



SMART COMMUNITY POLICING ACT of 2024

The rise of violent crime in Colorado and across the country demands a comprehensive response. An essential part of this response is community policing, where law enforcement partners with local responders to prevent crime, connect at-risk individuals with resources, and improve public safety. Mobile crisis teams, co-responder units, and case managers are vital to these efforts. They engage people experiencing crises related to mental health, poverty, homelessness, or substance use disorders to deescalate challenging situations. Community policing reduces the strain on law enforcement and allows officers to focus on violent crimes. Studies confirm that community policing produces better outcomes for public safety while saving limited resources.

The Supporting Mental Assistance Responder Teams Community Policing Act or SMART Community Policing Act of 2024 would provide dedicated funds for collaborative partnerships with law enforcement, health professionals, case managers, and outreach teams to improve public safety and connect people with mental health services and community resources. Specifically, the Act would create or expand programs that:

- Pair a mental health clinician with a paramedic or emergency medical technician (EMT) to respond to certain low-risk calls to the 911 system;
- Train crisis workers to respond to calls for service and help stabilize encounters;
- Provide mental health services for persons, including those in crisis who may need further evaluation and treatment;
- Stabilize encounters between law enforcement officers and people experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis and connect them with appropriate support programs; and
- Build case management and outreach teams to follow up with people to develop specific solutions to reduce repeat interactions with emergency services.

The legislation is based on Denver's STAR Program and Grand Junction's Co-Responder Program. Denver's STAR Program has responded to almost 7,500 calls for service that would have otherwise required police to respond. Grand Junction's Co-Responder Unit has responded to over 3,200 crisis calls. Colorado's successful community policing is a model to the nation by creating opportunities for law enforcement to focus on violent crime, deescalate encounters involving mental and behavioral health crises, and save taxpayer money.