ask the right questions, and intervene safely and effectively. These life-saving skills help to build a stronger network of community members equipped to support those in crisis.

Additionally, 167 people received specialized training on accessing Crisis Services and utilizing the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. These sessions helped demystify the process of reaching out for help, empowering more people to turn to us in times of need.

We closed out the year by laying the foundation for our new **Community Ambassador Volunteer Program**, an exciting initiative to broaden our outreach. Ambassadors represent Crisis Services at public events and provide a personal connection to our mission. Each volunteer will complete robust training that includes an overview of Crisis Services and suicide prevention – vital knowledge that strengthens our community's safety net.

2024 | Special Events & Major Appeals



— RONALD SOUTHARD —
CrisisServices
Agency & Foundation Boards

I <3 Crisis Services
Wine Tasting w/
Kevin LoVullo
\$4,644



A delicious night in support of Crisis Services.



10.16.24 @ 6:00PM

Admiral Room at the Marin
237 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203



Men Who
Cook
\$41,354

2024
Year-End
Appeal
\$32,730



FORWARD

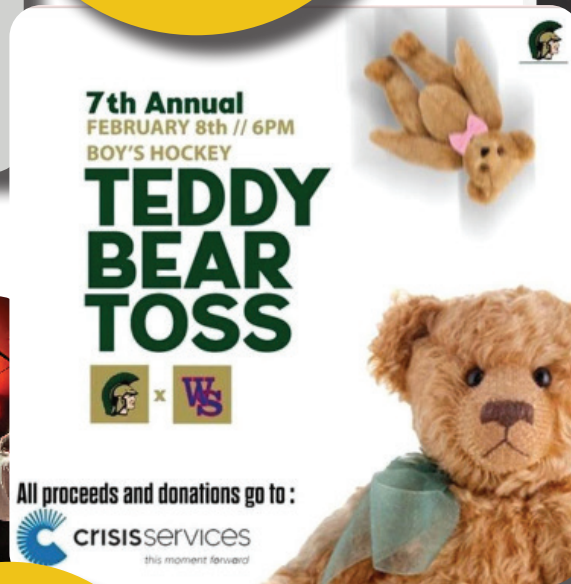
Through every season.
Through what feels impossible.
Through this moment.



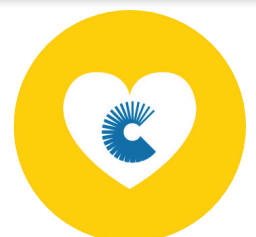
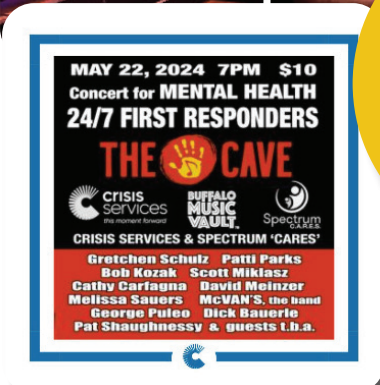
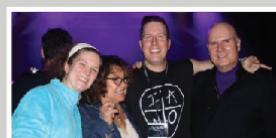
2024 | Third-Party Fundraisers



We are deeply grateful for our friends & partners who have raised funds in our honor!



Funds Raised in 2024:
\$22,265



2024 | Funders & Major Donors

Program Funders

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (SAMHSA)
Chautauqua County Mental Health
County of Erie Department of Mental Health
County of Erie Department of Social Services
Erie County Sheriff's Office
Highmark Blue Fund
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NYSCASA)
New York State Department of Health
New York State Department of Mental Health
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence's Enough is Enough
New York State Office of Children and Family Services
New York State Office of Victim Services
Patrick P. Lee Foundation
Senator Timothy M. Kennedy
Tower Foundation
US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services
US Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women
Legal Assistance for Victims

In 2024, the Crisis Services Staff Wellness Committee continued its mission to support the health, resilience, and morale of our frontline workers. Through thoughtful programming and activities, the committee worked to ensure that those who care for our community also feel cared for themselves.

We are deeply grateful to Eric Worrall, his family & LoCo Ventures for their generous support.

Their year-long financial support of Crisis Services truly fueled our frontline.

Major Donors

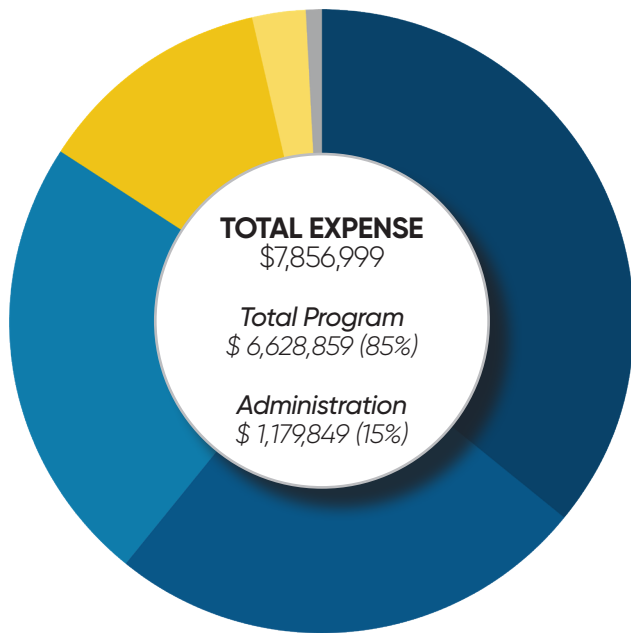
Matthew Barr
Jessica Brown
Michael Burns
Sandra Calandra
Judy Caraotta
Paul and Kimberley Corbett
Sue Cuomo
Jonathan Evanson
Douglas Garlapo
Tom & Marybeth Giambra
Evelyn and Robert Hamilton
Debi Handley
John Hellreigel
Peter Herman and Tipico Café
Andrew Hibbard
William Keefer
Scott Klaurens

James Kunkemoeller
Ryan Lucinski
LoCo Ventures Inc.
Jessica Pirro and David Mann
Dean Mann
Shelly Marabella
J L Mastorilli
Dr. Joan McCool
John McNamara
Brandon Michals
Richard Mugel
Deborah O'Connor
Dr. Sucharita Paul
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Steven Pierpaoli
Nick Pirro

Kathleen Reilly
Mark and Kellie Marie Roy
Dr. Michael Rutter
Douglas Schwallie
Joseph Skrobacz
Candy Skrobacz
Ronald Southard
Michelle Suer
Anne and Dave Taylor
Ellen & Tim Webster
Dennis Walczyk
Eric & Leigh Worrall
Michael Witmer
David Zapfel
Jackson Zenger
Wendy Zuch

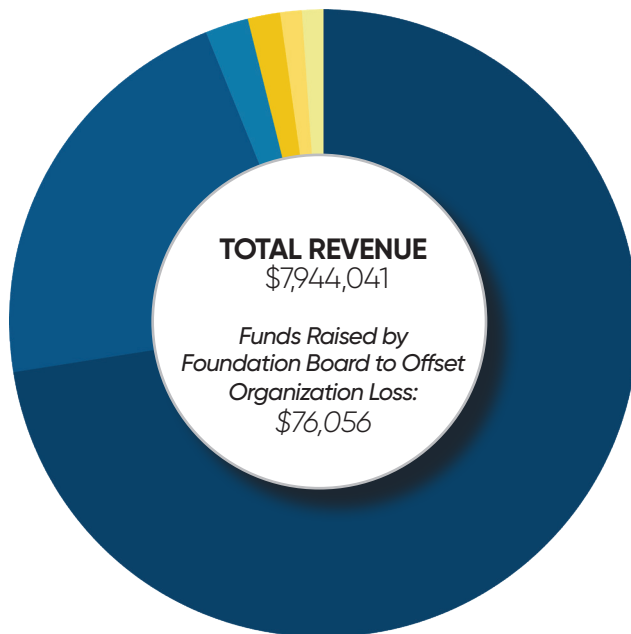
2024 | Financials

EXPENSES



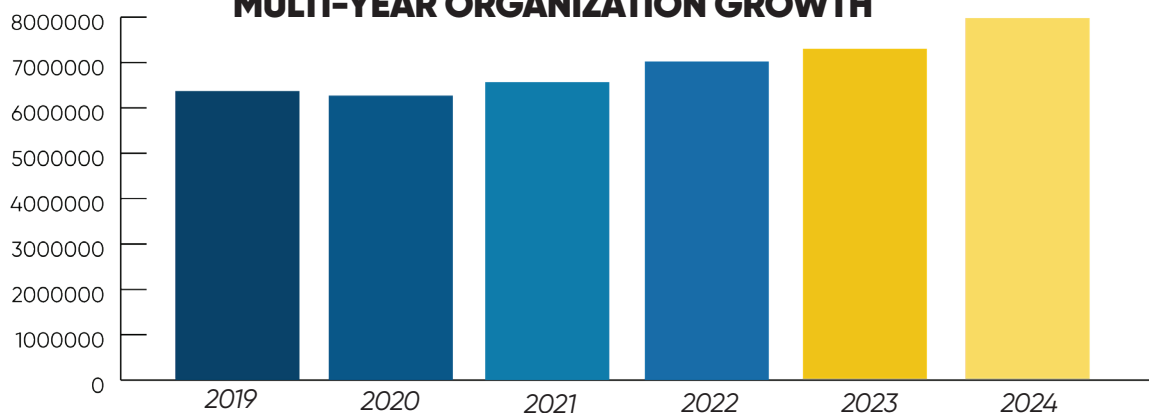
	Emergency Mental Health Response Services	\$2,822,316
	Advocate Department (DV/SA Services)	\$1,963,113
	Crisis Counseling Program (24-Hour Hotline)	\$1,843,430
	Management & General Expense	\$948,861
	Fund Development	\$230,988
	Suicide Prevention Coalition of Erie County	\$48,291

REVENUE



	Program Services	\$5,765,091
	Fee-for-Service	\$1,705,074
	All Contributions	\$176,658
	In-Kind Contributions	\$140,842
	Other Revenue	\$85,400
	Fundraising Income	\$70,976

MULTI-YEAR ORGANIZATION GROWTH



2024 | Boards of Directors

AGENCY BOARD

CHAIR

Jessica Brown
Comptroller, Erie County Water Authority

VICE CHAIR

Andrene Smith
Retired, Project Management & Finance

TREASURER

Scott Swan
Banking/Finance

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Nicole Staszak
Vice President
Quality Improvement People, Inc.

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Nurse Practitioner
Senses Medical Wellness, PLLC

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Executive Director
Talent & Organizational Development
Seneca Gaming Corporation

Mindy Cervoni
President/ CEO
Community Services for Every1

Tracy Fricano Chalmers
Director, Public Health Planning &
Emergency Preparedness/PIO
Niagara County Department of Health

Lani Churley
Associate Vice President, People Inc.

Mia Clark
Director of Residential Services
The Salvation Army

Heather Cruz
Vice Dean/Chief of Staff
School of Social Work, University at Buffalo

Cynthia Hammer
Senior Vice President, Assured Partners

Peter Herman
Owner, Tipico Coffee

Christine Marrano
Chief Human Resources Officer
Goldberg Segalla

Tim McKeever
VP Human Resources, ARC Health

Francesca Mesiah
Manager of Workforce Development
Kaleida Health

Miroslav Rakic
Vice President
Enterprise Analytics Agilon Health

Lawrence Ross
Attorney , Hurwitz Fine PC

Michael T. A. Smith
Save our Streets Task Coordinator City of Buffalo

David Zapfel
President/CEO, Gerard Place

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Quality Control, Goldman Titanium

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Vacant

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Law Office of Francis M. Letro

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M&T Bank

Stefania Talarico
Account Executive, Public Sector
Core Trust

Eric Worrall
Owner, LoCo Ventures

Executive Leadership Team

Jessica C. Pirro

President/CEO

Ronald Southard (resigned April 2024)

Sara Carella (hired July 2024)

Chief Financial Officer

Robyn Wiktorski-Reynolds

Vice President, Clinical Operations

Program Directors

Rachel Morrison

Director, Crisis Counseling Program

Tracie Bussi

Director, Emergency Mental Health Response Services

Ashley Amidon (resigned July 2024)

Shannon Rielly (hired September 2024)

Director, Advocate Department

Administrative Directors

Elyse Snider

Human Resources Director

Candice Fletcher-Pacheco

Development and Marketing Director

Sukie Smith

Administrative Operations Director

Fiscal Operations Director

Jessica Stritzinger



24-Hour Hotline | 716-834-3131

www.crisisservices.org



Crisis Services is the Regional Provider for:

