

Understanding Best Practices in Animal-Assisted Crisis Response (AACR)

HOPE
Animal-Assisted
Crisis Response

Objectives

- *Describe qualifications, training and certification of HOPE AACR teams & how to access them
- *Identify benefits of AACR
- *Meet and interact with HOPE AACR teams, identifying best practices and appropriate interventions

Working Dogs

- * Police K9
- * Military Dogs
- * Detection Dogs
- * Search-and-Rescue Dogs
- * Service Dogs
- * Crisis Response Dogs

Crisis Response Dog or Therapy Dog: Is there a difference?



Wildfire base camp

Yes!
All HOPE dogs are
therapy dogs,
BUT
not all therapy dogs
can be
HOPE dogs

Animal-Assisted Terms

- * AA Activities
- * AA Education
- * AA Therapy
- * AA Crisis Response



2018 SETRAC Symposium

What's the Difference?

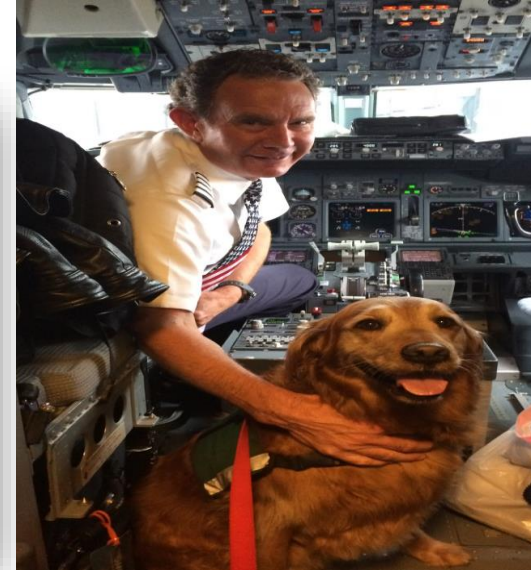
THERAPY VISITS

1. Scheduled in Advance
2. Travel by Familiar Means
3. Routine and Predictable
4. Calm Visits



CRISIS RESPONSE DEPLOYMENTS

1. No Advanced Warning
2. Varied Means of Travel
3. Chaotic with Loud Sounds, Bad Odors, Debris
4. Crisis Scenes with Unpredictable, Intense Emotions



What's the Difference?

THERAPY VISITS

5. Support Staff Available
6. Visits Less Than Two Hours
7. Safe Environment
8. Not Physically Demanding

CRISIS RESPONSE DEPLOYMENTS

5. Self Sufficient
6. Visits Can Last All Day to Several Days
7. Work with Other Teams for Safety
8. Deployments can be Physically Demanding



What's the Difference?

THERAPY VISITS

- 9. Minimal Costs
- 10. Appropriate for a Wide Variety of Animals



CRISIS RESPONSE DEPLOYMENTS

- 9. Can be Expensive
- 10. Dogs Only



Characteristics – AACR Human

- Patience
- Diplomacy
- Positive Attitude
- Social
- Flexible
- Grounded, intuitive, adaptable handler



Teams patiently waiting to start their work.

Characteristics – AACR Canine

- Socialized
- Engaging
- Focused, calm
- Able to recover
- Good health and stamina
- Grounded, intuitive, adaptable



Surfside Forensic Remains
Recovery Team 2021

Evolution of Crisis Response Dogs

After a shooting at a high school in Oregon in 1998, two therapy dog teams were asked to help comfort students, parents, and staff at the school.

Cindy Ehlers recognized that ***special training was needed to be effective in AACR work***. She began training dogs and handlers and founded HOPE AACR.

After deploying at Ground Zero **after 911**, they realized that **future crisis response teams would need specialized training** in emotional first aid, identifying and responding to human and canine stress signs, and disaster-related coursework to operate safely and professionally.



Ground Zero 911

Two Decades of Service History

First Deployment

May 1998 Thurston High
School Shooting



September 2001
World Trade Center

Additional AACR Program Benefits

Benefits of crisis response dogs beyond the common mental and physical aspects:

- ❖ Help people to focus outward
- ❖ Create a bridge to reach survivors who need mental health services
- ❖ Diffuse tense situations in disaster recovery centers, shelters, and distribution points
- ❖ Provides a brief minute of peace within the chaos and the strength to keep going when they return to the chaos



2015 Air Medical Memorial

Additional AACR Program Benefits

- ❖ Provide a welcome diversion for survivors waiting for services or information, including the responders
- ❖ Help those impacted come out of isolation and reconnect to their support systems and communities
- ❖ Provide onsite and after-support to first responders, participate in debriefings
- ❖ Provide a sense of normalcy



FEMA Joint Field Office after
2015 flooding in Austin.

Mission of HOPE AACR

Our mission is to provide comfort and encouragement through animal-assisted support to individuals affected by crises and disasters.



Who We Are

- HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response is a national, all volunteer, 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation.
- HOPE AACR is a member of National VOAD and sits on their Emotional & Spiritual Care committee.
- Teams are self-sufficient, background checked, and insured.

We are not first responders or mental health counselors. Our purpose is to work alongside agencies/organizations to comfort people after a traumatic event, through interactions with certified crisis response dogs.

But...We DO NOT Self Deploy



Our Commitment to All

HOPE AACR is committed to providing crisis response services to people affected by crises or disasters, regardless of race, religion, citizenship, economic status, or sexual orientation.

Our dogs serve as a “bridge” reconnecting individuals back to their communities



Who HOPE Works With

- ❖ Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD): Red Cross, Salvation Army, Faith-based Orgs
- ❖ Government Agencies: FEMA, GEMA, County EMAs, FBI, Military
- ❖ Public Safety: Fire & Forestry Agencies, Law Enforcement Agencies
- ❖ Relief Personnel: Chaplains, School Counselors, Medical and Mental Health workers
- ❖ Citizen Corps Volunteer Groups: CERT, MRC, Fire Rescue Reserves, VIPS and affiliate partners
- ❖ Private Sector: Corporations



Organizations HOPE works with

HOPE AACR Teams assist Local, State,
and Federal Agencies



FEMA



National
Voluntary Organizations
Active in Disaster



**American
Red Cross**



CISM Critical Incident
Stress Management



HOPE AACR Evaluation

- ❖ 30 minute “job” interview of handler and canine
- ❖ Basic pet therapy evaluation elements
 - ❖ grooming and touching
 - ❖ obedience and neutral dog introduction
 - ❖ crate testing
- ❖ Observation of dog and human interactions
- ❖ Disaster environment scenario
 - ❖ introducing services to shelter manager to gain access
 - ❖ experiencing the sounds (80 db) of shelter chaos
 - ❖ encountering a variety of typical shelter inhabitants
- ❖ Feedback on performance and readiness for workshop



Certification Workshop

- HOPEfuls are trained in all **critical aspects** of AACR work
- HOPEfuls are evaluated for their ability to successfully **work in stressful situations**
- HOPEfuls must successfully **complete the workshop** to join HOPE AACR:
 - ❖ Canine Body Language and Behavior
 - ❖ Concepts and Phases of Disaster
 - ❖ Listening and Communication Skills
 - ❖ Providing Emotional Support
 - ❖ Role of **Team Leaders**
 - ❖ Working with Other Agencies
 - ❖ Experiential Activities and Exercises



Teams at Fire station during workshop exercise

Continuing Education

- ❖ Core 4 courses:
 - FEMA Incident Command, CPR & Human First Aid, Pet First Aid, Psychological First Aid
- ❖ Crisis intervention
- ❖ Critical incident stress management
- ❖ Community outreach
- ❖ Agency networking
- ❖ Disaster drills
- ❖ Involvement with other crisis response groups, such as Red Cross, EMAs
- ❖ Dog skills training

National Standards

- *Code of ethics
- *Standards of behavior
- *Administrative oversight & structure
- *Written policies & procedures
- *Liability insurance
- *Background checks

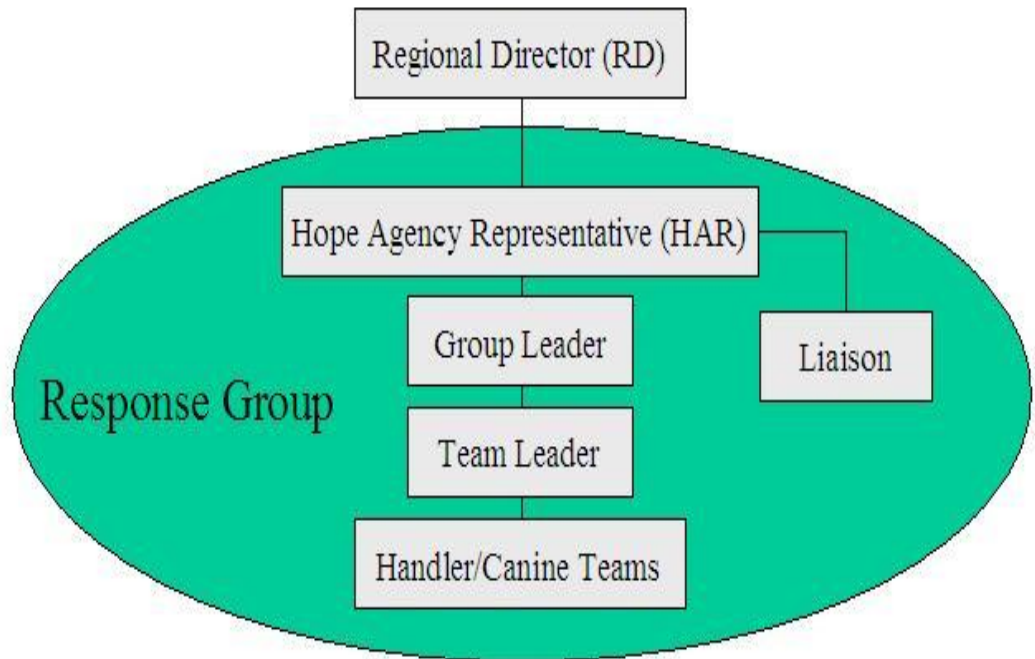


2020 Rio Grande Valley flooding

HOPE's Deployment Protocol

* Regional Manager is notified and contacts requesting agency to determine needs

* Regional Director contacts teams for availability based on needs of requesting agency



Prior to Deployment Crisis Response Handlers:

- ❖ Promote resilience through desensitization training
- ❖ Educate themselves on their dog's stress signals
- ❖ Take note of animal and human welfare guidelines
- ❖ Maintain a “go-pack” for quick response



Desensitization training at Fire Station

During Deployment Crisis Response Handlers:

- ❖ Constantly monitor conditions while on deployments
- ❖ Advocate for their canine partners
- ❖ Provide breaks for themselves and their canine partners



**Air Medical Memorial Service
2015**

After Deployment Crisis Response Handlers:

- ❖ Provide a stress-relief activity for their canine partner
- ❖ Talk to other members or take advantage of emotional support from HOPE's in-house mental health professionals after an impactful event
- ❖ Take time for themselves to process and “get back to normal”



Teams debriefing after a deployment



Field Exposure Training
EXPOSURE TO EMERGENCY
RESPONSE VEHICLES AND
PERSONNEL



Field Exposure Training

Field Exposure Training

PUBLIC TRANSPORT, AIRPORT & BUS TRAVEL



National Deployments



2005 CA Wildfire Base Camp

2007 Virginia Tech Shooting



Hurricane Katrina
2005

Superstorm Sandy, Hurricanes Harvey, Matthew, Florence, Irma, Dorian, Ian....



Hurricane Harvey



Shelters, Base Camps, & Joint Field Offices

Harris County Court Support



Local Memorials , Debriefings

2016 Air Medical Memorial



2021 HPD AstroWorld debriefing
10 people killed, 25 hospitalized,
300 treated on site.

Wildfires

West Coast, PNW, &
Rocky Mt



2013 Yarnell Arizona
Fire



AZ Firefighter
Memorial sites

Natural Disasters

Tornadoes, Hurricanes



Floods/Mudslides

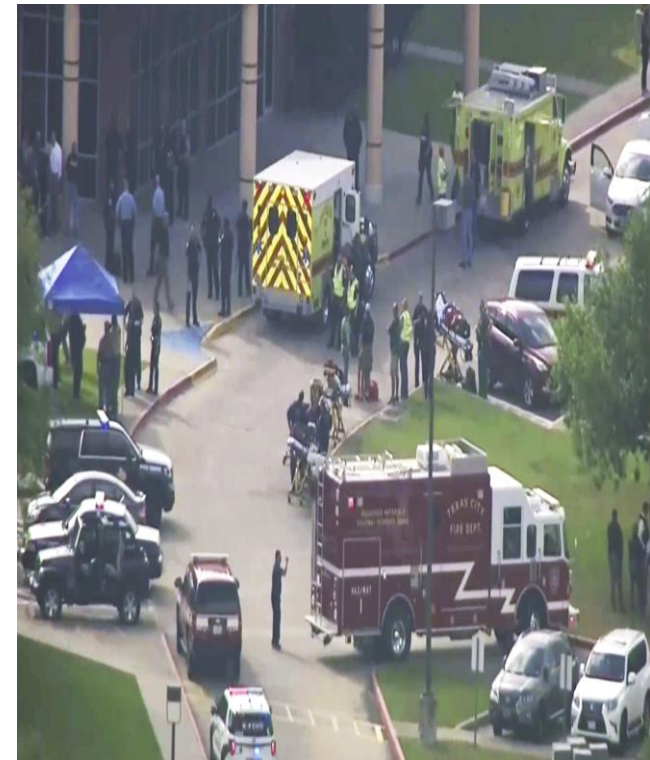
Intentional & Accidental Disasters



2021 YES Prep shooting



2014 NC Texas College bus crash



2018 Santa Fe High School Shooting

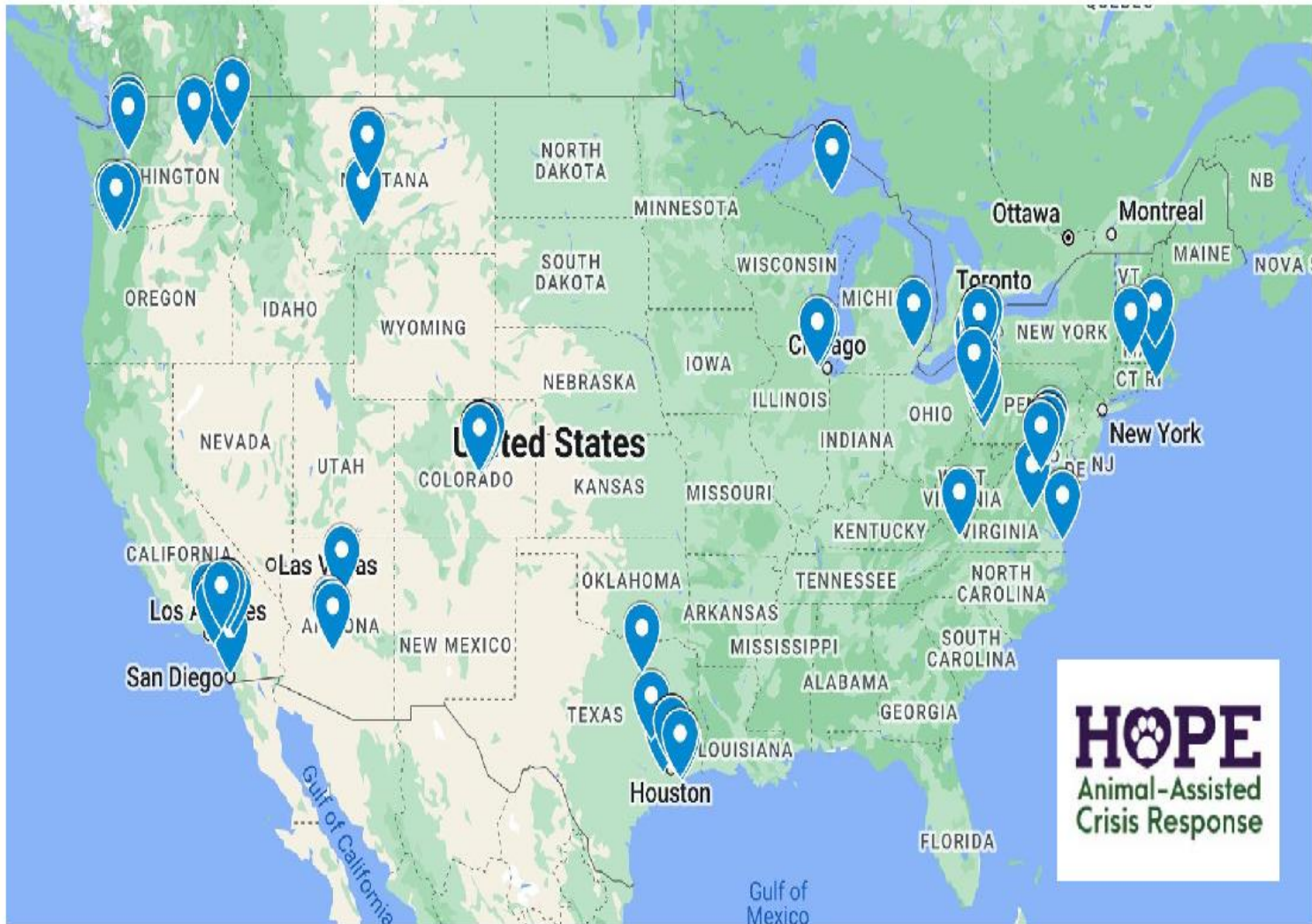
More Recent National Deployments

- ❖ Kroger shootings: Boulder, CO and TN
- ❖ Surfside FL Condo Collapse
- ❖ Numerous student and first responder deaths
- ❖ 4th of July mass shooting, Highland Park, IL parade shooting
- ❖ Kentucky flooding
- ❖ Hurricane Ian

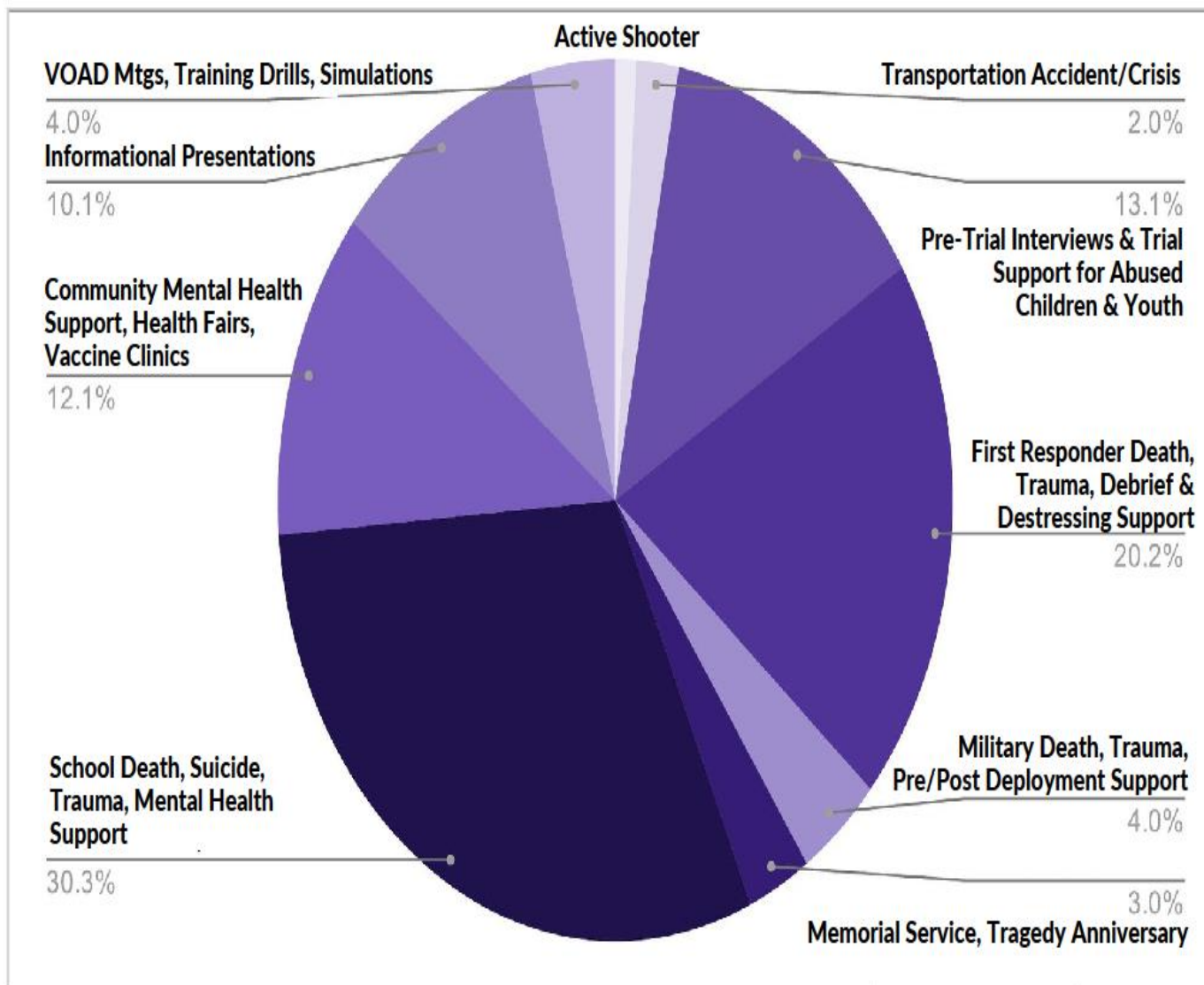


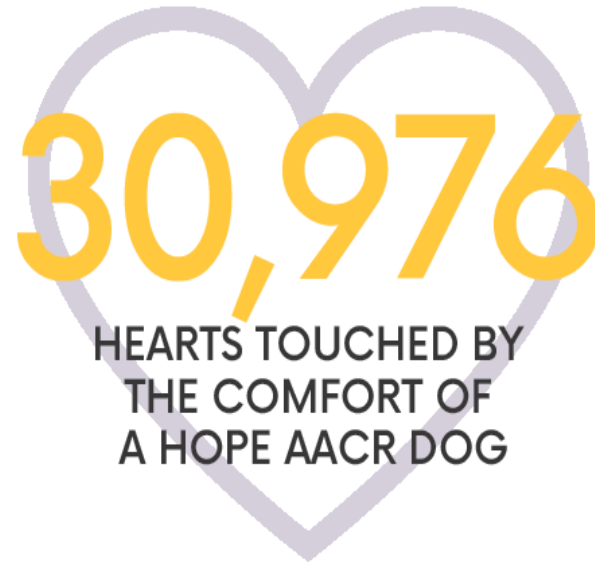
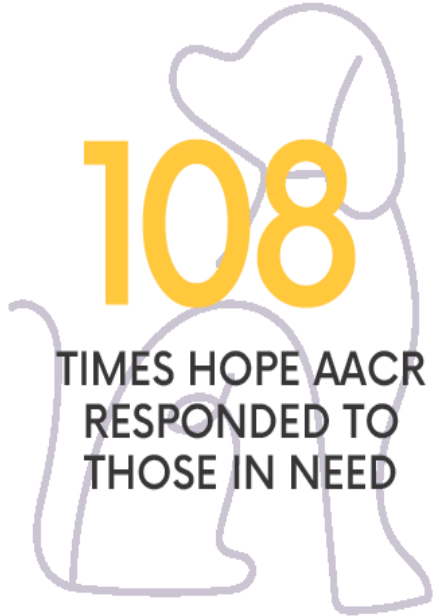
Where HOPE AACR Has Been Deployed in 2022

108 Deployments Jan - May Across the US



How Has HOPE AACR Helped Jan - May 2022





Quote attributed to an FBI officer in Tucson during Judge Roll's funeral, 2011 Arizona Shooting

"A dog's eyes
have the power
to speak things
that words
never could."



THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE



Questions???

**Thank you for
allowing us
to share our work
with you!**



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