



Please Support FY2026 Funding for SIREN Act Grants

REQUEST

The Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs (SIREN) Act created a grant program specifically for rural public and non-profit EMS agencies and fire departments to purchase equipment, provide training, and meet other critical needs, called the Rural EMS Training and Equipment Assistance (REMSTEAs) grant program.

Please include \$33 million in the FY2026 budget for SIREN Act grants to provide much needed resources to already strained EMS agencies working to provide life-saving medical care to the patients in their communities.

BACKGROUND

In small towns, farming communities, and frontier areas, rural EMS agencies are a lifeline to the healthcare system for residents, who on average are older, have higher rates of chronic illness, and lower incomes. Rural EMS agencies often are forced to rely on community donations to supplement limited funding from municipal or county governments. While these donations help rural EMS agencies and fire departments maintain their operations, they have not kept pace with the rising costs that these agencies face. In many communities, EMS agencies have been forced to close their doors completely.

In the wake of exponential increases in expenses for medical supplies, equipment, fuel, and medications, even the most well-resourced EMS agencies and fire departments across the United States are struggling to stretch their budgets to maintain their operations. Many are also facing crisis-level challenges in recruiting and retaining personnel, fueled in part by low unemployment and an incredibly competitive labor market.

Coupled with declines in primary care and hospital service availability, greater distances between healthcare facilities, low reimbursement rates, and the ongoing opioid and fentanyl crisis, these circumstances have created a perfect storm of financial challenges for rural EMS agencies.

The REMSTEAs program, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is a critical lifeline for these budget-challenged rural EMS agencies and fire departments. REMSTEAs grants have provided much-needed funding to assist agencies in procuring medication and medical supplies, recruiting and retaining personnel, increasing service levels from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support, and even replacing older ambulances with newer and safer models.

Since the inception of the program in 2018, 170 awards ranging from \$92,000 to \$200,000 have been made to rural communities. The funds have been used to maintain, improve, or expand the level of emergency medical care provided to the residents of those communities – activities that were only possible with the support from the REMSTEAs program.

In FY2024, SAMHSA received more than 90 REMSTEAs grant applications – more than triple the total number submitted since the program's first awards were made in FY2020 – but only had funding available to make 62 awards. There is clearly a strong ongoing need for this program, and we expect that the number of applicants will only continue to grow in FY2026 and beyond.

Please submit a programmatic funding request to the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee to support \$33 million for SIREN Act grants in FY2026.