

**2018-2019 BUDGET QUESTION**  
***Response to Request for Information***

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DEPARTMENT: Police

REQUEST NO.: 25

REQUESTED BY: Pool

DATE REQUESTED: 6/13/18

DATE POSTED: 8/29/18

DATE REVISED: 9/4/18

**REQUEST:** Please provide information on Victims Services Counselor staffing levels over the past five years, including any current unmet staffing needs and the level of service that could be provided if those unmet needs were met.

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**RESPONSE:**

Victim Services Counselors provide immediate mental health and practical intervention 24 hours a day, 365 days a year following violent incidents to ensure victim security and restoration. This includes crisis counseling and stabilization, justice support, advocacy, safety planning, resource referrals and victims' rights information. Counselors provide essential services to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sex crimes, child abuse, robbery, homicide, vehicular homicide, and human trafficking. In addition, Victim Services Counselors provide death notifications for the medical examiner's office and respond to requests from AFD and EMS.

The Austin Police Department General Fund budget maintained the same level of Victim Services Counselor positions from FY 2014 to FY 2018. This includes a total of 26 FTEs: 19 Counselors, 3 Lead Counselors, 3 Supervisors and 1 Manager. The FY 2019 Proposed Budget includes funding for an additional Counselor position, as well as funding to convert a temporary grant-funded counselor to a regular position, partially funded by federal grant funds and partially funded through the General Fund. This position assists victims following Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) hit notifications on the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Program. The FY 2019 Proposed Budget includes authorization and grant funding to convert an additional 3 temporary counselors to full grant positions (all grant funded through FY 2020).

Combined General Fund and Grant Victim Services Authorized Positions						
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
General Fund	26	26	26	26	26	28
Grant	2	2	2	4	4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>

All temporary positions within Victim Services are full-time. The conversion to FTEs, whether grant or regular, provides for those individuals to receive benefits and be covered by Municipal Civil Service. In the table above, the number of combined grant and General Fund authorized positions increases from 30 to 35 in FY 2019. Please note that, though the actual number of authorized positions is increasing, because four of those are converting from temporary to

regular, the Victim Services unit will experience a net increase in scheduled staff equal to one position.

Without adequate staffing levels, Victim Services Division personnel are forced to prioritize immediate and follow up response to violent crime victims and survivors. The division has the capacity to serve approximately 9,000 crime victims annually. The categories of service for the counselors range from murder, rape and aggravated assault domestic violence to child abuse, violation of protective orders and assault with injury family violence. The City recorded over 34,000 incidents within these categories in 2017. Funding additional positions would allow the Division's trauma-informed care program to serve 250 - 300 victims of violent crime per counselor, per year.